Media Arts in Practice Unit Options A-D



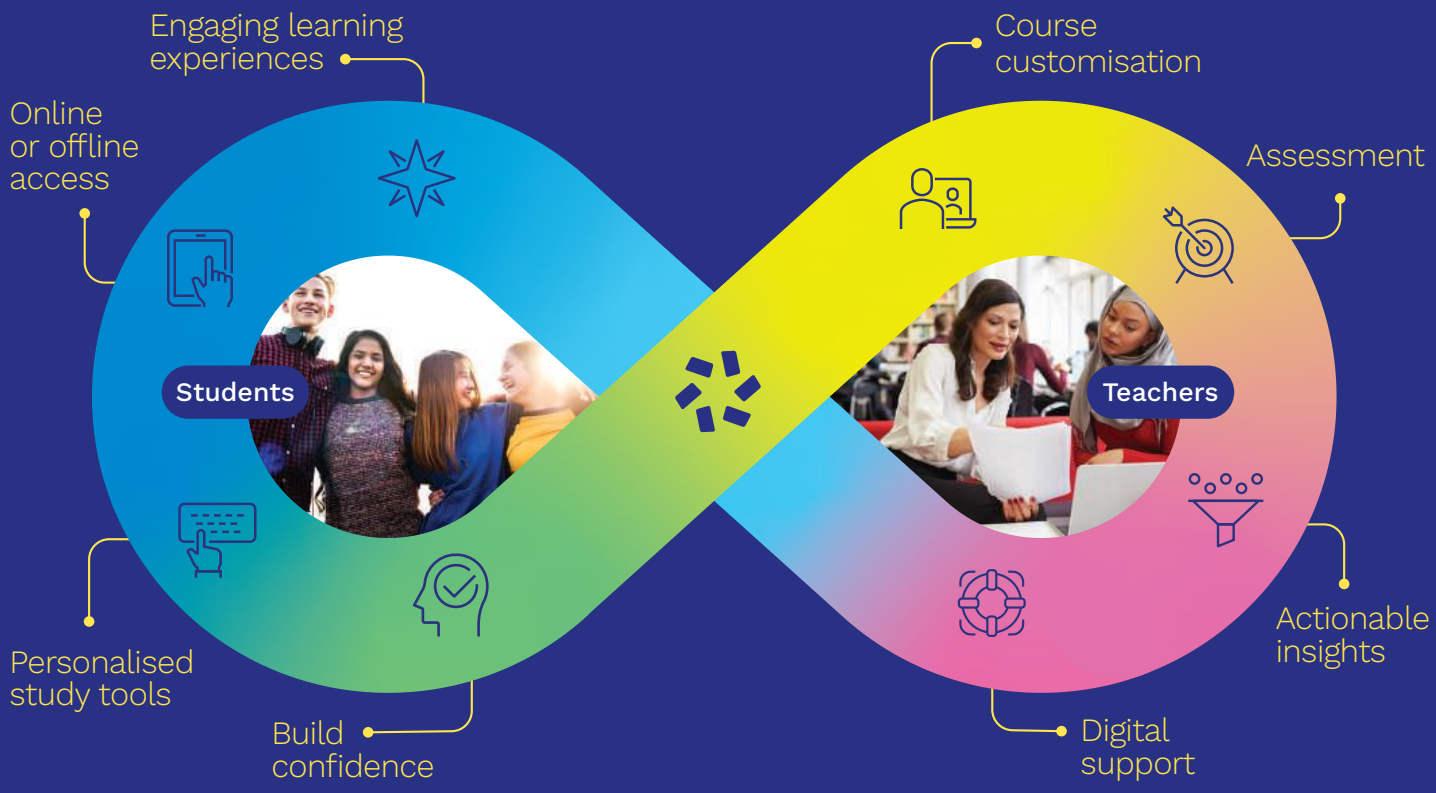
NELSON FILM, TELEVISION AND NEW MEDIA

QCE UNITS 1 & 2

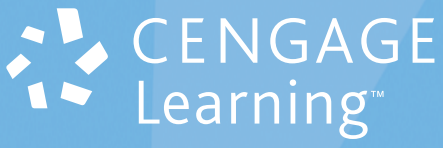
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Media Arts in Practice Unit Options A-D



NELSON

FILM, TELEVISION AND NEW MEDIA

QCE UNITS 1 & 2

Colin Stewart
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ISBN 9780170484176

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National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library of Australia

Cengage Learning Australia
Level 7, 80 Dorcas Street
South Melbourne, Victoria Australia 3205

For learning solutions, visit **cengage.com.au**

Printed in China by 1010 Printing International Limited.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 27 26 25 24 23

AUTHOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge the writing of this co-authored book was assembled across lands of the Turrbal, Yuggera (Jagera) Ugarapul and Waka Waka people to educate the generations.

The authors would like to thank their families and friends for their help and support during the writing process and all that it entailed. The incremental learning from colleagues in Media Studies, other disciplines and past careers is also gratefully acknowledged as contributing to the knowledge base we have attempted to share with others. As authors, we want to thank the Cengage staff involved in the project for enabling us to publish this book as a compilation of the most relevant content for the implementation of the Film, Television & New Media syllabus. Thanks to them, we can deliver that content to our students. To our current and future peers in the statewide 'media faculty', we thank you for meeting the challenge of media literacy for the wider population at a time when global economics, democracy and the value of individual thought may depend on it.

CONTENTS

About the authors vi
How to use this book vi

1 STARTING TO STUDY FILM, TELEVISION & NEW MEDIA 1

What is meant by 'the media'? 1
Film, Television & New Media – the subject 3

MEDIA ARTS IN PRACTICE (MAP) 9

2 STARTING TO STUDY MEDIA ARTS IN PRACTICE 10

Media Arts in Practice (MAP) – The subject 10
Map units and options in book one 19
Option A: Personal viewpoints 19
Option B: Representations 24
Option C: Community 33
Option D: Persuasion 36

UNIT 1: FOUNDATION 43

3 LANGUAGE CODES AND CONVENTIONS OF MOVING-IMAGE MEDIA 44

About language codes and conventions 44

4 CAMERA CODES AND CONVENTIONS AND *MISE EN SCÈNE* 49

Camera codes and conventions 49
Mise en scène 67

5 GAME AND NEW MEDIA CODES AND CONVENTIONS 72

Game shot types and purposes 72
New media shot types and purposes 74
New media codes and conventions 78

6 EDITING CODES AND CONVENTIONS 81

Techniques of editing 81
Sound codes and conventions 86
Music in moving-image media 90

7 ELEMENTS AND PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN 94

Elements and principles of design 94

8 MEDIA INSTITUTIONS 105

About media institutions 105
Global media organisations 108
Australian media organisations 112
Regulation of the media 115

9 TECHNOLOGIES OF THE MOVING-IMAGE MEDIA 124

About technology 124
Evolution of technology and audience engagement 126
Technologies and the medium (+ MAP) 133

UNIT 2: STORIES 145

10 AUDIENCES AND MOVING-IMAGE MEDIA STORIES 146

About audience engagement 146
Audience expectation 150
Audiences and different platforms and contexts of reception 152
Ways audiences 'read' texts 157

11 REPRESENTATIONS IN MOVING-IMAGE MEDIA STORIES 161

About representation 161
Realism and representations 165
Representations of people 169
Representations of gender 170
Representations of cultural and linguistic diversity 176
Representations of First Nations people 182
Representations of neurodiversity and disability 187
Representations of age groups 192
Representations of the family 197
Representations of LGBTQIA+ 198

9780170484176

Representations of places 199
Representations of ideas and events 205
Representations in social media 211
Representations in gaming 216

12 LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS IN MEDIA STORIES 219
About story 219
Cause and effect 221
Three-act structure 223
Point of view in stories 231
Character 233
Setting 239
Multiple story lines 240
Structuring time 242
Digital games and story 245
Digital games and movies 247
Genres and codes and conventions 249

UNIT 2: MAKING AND RESPONDING 253

13 TYPES OF FTVNM AND MAP PRODUCTION TASKS 254
Film trailers 254
Music videos 256
Genre and stories 259
Conventional movie genres 260
Series and episodic storytelling 270
Animation 274
Advertising and persuasive moving-image media 275
Types of production tasks – MAP 278
Digital billboards and displays, installations and corporate displays 283
The logo 284

14 STAGES OF PRODUCTION 287
Stages of media production 287

15 IDEA DEVELOPMENT PLANNING 291
Putting the development stage into action 291

16 PRE-PRODUCTION PLANNING 300
Pre-production formats 300

17 SAFETY AND LEGALITY 314
Safety and risk management 314
Production legality 321

18 ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI), COPYRIGHT AND REFERENCING 329
Artificial intelligence (AI) and media production 329
Copyright and referencing 336

19 PROJECT MANAGEMENT 341
Managing productions 341

20 PRODUCTION 351
Working with the 'talent' 351
Set design, props, costumes and character appearance 354
Shooting productions 358
Shooting dialogue for story-based videos 370

21 POST-PRODUCTION 374
Post-production techniques 374

22 DISTRIBUTION 379
About distribution 379

UNIT 2: WRITING ABOUT MEDIA IN FTVNM AND MAP 383

23 WRITING ABOUT MEDIA 384
Writing about media in FTVNM assessment tasks 384
Writing case studies 387
Writing about media in MAP 394

Glossary 396
Index 410

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Nelson Film, Television & New Media QCE Units 1&2 and Media Arts in Practice Options A–D is a complete Units 1 and 2 course book written specifically for the QCAA Film, Television & New Media syllabus, and a two-year course book for the QCAA Media Arts in Practice syllabus. This authoritative text delivers content knowledge for deep understanding and skill building for students who wish to learn about the key concepts of production and theory.

The highly visual text has a comprehensive yet flexible design, and is suitable for a variety of individual school teaching plans.

Structure

Within the text

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

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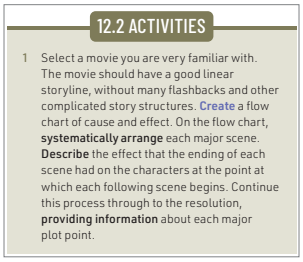
Cal Sport Media/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 18.6 Deepfake media of Taylor Swift emerged on the internet in 2024, spreading disinformation about her support for Donald Trump leading into the US Presidential Election. This drew significant attention from authorities seeking to understand the impact of AI in electoral campaigns.

Images as a learning channel

The text features a range of up-to-date and relevant images, accompanied by an extended caption providing additional information to enhance and deepen their learning experience.

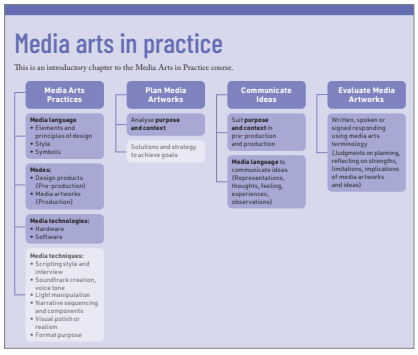
End-of-section activities



12.2 ACTIVITIES

1 Select a movie you are very familiar with. The movie should have a good linear storyline, without many flashbacks and other complicated story structures. **Create** a flow chart of cause and effect. On the flow chart, **systematically arrange** each major scene. **Describe** the effect that the ending of each scene had on the characters at the point at which each following scene begins. Continue this process through to the resolution, **providing information** about each major plot point.

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



Media arts in practice

This is an introductory chapter to the Media Arts in Practice course.

Media Arts Practices

Media language
- Elements and principles of design
- Style
- Symbols

Modes:
- Design products (Pre-production)
- Media artworks (Production)

Media technologies:
- Hardware
- Software

Media techniques:
- Scripting style and interview
- Soundtrack creation, voice tone
- Light manipulation
- Narrative sequencing and components
- Visual polish or realism
- Format purpose

Plan Media Artworks

Analyse purpose and context

Solutions and strategy to achieve goals

Communicate Ideas

Suit purpose and context in pre-production and production

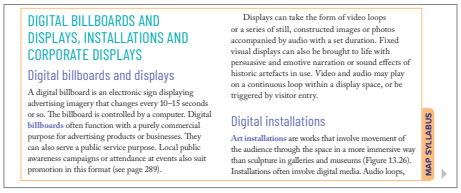
Media language to communicate ideas (Representations, thoughts, feeling, experiences, observations)

Evaluate Media Artworks

Written, spoken or signed responding using media arts terminology

(Judgments on planning, reflecting on strengths, limitations, implications of media artworks and ideas)

For MAP students



DIGITAL BILLBOARDS AND DISPLAYS, INSTALLATIONS AND CORPORATE DISPLAYS

Digital billboards and displays

A digital billboard is an electronic sign displaying advertising imagery that changes every 10–15 seconds or so. The billboard is controlled by a computer. Digital billboards often function with a purely commercial purpose for advertising products or businesses. They can also serve a public service purpose. Local public awareness campaigns or attendance at events also suit promotion in this format (see page 289).

Displays can take the form of video loops or a series of still, constructed images or photos accompanied by audio with a set duration. Fixed visual displays can also be brought to life with persuasive and emotive narration or sound effects of historic artefacts in use. Video and audio may play on a continuous loop within a display space, or be triggered by visitor entry.

Digital installations

Art installations are works that involve movement of the audience through the space in a more immersive way than sculpture in galleries and museums (Figure 13.26). Installations often involve digital media. Audio loops,

MAP SYLLABUS

This tab and the orange outline direct MAP students to material that is relevant to their subject syllabus only. For example, information that is about still-image or text-based productions is clearly identified for MAP students only and therefore not required for FTVNM students.

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- **Navigate** your own path, accessing the content as you need it.

For teachers*:

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- **Help** build your students' exam readiness with Cognero Assess, with six key concept tests.

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

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

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1 Starting to study Film, Television & New Media

WHAT IS MEANT BY 'THE MEDIA'?

According to the strictest meaning of the word, a 'medium' is a channel of communication. 'Media', as the plural of medium, simply refers to more than one channel. 'The media' refers to the institutions in which teams of people work to produce the communications we consume (Figure 1.1). The term is broad enough in its usage to also include the cultural products of the media: texts such as movies and computer games.

- **Moving-image media.** This term refers to the media associated with film, television, video and digital games, which are the media studied in the subject Film, Television & New Media. Text-based media (such as newspapers) and exclusively audio-based media (such as radio) are not included in the study of moving-image media. Still images or photography are also outside of the scope of study.
- **Traditional media developed in the 19th and 20th centuries.** This term refers to the types of media through which a small number of producers communicate with a mass audience. Traditional media are sometimes called 'one-to-many' media.
- **New media developed in the late-20th century and have come of age in the 21st century.** New media are computer-based media with a more complex pattern of interaction between producers and consumers. New media are sometimes called 'many-to-many' media.

Since the turn of the 21st century, the term 'media' has come to include both the traditional media and the emerging new media of computer-based and digital communication.



Don Arnold/WireImage/Getty Images

Figure 1.1 The media scrum. Behind each camera and microphone can be millions of viewers.

Purposes of the media

According to communications professor Denis McQuail (1935–2017), the new and traditional media fulfil the following roles in society:

- **Political role.** The media perform an essential political role in all societies, whether democratic or non-democratic.
  - They provide debate and supply information.
  - They make politicians widely known in the general community.
  - They allow governments to exercise power because politicians have easy access to the media.
  - They promote new ideas, social change and global understanding.
- **Cultural role.** The media are now among the most important communicators about culture.
  - They are agents of socialisation. Like schools, the media educate the young about the meanings of our culture.
  - They provide an experience that we can share. Media programs and images allow

Weblink
The Theorist of Mass Communication

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many people to have a shared sense of belonging. This is why, for instance, many comedians make jokes about politicians or television shows – because we've all seen them.
  - They provide important pastimes and leisure activities for many people.
- **Economic role.** The traditional media are large industries. The developments in new media have increased the importance of the media to the overall economy.

Traditional media – definition

The traditional media, the so-called 'mass media', includes television and movies. Because their production is so expensive, it is very centralised. As a result, the communication tends to be from a privileged few to many.

The traditional media have all or some of the following features:

- **Large numbers of people are reached.** The audience may truly be a mass **broadcast** audience, or it may be a much smaller **narrowcast** audience. With the exception of movies in cinemas, traditional media products are usually produced centrally but consumed privately.
- **Media products are often multimodal.** Language has a variety of modes of delivery. These include speaking, writing, audio, non-verbal and visual modes of communication. Media products commonly combine several modes.
- **Some form of technology is employed.** Although the technology used may be simple, most traditional media use advanced technological processes.
- **Industrial corporations are involved in production.** With the traditional one-to-many media, large-scale government or commercial organisations control the production processes.
- **There is often multiple authorship.** Since media production is an industrial process, workers often have specialised roles, as on an assembly line.
- **Government regulation often applies.** The media industry is usually regarded as a 'special case' and is subject to some degree of government regulation.



KarenHBlack/Shutterstock.com

Figure 1.2 Television transmission towers (one for each channel). Traditional media are broadcast media following a one-to-many model: one broadcaster and an audience of many hundreds of thousands.

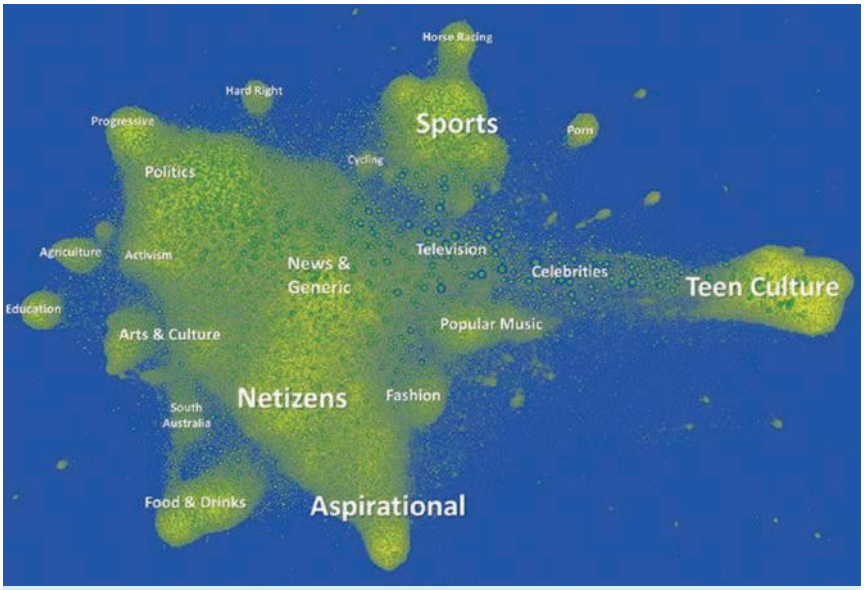
New media – definition

The new media are loosely defined and in a process of constant change. Large numbers of people are involved in the production and the consumption of new media. Anyone with a computer and a multimedia program can be a producer. Rapid changes in technology have affected media production and consumption more than most other areas of society.

Technological change is 'ecological', says American cultural critic Neil Postman. He uses the term in the same way as environmental scientists. 'If you add caterpillars to a given habitat, you do not have the same environment plus caterpillars. You have a whole new environment.' According to Postman, a new technology does not add or subtract something; it changes everything!

New media have all or some of the following characteristics:

- **Digitality.** New media convert information from real-world lived experiences into numbers stored on a computer hard drive.
- **Interactivity.** New media allow the consumer to interact with the product to make certain choices.
- **Hypertext.** Hypertext in new media differs from the linear style of storytelling by allowing people to jump around from text to text and within a text.



Axel Bruns, Brenda Moon, Felix Munch, Troy Sadkowsky, Queensland University of Technology, Australia. The Australian Twittersphere in 2016: Mapping the Follower/Followee Network. Social Media and Society, Volume 3, Issue 4, Figure 3. © 2017 Reprinted by Permission of SAGE Publications, Ltd.

Figure 1.3 A map of social media communications grouped according to the themes of the discussions. The map was produced by Queensland University of Technology's 'Mapping Online Publics' project led by Dr Axel Bruns.

- **Dispersal.** New media allow widely dispersed many-to-many communication.
- **Shared.** New media involve user participation and encourage user-generated content.
- **Social.** New media allow groups of people with shared interests to collaborate (Figure 1.3).
- **Virtuality.** New media have created electronic 'places' and 'spaces'.
- **Global and local.** New media provide instant communication across vast distances, but also make it easier to socialise and communicate with friends locally.
- **Everywhere at once.** New media are embedded in everyday objects and in our daily lives.

FILM, TELEVISION & NEW MEDIA – THE SUBJECT

Film, Television & New Media (FTVNM) is a Queensland Certificate of Education subject that recognises the importance of the media as our primary sources of both information and entertainment. This means that the media are giving us many of our ideas and shaping the way we think. The subject has a long history that spans the movement from traditional linear media to digital new media.

The subject in the 20th century

The study of television, film and moving-image media has a long history in Queensland. Thousands of students have graduated from the subject over more than 40 years. Many of them are now 'movers and shakers' in the media industries in Queensland, nationally and internationally. Included are Hollywood actors, heads of internationally known production companies, and well-known journalists and news readers. A host of production people, such as editors, post-production staff, camera operators and sound-recordists, have also graduated from Queensland schools having studied the subject in Years 11 and 12. More than that, the subject has created a generation of people who are highly media literate.

The development of the subject can be broken down into several stages.

Early beginnings

The course has its origins in short film courses taught as part of English in some independent and state schools. For example, Anglican Church Grammar School (Churchie) established a film course and its own production studios in 1970. Beaudesert State High School set up its own production courses and an annual film festival in 1977.

At this time, many schools used the junior school English textbook *Mastering the Media* by Barry Dwyer et al., first published in 1971. However, there were no dedicated senior school textbooks for the subject.

The first Film and Television syllabuses

Writing began on the first Film and Television syllabus in 1975, and it was trialled in eight Queensland schools between 1979 and 1980. The schools were: Beaudesert SHS, Indooroopilly SHS, Noosa District SHS, Gordonvale SHS, Miami SHS, Anglican Church Grammar School, Villanova College and Corpus Christi College (now Mary MacKillop College). The syllabus was approved as a success and implemented state-wide in 1981.

Queensland was the first state in Australia to offer such a course for university entrance. Students in these early syllabuses studied the following key topics:

- visual narrative
- the soundtrack
- news and documentary
- advertising
- **genre** and convention
- propaganda and ideology
- censorship and freedom of expression.

Period of rapid growth

Film and Television quickly became one of the most popular subjects in the 1980s and 1990s with more and more schools offering the subject. However, it remained a specialty course, and only about 25 per cent of schools taught the subject. In this period, the subject developed its own understanding of itself as a discipline. It also developed its own way of structuring curriculum content.

Several new textbooks made an important contribution in this period. Western Australian teachers Barrie McMahon and Robyn Quin's *Real Images: Film and Television* (1986) brought the study of media codes and conventions to the subject. Queensland teacher Colin Stewart (co-author of this book) published *Media Ways and Meanings* in 1990, which helped clarify the study of genres in Film and Television.

In 1996, a new syllabus for Film and Television brought about a major shift in the teaching of the subject. This syllabus introduced the study of the key concepts: Technologies, Representations, Audiences, Institutions and Languages. These concepts were introduced from UK curriculums, and they are now the basis of the subject discipline around the world.

The subject in the 21st century

In 2005, the name of the subject was changed to Film, Television & New Media. This was to account for the huge growth in digital media from the early 2000s onwards. Including new media in the name of the subject allowed for the study of video across a whole range of new platforms that hadn't existed when the subject was first established. These include digital games, internet subscription services and mobile phone platforms.

FTVNM in the ATAR system

Queensland abandoned the system of continuous school-based assessment in 2019, after 46 years. The state moved to the system used in all other Australian states, based on some school-based assessment and an external exam. For the school-based assessment, the Film, Television & New Media syllabus of 2019 had one case study, one production with a multiplatform focus and one stylistic production. For the external exam, the students wrote a written response to an unseen electronic stimulus.

The 2025 syllabus continued with a similar approach, but with slightly changed objectives and a little more flexibility in the preproduction choices that students could make.

Moving-image media is the media type studied in the subject. This is in keeping with the tradition of the original subject, and its concern with television and film. In many ways, the moving-image media are the most attractive for most people; they are also the ones that most resemble the appearance of the actual world. This makes moving-image media the most influential and significant of all media.

Key concepts in FTVNM

To come to an understanding of the moving-image media, whether traditional or new, more than just the media product needs to be considered. The media embody social customs and relationships, as well as buildings and hardware such as fibre-optic cable, steel transmission towers and printing presses.

The subject Film, Television & New Media develops understandings about the media around the

Fig 2 Key Concepts Film, Television & New Media 2025 v1.0 General Senior Syllabus © Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority p9

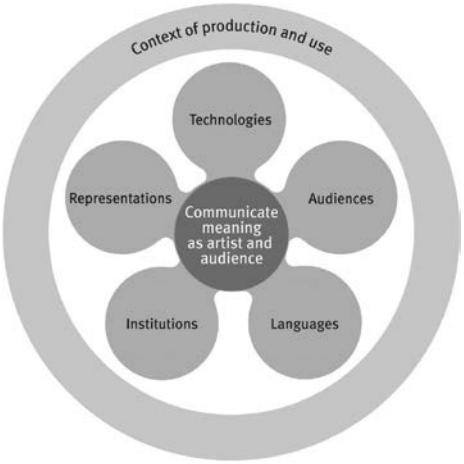


Figure 1.4 A graphic from the QCAA Film, Television and New Media General Senior Syllabus 2025 showing the interrelationship between each of the key concepts in the subject Film, Television & New Media. Moving-image media can be investigated from the perspective of each of the key concepts. The key concept acts as a lens to look through. The whole system should be considered in the light of the contexts of production and use.

key concepts. These were originally developed by the British Film Institute. The key concepts allow the study of the media in broad areas of investigation (Figure 1.4). They are as follows.

- **Technologies.** The technologies of production, distribution and reception are integral parts of the media themselves. They are the tools and the processes used to create media products. How we receive a communication determines how we use it and has an impact on what it means.
- **Representations.** What we see through the media is not reality, but a 're-presentation' of reality. It is constructed from various selection decisions made by the producers. The way the media construct a view of the world provides an insight into their relationship with society.
- **Audiences.** While members of the audience may not immediately think of themselves as part of the equation, without them the media would have no meaning. Audiences consist of individuals and groups. The media products are made for them, and audiences make meaning of them.
- **Institutions (industries and organisations).** Media products are influenced by the organisations that produce them. Roles involved in assembling the products have an impact on the style of the product. Patterns of ownership and government regulation also have a significant effect. Institutions make it possible to have media products. Institutions also limit what is produced – whether by cost limitations, regulations or just inability to 'think outside of the square'. Institutions both enable and constrain production and use.
- **Languages.** The media have their own way of looking at the world. Each uses a specialised language, whether visual or written. Media products have distinctive ways of telling stories; they have particular narratives and recognisable genres. Moving-image media languages are the systems of signs, codes and conventions that help to create the meanings we get from media products.

Key terms in FTVNM

There are some specialised terms used in the Film, Television & New Media course that may be new to you. In some cases, you will be used to hearing another term in its place. It is the idea that is important, and more familiar terms can be used interchangeably until you become accustomed to the specialised language used to study the media.

Moving-image media texts or products

The products of the media are often referred to as **media texts**. Media texts or products are the programs, videos, films and digital games you are familiar with. The term can loosely include any sequence of communication, such as a music video, radio broadcast or mobile phone game. Texts have the following features:

- **A text is a unit of meaning that is complete in some way.** A sequence of meaning, or story, is the most common media text. News stories, television soap operas and movies are sequenced narratives in which the meanings systematically relate to one another: there is a start, a middle and an end. However, a single image such as a movie poster could also be a text, since it is complete in itself.
- **Media texts are created through a process of selection.** For example, what is finally shown on a television program is the end result of selection decisions made by the scriptwriter, producer, director, camera operator, editor and even the actors.

- **Media texts are said to be 'constructed' rather than natural.** Media texts come with certain perspectives that have attitudes, interpretations and conclusions already built in. This is inevitable because they come from particular contexts. Institutions such as commercial television stations may have constructed the text, and the text may have been aimed at a certain audience, such as 18- to 39-year-olds. The combination of these factors means that a point of view is always present, even in seemingly neutral texts such as news stories.

Moving-image media processes

Media processes are the stages of production that media texts go through, from the initial idea to the final distribution to an audience. To make a film, for example, teams of people are involved in the media processes that take the idea and produce a finished feature film for release in cinemas, on DVD and via online platforms.

The staged processes of media production are called pre-production, production and post-production (see page 302).

Mediums

Mediums include the traditional media of television, movies, radio, newspapers and magazines. Media forms also include the new media of the internet and video games. However, modern media cannot be so easily divided. The boundaries between mediums are blurring, and many traditional media are moving into new-media forms of delivery. Television is an example of this, as many well-known television programs have both traditional and online delivery.

Platforms

A media platform is a means of delivering media content to audiences. It is a means of allowing audiences to engage with media categories such as film, games or social media. A platform can be regarded as an information or content space.

Platforms can be mediums, sites or services. The term 'platform' can be used interchangeably with 'medium', as in television as a platform. It can also refer to internet sites. YouTube is referred to as a platform. Facebook is a platform. Subscription services delivered over the internet can also be referred to as platforms. Netflix and Stan are platforms.

Context

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

1 **Production context.** When language, the time of production, nationality, organisation, government regulations and all other factors of a production environment are combined, they create what is called the context. Context refers to all the natural, cultural and social aspects of an environment that help shape the final meaning of a text.
2 **Use context.** The contexts of reception and consumption are the surrounding circumstances in which a media text is consumed or used. The reception context includes the:
   - surrounding environment of the audience
   - technology used to consume the media product
   - time of day
   - individual personality and life history of the audience member
   - background knowledge or cultural knowledge of the individual.

Genres

Genres (from a French word meaning 'type, classification or category') are used to put media texts into categories according to the characteristics they share. For example, similar plot lines, characters or settings in different films suggest they belong to the same genre. The habitual use of genre conventions tends to mean their structure stays the same – at least for as long as they are a useful way of doing things. Consequently, genres have predictable patterns.

FTVNM units in Book One

The subject Film, Television & New Media is a two-year course that has four units of study. The Nelson Film, Television and New Media 1e series comprises two books: Book One for Year 11 and Book Two for Year 12. Each book is arranged to follow the units of work required for each year level, and to focus on the key concepts of Technologies, Representations, Audiences, Institutions and Languages.

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Book One – Year 11

Unit 1: Foundation. Unit 1 is an introduction to the ways in which the visual languages are used to communicate meaning. You will learn about media technologies, media institutions and media languages.

Unit 2: Stories. Unit 2 investigates how stories are told in moving-image media, and how the form a story takes changes depending on its platform and contexts of production and use. You will learn some of the formats and techniques involved in creating moving-image media stories. The key concepts to be focused on are media representations, media audiences and media languages.

Book Two – Year 12

Unit 3: Participation. Unit 3 explores the potential for media users to participate in the moving-image media experience. Audiences can participate as users across multiple platforms using the internet and smartphones. They can also participate as producers using modern consumer production technology such as DSLR movie cameras. At an advanced level, you will investigate the key concepts of media technologies, media audiences and media institutions.

Unit 4: Artistry. Unit 4 is the final unit and encourages experimentation with moving-image media production to explore and question individual artistic identity. Identity expressed through media production can be explored in various aesthetic, historical and cultural traditions and contexts. In doing so, an individual style can be developed. At a more advanced level, you will develop understandings in the key concepts of media technologies, media representations and media languages.

What you will find in Book One

Learnings in Unit 1

In Unit 1, you will learn all the foundational understandings you need for the Film, Television & New Media course. What you learn in Unit 1 will be useful for your own productions, and also for the critical responses you make to television, film and new media products.

The building blocks for your productions, and of all media products, are the signs, codes and conventions of media language. Once you have mastered these, you can make your audience laugh or cry, and keep them on the edge of their seats. The best way to learn this is to watch what others have done and make a detailed study.

You also need to know that all media, including your own, come about through institutional practices. Whether it is your own little production company of one, a small group or a large multinational media corporation, there are certain routine practices undertaken. There are also particular regulations and safety procedures that must be complied with.

Using technology to communicate is what defines the media. You will learn how technology has evolved, making media more and more central to the experience of our lives. At the same time, technology gives us new ways to interact with the media.

By the end of Unit 1, you will have made your own production project and closely analysed a significant production work by another.

Learnings in Unit 2

Unit 2 is about stories and the varying forms they take across many different platforms. Stories are fundamental to humanity. Some say they are fundamental to human thinking because everything is a story we construct. What you learn about stories in Unit 1 is foundational. It will be important in all the stories you construct or respond to for the rest of your course.

You will learn about the underlying structure of stories and the ways that they communicate meanings using technical and symbolic codes. You will also learn about the genre conventions of stories, and the ways these change according to contexts.

It's audiences that stories are produced for. Audiences play a key role in creating meaning out of stories. By engaging with stories, audiences also gain a range of benefits in their own lives. You will learn some of the techniques of engaging audiences.

Stories are systems of meaning. The ways that meanings are represented in stories can influence the way audiences think about things. You will learn how media representations of people, places, events, ideas and emotions are constructed. Learning how others make representations will allow you to make your own.

By the end of Unit 2, you will have made a production using genre conventions. You will have also carefully analysed and appraised the way others have used representations and story conventions to appeal to audiences.

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Template
Activity 1.1

1.1 ACTIVITIES

1 Make a list of all the media productions you have participated in. The list could range from photography to blogs, videos and so on. **Describe** one of these types of productions in greater detail, giving information about what you did, who you worked with and who made up the audience for the production.

2 Neil Postman says that technological change is 'ecological'. In small groups, brainstorm some recent technological changes in media and apply Postman's theory. **Evaluate** whether it changed the whole environment in some way. As a starting example, **make judgements** about ways in which the increase of downloading has changed the music and broadcasting industries.

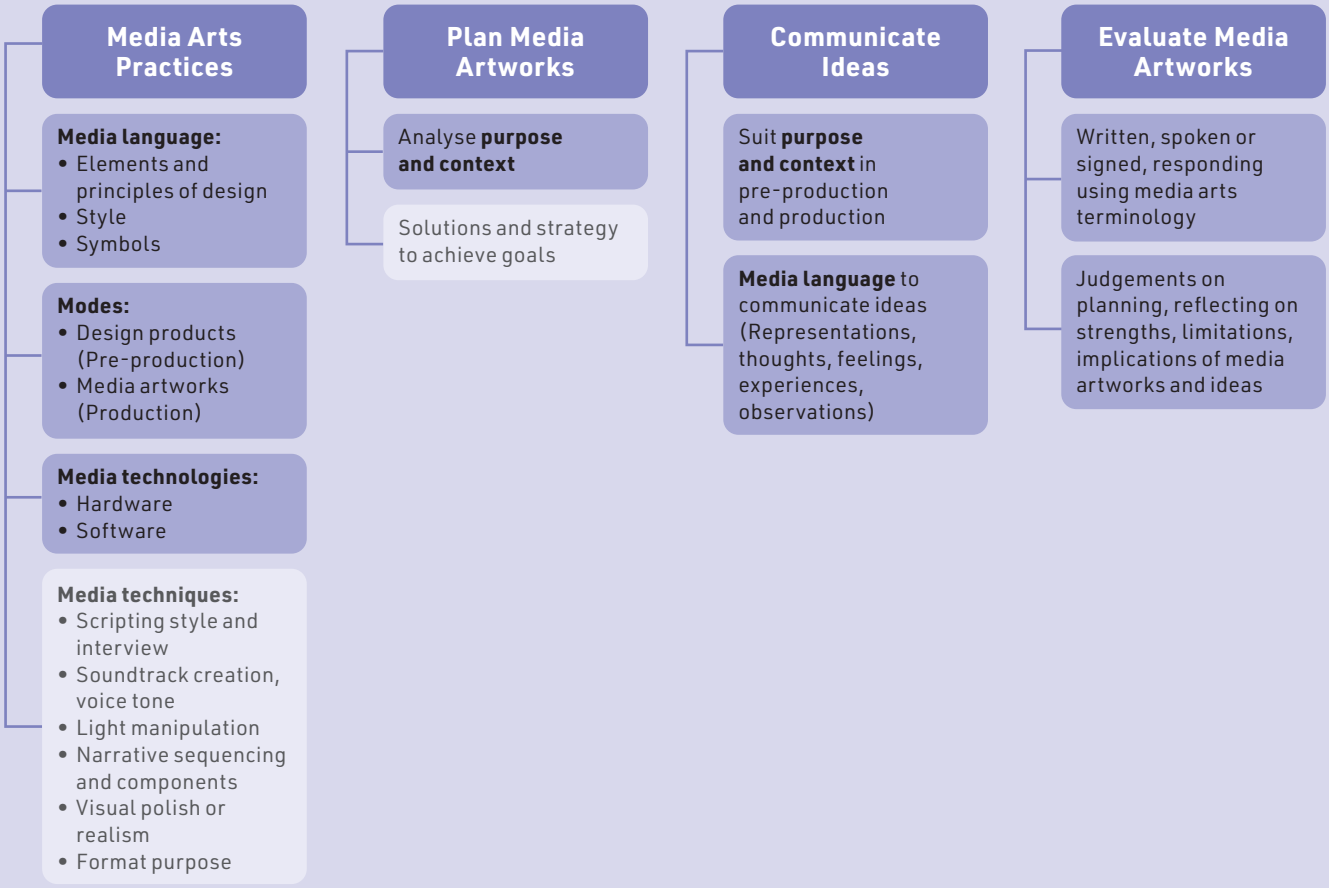
3 Select a media form/medium (e.g. television) and consider the characteristics of the media that apply to that media form. Respond to the areas of investigation in the following table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe how the characteristics of the media generally apply to the medium you have chosen. Give information about the way your chosen medium matches the characteristics.	**Analyse** component features of your chosen medium by **examining** each and **consider** the **strengths and limitations** of the medium.	**Evaluate** the **significance** and **status** of the medium, **drawing conclusions** about its overall **worth** for audiences.

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Media Arts in Practice

This is an introductory chapter to the Media Arts in Practice course.



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2 Starting to study Media Arts in Practice

This chapter is applicable only to Media Arts in Practice students. Film, Television & New Media students progress to the next chapters.

MEDIA ARTS IN PRACTICE (MAP) – THE SUBJECT

Media Arts in Practice is a Queensland Certificate of Education subject. This subject explores how media art-marking and artworks have a larger role in shaping and informing the values, attitudes and beliefs of society. Examples of media artworks include film, television, radio, print, gaming and web-based media.

The study of Media Arts in Practice allows students on a vocational pathway to gain an appreciation and understanding of how media artworks connect ideas and purposes to audiences and prepares them for the practical and hands-on nature of the industry. The course provides the opportunity to learn how to:

- **Use** media arts practices – when making a media artwork, the creator uses media language, modes, technologies and techniques.
- **Plan** media artworks – when responding to media artworks, the creator analyses the key features of purpose and context to plan and inform their own artwork.
- **Communicate** ideas – when making a media artwork, the media artist creates both pre-production and production formats that suit the purpose and context.
- **Evaluate** media artworks – when responding to media artworks, the creator examines these in relation to strengths, implications and limitations.



Dmitriy Shironosov/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.1 Two media artists using a storyboard during the production phase. A storyboard is a key pre-production format that media artists use to inform their production practices. Storyboards allow the media artist to visualise the sequence before filming begins.

MAP relationship to vocations and industry

Media Arts in Practice, as an applied pathway, allows students to develop the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills required for a career pathway in a creative field that is constantly adapting to new media technologies. Media Arts in Practice content is closely linked to industry practice and opportunities, urging students to embrace their future employment and preparing students as responsive, skilled and safe media arts employees, who can work effectively in a team to solve problems and create project-based media artworks.

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The content creation industry

The types of industries best suited to a Media Arts in Practice (MAP) pathway involve content creation. The content creation industry refers to the various individuals and small businesses involved in creating and distributing different forms of content. This could be for consumption by audiences across online platforms and mediums. The content creation industry caters for a wide range of content types, including written, visual, audio and interactive media.

Defining media texts in MAP

What is the difference between media content, artworks and products? These three terms describe the media texts made by media artists. The ways in which they might differ are influenced mainly by the institutional context in which they occur. For example, projects made for the creative industries, such as museums and public conventions, might utilise the term 'artworks' when labelling project work. The term 'content' is often used when referring to online work for platforms, 'artwork' is used when referring to creative projects and 'product' is used when the project is predominantly advertising. When creating with no context in mind, the term 'media text' or 'project work' is generally acceptable.

Key practices in MAP

Communication is important when making media artworks. All great works of media should be trying to communicate something to their audience.

Media languages

Media languages are the language and vocabulary used in media art-making to demonstrate the understanding and interpreting of relationships between the elements and principles of design, style and symbols. The most common subjects communicated to audiences in content creation are drawn from everyday life. Most of the time, this appears as a representation of social and community values, such as environmental activism, education and personal growth, community spirit and more.

Elements and principles of design

When creating media artworks, the media artist doesn't start from scratch but rather utilises and manipulates elements and principles of design to effectively communicate visually. The elements of design include the use and manipulation of:

- **line** – the use of lines and symmetry within the frame that draws the attention or focus of the audience
- **shape** – the use of shapes for an intended purpose or meaning
- **form** – the overall shape or configuration of the media artwork
- **space** – how the objects/subjects are positioned within the frame
- **tone** – the overall feeling or mood of the media artwork
- **texture** – how the visual elements might feel and the effect this has on the audience
- **colour** – the use of colour within the frame for an intended or desired effect.

Similarly, the principles of design focus on how these elements are used in a media artwork and include:

- **harmony/unity** – the sense of consistency or similarities in the media artwork
- **proximity** – the position of media elements from one another
- **balance** – the distribution of the various elements of design
- **repetition/consistency** – similar elements repeated in the frame
- **alignments** – the placement of elements in an arrangement within the frame that looks organised and unified
- **hierarchy/proportion/scale** – the size choice of elements within the frame
- **contrast** – the juxtaposition or striking differences in the media artwork.

By understanding the elements and principles of design and how they are applied through various principles, the media artist effectively creates and evaluates media artworks (Figure 2.2).

Style

Products created by media artists should not all look and feel the same. It is important to develop an original style or visual expression that makes that



Mei Zendra/Shutterstock.com

Figure 2.2 A marketing poster for musician Taylor Swift. The use of colour and shape is used to create a sense of harmony and balance in the poster. Swift is directly in the centre of the frame. The poster uses space to draw the eyeline of the audience to her face. This illustrates a sense of identity and mystery as she looks away from the audience's gaze.

artist recognisable and unique. This could be based on the inspiration of other artists with a similar style or developed through various other inspiration in life. For example, Wes Anderson's directorial style (Figure 2.3) can be used to inspire design in a project at the pre-production stage. Using ideation tools and techniques, such as mood boards, will provide opportunities for the media artist to explore this level of identity.



BFA/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.3 Motel manager (Steve Carell), Clifford (Aristou Meehan) and J. J. Kellogg (Liev Schreiber) in Wes Anderson's *Asteroid City* (2023). Wes Anderson is well known as a director with a distinctive style in all of his films. Viewers can often recognise his work from a single still image. Wes Anderson's style has been inspired by other directors such as Yasujirō Ozu and Satyajit Ray.

Symbols

All media artworks contain non-verbal symbols that communicate ideas to the audience. Symbols are part of a personal, cultural or global language and are represented in the form of:

- **visual forms** – the composition or placement of an object or subject
- **gestures** – communication through hand signals
- **words** – written communication
- **sounds** – the use of sound effects or Foley sound for an intended effect.

Within the broader landscape of media arts, symbols are elements that the audience sees and/or hears in context. This is observable in various modes such as film, podcasts, graphic art and photography. Symbols refer to objects, characters, figures or colours used to represent abstract ideas or concepts that allow the audience to make interpretations about the text. Symbols in media can be universally recognised or specific to a particular culture or context. They are often used to evoke emotions, suggest deeper meanings or reinforce themes and messages in a subtle way (Figure 2.4). Symbols in media arts include:

- **body language** – the posture and position of the subject's body; for example, crossed arms can signify a disagreement
- **camera angles** – the angle of the camera relative to the subject (see page 53)
- **camera shots** – how close or far the camera is to or away from the subject/object (see page 48)
- **character position in frame** – the location of the subject within the frame
- **colours** – see page 69
- **clothing** – choice of costuming (see page 68)



Atlaspix/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.4 Dominic Toretto (Vin Diesel) and Mr Nobody (Kurt Russell) in *Furious 7* (2015). Toretto's facial expression and body language communicate to the audience how he might be feeling in this moment as he is ordered by Mr Nobody to follow his directives. Through his closed-off body language and contrasting costuming, it shows the conflict and expectations placed on the character. The position of the character within the frame and the choice of a two-shot with both characters contrasts their roles within the team.

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- **facial expressions** – the actor's facial response
- **icons or motifs** – the objects within the space that hold a particular importance or resonance
- **props** – see page 68
- **signs** – both visual and aural signals of symbolic importance
- **sound effects** – see page 86
- **volume or tone of voice** – the actor's performance through their vocal delivery of lines.

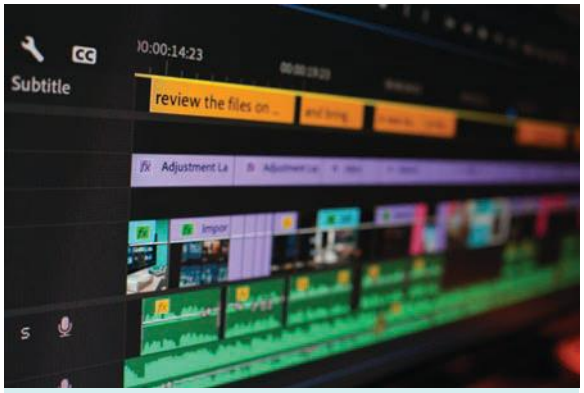
Modes

Media Arts in Practice requires various skills to produce media texts such as storyboarding, writing treatments and recording audio or videos. To make it easier, MAP splits these different skills into two assessable tasks that may be completed separately or together. These tasks are split into two key categories to imitate the media industry process: pre-production and production (Table 2.1).

Media technologies

Media artists require access to appropriate technology to create their work. Technologies include the hardware and software artists use suited to the appropriate mode of work. Emerging technologies are part of this context. Whenever technologies emerge, they are initially expensive and require specially trained skills to use them. However, over time these technologies become affordable and eventually merge with everyday contexts as they evolve into more user-friendly versions.

1. Hardware are the tools used – camera, microphone, computers, etc.
2. Software is the programming behind user interfaces (UIs) – display graphics, editing software (Figure 2.5), etc.



Gergedan/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.5 Adobe Premiere Pro editing timeline. Premiere Pro is an example of editing software used to create video content. Other examples of editing software include Final Cut, Premiere Rush, Adobe Express and DaVinci Resolve.

Media techniques

Media artists must select the appropriate techniques for the project's chosen mode. They must also consider how these media elements come together to successfully meet the client's expectations. For example, when filming (technology) a documentary (mode), it is important to ask open-ended questions during an interview (technique) to obtain the best response. Similarly, when recording (technology) a podcast (mode), it is essential to ensure the sound/music matches the tone (technique).

Purpose and context in MAP – artistic intention

The role of a media artwork is to communicate meaning and to reflect the context in which it has been made. To effectively create multiple layers of meaning for the audience, it is essential to consider how the context supports or shapes the final outcome.

Table 2.1 Pre-production and production media arts works that are commonly used in MAP. The two categories are the divisions typically used in the industry. Media artists create pre-production documents during the design phase and production documents during the making phase.

PRE-PRODUCTION – DESIGN PRODUCTS FOR AUDIO, MOVING IMAGE OR STILL IMAGE		PRODUCTION – PRODUCED OR CREATED MEDIA ARTWORKS FOR AUDIO, MOVING IMAGE OR STILL IMAGE	
• script	• treatment	• Foley and other sound effects	• video log
• timeline	• sketch	• podcast	• virtual tour
• pitch	• television bible	• soundscape	• digital illustration
• storyboard	• portfolio	• animated film	• graphic art
		• interactive technologies	• photography
		• live-action film	• print media
		• short-form video	• web-based media

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Context

By understanding and considering the various contexts surrounding media production, such as content creation, media artists can develop more meaningful, impactful and engaging work. Ignoring the context can lead to misinterpretations, lack of relevance and failure to connect with the intended audience.

Defining media contexts in MAP

Context refers to the circumstances, conditions or settings in which a project exists. It provides meaning, relevance and understanding to a particular situation, event or piece of information. The context helps us comprehend the significance, implications and underlying factors surrounding a subject or topic.

Depending on the shape of the media project, contexts may draw from local (surrounding the school area), national (wider Australia) or global places, spaces and time periods. They can be real-time physical spaces or spaces that operate in virtual and online platforms.

Audiences/Users

Media texts are created to be consumed by audiences. When making and responding to media projects, media artists must consider the audience, the reason for creation and how it will be distributed.

What is the audience?

The audience refers to the collective of individuals who engage with a particular media form or text. This group can gather in both public venues and private settings. Public audiences commonly gather at dedicated spaces such as movie theatres or concert halls. In contrast, private audiences often consume media individually or in smaller groups through personal devices such as smartphones and computers. Every media text is made with a particular audience in mind (including the client). In a MAP context, audiences usually operate within the private spaces of their mobile, connected devices. Media artists create media texts that engage the chosen audience while also considering their reactions to the product.

What is the target demographic?

The target demographic refers to the group of people who are most likely to engage, enjoy and recommend a media text. This assessment is based on a set of qualities used to categorise them.



FlixPix/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.6 The main characters of *Stranger Things* (2016–current). *Stranger Things* focuses on a group of young teenagers as they fight evil in their local town. As the show focuses on young teenage characters, the target demographic is naturally teenagers. The show is made accessible for them through the exploration of feelings about finding yourself, friendships and relationships. These are social issues that teenagers typically care about.

Using target demographics to design a media text involves breaking down the target audience into a set of categories. Target demographics are broken down into:

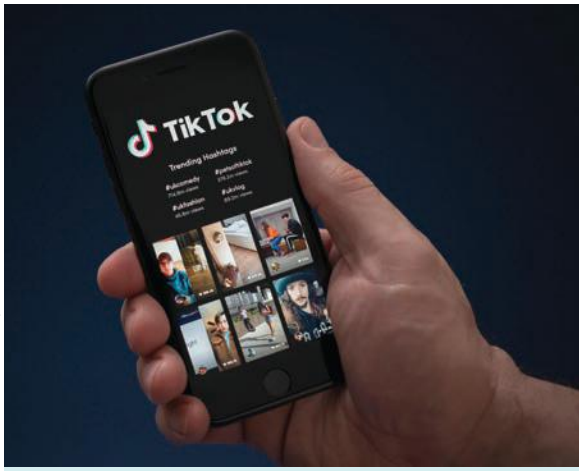
- age (Figure 2.6)
- gender
- ethnicity
- religion
- region
- sexuality
- socio-economic status.

How audiences access media texts

Understanding the distribution process allows media artists to reflect on how their target audience will access their media texts during the distribution stages.

There are many methods of distribution, such as:

- **streaming** – content can be uploaded and accessed on online platforms that allow content to be viewed whenever the audience desires. This is called 'on-demand viewing' (Figure 2.7)
- **free-to-air broadcast television** – scheduled programming with particular time slots based on ratings and popularity
- **radio** – accessed primarily while the audience is driving, this is a free audio outlet with scheduled programming
- **cinema release** – session time slots with a cost involved for purchasing tickets.



M4OS Photos/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.7 A screenshot of a TikTok channel with videos uploaded to the account. As a method of communication, TikTok allows users to distribute content across platforms, with Hank Green using his to spread awareness of his various projects. This also allows the audience to have a greater relationship with the content creator.

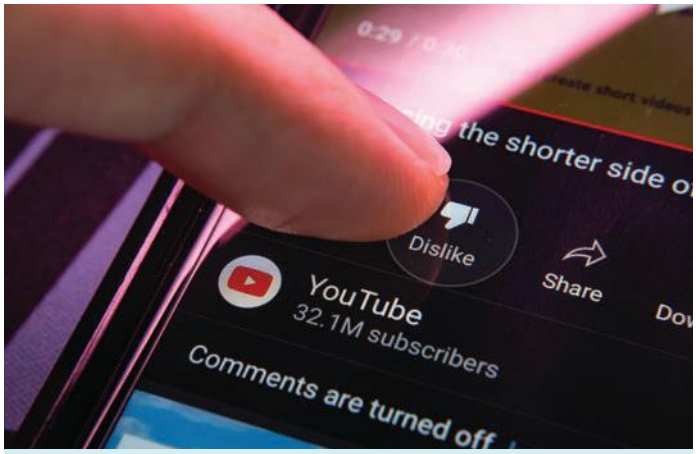
How do media artists communicate with audiences?

Every media artwork is a form of communication between the media artist and the audience. However, with the developments in social media, there are also many ways in which audiences and media artists can now communicate directly with each other. The nature of this online environment has altered how audiences are perceived. Audiences are no longer seen as passive viewers, but as active participants taking the initiative to open communication with media artists:

- **Forums** are community groups focused on a designated topic, where users can ask questions, start conversation topics and respond to comments.
- **Social media platforms** allow audiences to react to content but also post and curate their own content.
- **Blogs** are webpages that promote conversation on a specific topic that is updated regularly, and allow participants to comment and ask questions.
- **The YouTube comments feature** is situated below the posted video content, where audiences can like, dislike, share and respond to the content.

How do media texts meet with expectations?

Media texts are rarely created in isolation or without feedback from an active and interested client.



Wachiwit/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.8 The 'dislike' button on the YouTube UI was one of the first examples of audience interactivity. Audiences can provide instant feedback to content creators to communicate their thoughts and feelings. This requires the content creator to consider the immediacy of the distribution method and how best to communicate with the audience.

Therefore, media artists need to consider the needs of their clients to meet the project's expectations based on:

- **cost** – the financial opportunities or constraints of the project
- **context** – the client's background or the product's intended release market
- **purpose** – the reason why the product is being created.

What is an 'end user'?

In the media and content creation industries, an 'end user' refers to the consumer or audience member who engages with or consumes the media product or service at the end of project development. They are the individuals or groups targeted by media companies, advertisers and content creators. The term 'end user' is intentionally used to differentiate between users, consumers and audiences. It includes those who consume media content but also those who engage with media features, such as interfaces, platforms or systems. There is an important agency involved in how end users participate that differs from how consumers and audiences are defined. For example, a social media platform's end users include those who consume content as well as create and share content. This means that using the term 'consumer' is inaccurate in this instance.

The context of design thinking

Design thinking is a creative process that fosters innovation in product development through a client-centred approach. It is widely used across various industries, including media and content creation, to effectively develop solutions that meet user needs. The design thinking process is generally divided into five stages (Figure 2.9).

The empathise stage

In this stage, the media artist seeks to understand the target audience's needs, motivations and behaviours using question–answer processes. Gaining insights into the audience's experiences with and emotions about the product can be done by estimating responses or directly interacting with the target audience's representatives. For example, an empathy map provides a concise procedure for creating more engaging and relevant products in the content creation industry.

What is an empathy map?

An empathy map (Figure 2.10) is a collaborative tool used in design thinking to gain deeper insights into a user's experience. It is typically divided into several quadrants, each representing different aspects of user experience. Empathy maps refine the project using 'How might we' questions. For example, 'How might we describe the product?' or 'How might we use the product?' are appropriately shaped design questions.

The define stage

In this stage, the media artist collates the information gathered during the empathise stage into a clear statement about any problems noted. This helps identify the core issues that the project needs to address. For example, defining user needs and challenges in UI development is crucial for creating interactions that offer real value for end users. Integrating design thinking into development methods provides an efficient way to improve the outcome.

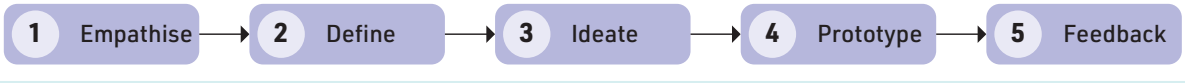
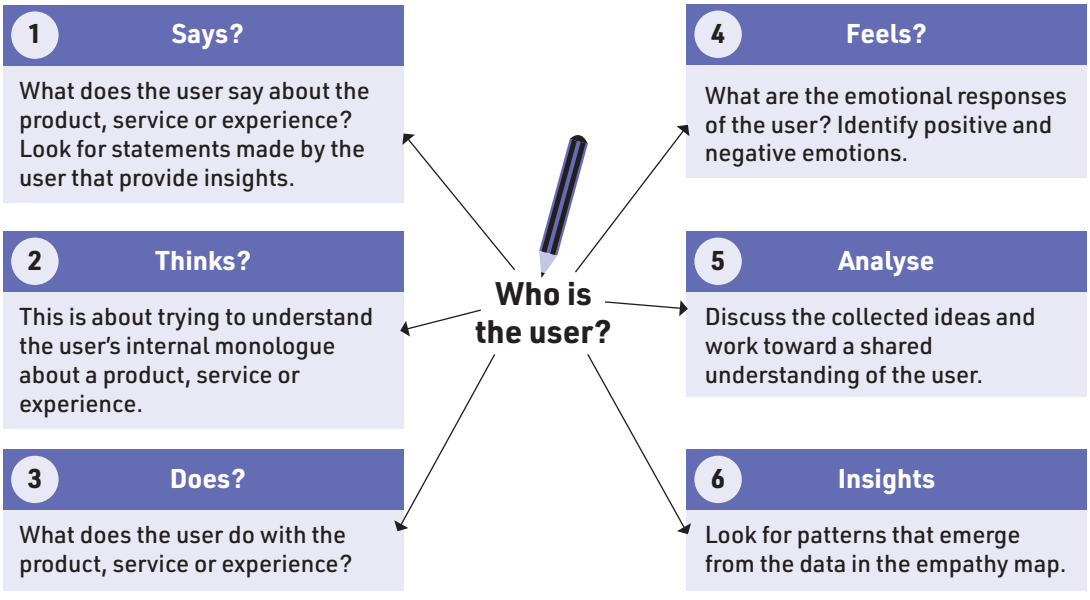


Figure 2.9 The design thinking process



Matthew Beattie (in Canva)

Figure 2.10 This type of empathy map is the standard approach to developing a project during the empathise stage. This involves several steps that are followed in order.

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The ideate stage

In this stage, the media artist generates various ideas and solutions to address the problems discovered during the empathise and define stages. Ideation encourages creativity and out-of-the-box thinking to shore up project development. For example, brainstorming techniques in design thinking promotes collaboration, creativity, problem-understanding, diverse ideas, and time and resource savings.

The prototype stage

In this stage, the media artist develops scaled-down versions of the product or its features to investigate the solutions generated in the ideation stage. Prototyping is similar to a drafting stage and allows for a tangible exploration of ideas for testing. For example, content creation strategies benefit from design thinking by employing user journey mapping and storyboarding, thus optimising content for user goals and business objectives.

The feedback stage

In this stage, the media artist tests prototypes with users to gather feedback, learn more about the user and refine the prototype or approach. For example, design thinking projects in content creation contexts provide opportunities for validation, improvement and identification of blind spots, and highlight any potential risks before the project is released to market.

Community engagement

Community engagement refers to the ways in which artworks are developed during each stage of production in consultation with members of the community. Engaging with an authentic community provides real-world opportunities for media artists to target their artwork and realistically follow the media workforce effectively. These communities could include a local business, community group, online or digital community, or educational institution. Engaging with these communities provides a depth of consideration and authenticity to the process, enhancing the validity of the work.

Industry engagement

Industry engagement refers to the ways in which artworks are developed in consultation with another business. This is typically the business that hires the media artist to create content. The media industry is diverse, with so many transferable skills in other vocational areas. When considering work in the media industry, it is important to consider the various career pathways available, such as videographer, blogger and video marketing.

Furthermore, media artists must develop an understanding of how:

- industries and professions recognise media arts
- media artworks can be presented to an employer as a portfolio of skills
- skills become transferable to various other vocational pathways.

The media industry is not comprised of solely independent vocations. The broader industry has various areas and departments, and transferable skills for different workforces. Larger scale projects such as music videos or long-form advertising require broad vocational skills ranging from electrical work to garden maintenance and design, as well as builders, carpenters and cabinet makers. The following transferable skills can be developed through an understanding of the media industry:

- aesthetic understanding and judgement
- communications skills
- creative ideation and design thinking
- critical literacies (visual, aural, oral and digital)
- entrepreneurialism
- project management
- teamwork.

Distribution

Media artworks are designed to be distributed. They are created to be accessed and/or viewed in both public and private spaces across physical (such as a cinema) and virtual (streaming or social media) platforms. The choice of how the media artwork will be distributed impacts the perceived value and social, cultural and artistic intention for the audience. When designing and creating a media project, the media artist must consider how audiences will consume the media text in order to better engage their chosen audience (Figure 2.11).

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Nathaniel Noir/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.11 An outdoor film screening is a unique form of distribution for any media text. There are several considerations for the media artist when designing for this form of distribution, such as sound and visual barriers, weather and seating capacity.

This could include:

- the exhibition or screening of the artwork
- hardware requirements of the audience
- the location of the platform
- the marketing.

For example, in the content creation industry, carefully considering the distribution channels made available via online platforms allows content creators to optimise their products for maximum reach, engagement, monetisation and adherence to relevant regulatory and ethical standards. Without appropriate distribution planning, content creators could fail to engage their target audience by providing a product that suffers because it is ill-suited for its context.

2.1 ACTIVITIES

1 **Analyse** an advertisement created by a local business in your area that is not targeted towards your demographic. The advertisement could be still image, moving image media or audio. **Describe** the symbols manipulated in the advertisement. **Identify** the target demographic. **Evaluate** whether the advertisement effectively persuades the target demographic. **Identify** the platforms used for distribution. **Consider** how the advertisement could reach a greater local audience.

2 **Analyse** an existing concert poster for a famous musical artist or a promotional poster for a film. **Identify** the elements and principles of design used in the image. **Compare** this to posters used by similar artists or a film of the same genre. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of the chosen poster. **Create** two alternative posters for the same music artist or film. **Consider** what image editing software you will use, and how it will help you create effective posters.

3 Take five still images in and around your classroom to use in an advertisement that promotes MAP as a secondary school subject. **Consider** symbols you might manipulate to communicate your message. **Create** two different still image advertisements aimed at two specific demographics: one aimed at students about to enter Year 11, and one aimed at the parents of these students.

4 **Analyse** two TikTok advertisements for the film *Barbie* (2023). **Identify** the target demographic for this film based on the advertisements' use of music and images. **Interpret** the meanings that are created through music and images to engage this target demographic. **Compare** this to the use of music and images in a TikTok advertisement for *Oppenheimer* (2023). **Consider** the difference in target demographics. **Create** your own TikTok for *Barbie* using music and images to construct meanings that would appeal to the target demographic of *Oppenheimer*.

5 Use the empathy map stages to make a social media post for Facebook. **Identify** a target audience for the Facebook post. Consider factors such as age, interests and online behaviour. **Develop** an empathy map for the target audience. Use an existing social media account (such as the school's social media) to obtain data:
   - Says: Record what your audience expresses on social media posts.
   - Thinks: Infer what your audience might be thinking based on posts.
   - Does: Describe how your audience interacts with social media posts.
   - Feels: Interpret the emotions your audience experiences when engaging with social media. Are they positive or negative?
   - **Analyse** the data collected.
   - **Look** for patterns and insights across the data. What is common?

   Generate ideas for a social media post that aligns with students' research data. Include brainstorming some topics and content that will encourage engagement from your target audience. **Create** and **evaluate** a draft of your social media post based on the research students have collated. Write the final social media post for Facebook. Ensure the content is engaging and visually appealing.

MAP UNITS AND OPTIONS IN BOOK ONE

Media Arts in Practice has been designed to be flexible and allow for alternative pathways and foci depending on the school context and teacher skill set, and to meet the creative demands of student interest. Units in MAP have been titled as 'options' to better reflect this and allow students to complete their two assessments in alternate sequence if suitable for the task. While the order of unit completion is flexible, each unit/option has been designed to still cover all necessary content required for a media artist. Media Arts in Practice has been separated into four different options:

Option A: Personal Viewpoints – explores how the personal views, thoughts and opinions of media artists play a large role in the media artwork.

Option B: Representations – explores how certain portrayals of people, events, ideas and emotions can impact the audience.

Option C: Community – explores how communities can communicate in media artworks and how this affects the representations in media.

Option D: Persuasion – explores how media artworks use various persuasive techniques to engage and manipulate the audience.

OPTION A: PERSONAL VIEWPOINTS

What is a personal viewpoint?

Personal viewpoints are the media artist's distinct perspectives of or attitudes towards the world. Media texts provide artists with a platform to express their own social values, attitudes and beliefs. Communicating ideas about a societal issue offers new ways of using media languages, technologies and techniques. For example, the music industry can express a message for their audience through an artist's branding, marketing and music video design (see page 22). Artists who feel strongly about a particular issue can create a branded image that acknowledges (and sometimes challenges) a societal issue while creatively producing an effective and engaging product.

The relationship between viewpoints and perspectives of society has an important ethical dimension that a media artist must be aware of. A media artist is responsible for creating media that aligns itself with the public good. For example, creating racist hate messages in a music video is not in the public's best interests and may draw the attention of a governing body to regulate the content. When developing media texts, the media artist needs to consider the unique context of production based on location, perspective and the client's intentions. This has the potential for the project to be scrapped altogether. For example, when a musician is designing a song and accompanying music video, the design is often embedded in the personal experiences and beliefs of the artist (Figure 2.12).

Personal perspectives can also be observed in non-fiction media. These perspectives typically appear as the values or beliefs of the filmmaker or the subject and often express a way of seeing the world (Figure 2.13).

Social values, attitudes, beliefs and the media

Various media are crucial in informing people about current worldwide events, especially for audiences needing direct knowledge or experience. However, the media can choose how they present particular social issues. This is sometimes referred to as 'agenda setting'. The media has the power to change or directly shape the shared values, attitudes and beliefs of individuals



FiledIMAGE/Shutterstock.com

Figure 2.12 Australian rap artist and producer Kwame at a concert in Melbourne. This artist often explores various themes and references to belonging, nostalgia and the importance of family and where you came from – a clear personal viewpoint of Kwame's experience in Australia.

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Hugh PETERSWALD/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.13 Former AFL player Adam Goodes released a documentary called *The Australian Dream* (2019) (MA15+). This film explored Adam Goodes' experiences on and off the field as he dealt with racism and heckling by fans. The documentary explores identity and belonging in Australian sport from the perspective of an Indigenous Australian.

and society. This power has the potential to lead audiences to either positive or negative viewpoints.

Ethics and bias

The ethical dimensions of personal viewpoints are an important consideration when creating media texts. Content may be curated, require a G-rating for release or contain a comment section for audiences to engage directly with the media artwork. Depending on the choices made by the media artists, the media artwork can be biased. Bias in media refers to unjust favouritism or focus on information or stories that are shaped in particular ways and presented to the audience. The media artist is responsible for taking great care in managing any bias when making media.

The media artist can consider the audience at the forefront of making a project by asking the following:

- What is the impact of what I am making on society?
- Is this appropriate for the context?
- Will this content damage my relationship with a particular society or group?
- Am I prepared to change or modify my content if it doesn't suit the needs and requirements of my context?

Ethical perspectives

By incorporating ethical perspectives into the creative process, media artists can produce work that is not only engaging and entertaining, but also socially responsible, respectful and aligned with ethical principles and values.

There are many different types of ethical perspectives, but two conventional types often inform the production processes of the content creation industry. Ethics can either be descriptive (observing beliefs) or prescriptive (setting guidelines):

1 **Descriptive ethics** examine and describe moral beliefs/practices across cultures and situations. The key question is, 'What do people think is right?' Descriptive ethics could study beliefs; for example, whether some journalists see invading the privacy of celebrities as an acceptable practice.
2 **Prescriptive (or normative) ethics** involve determining what is considered right or moral behaviour. The key question is, 'How should people act?' Prescriptive ethics would evaluate whether belief in the privacy of celebrities is ethically correct.

Transparency and media production

Keeping secrets is something that a media artist will have to deal with in the course of their career. One ethical perspective that plays an important role in the content creation industry is transparency. In this context, there is a tension between transparency as an ethical duty and the potential consequences of unrestricted disclosure of company secrets. For example, revealing too much information can have dire consequences at particular industrial levels. At a more localised level, a media artist might come into a protected space, such as a company's intellectual property. Transparency can be applied in many different media contexts, like government communications, digital media, advertising and media research.

Ethics vs morals

Ethics and morals are related concepts, but they are also very different:

- **Ethics** refer to external principles, rules and codes that govern right and wrong behaviour. These are often set by institutions or groups.
- **Morals** refer to an individual's personal beliefs about what is right or wrong.

This is relevant to studying MAP as the creation of media texts in the content creation industry is often regulated by institutions and groups who work together to maintain an ethical approach to making media texts.

Regulation and constraint

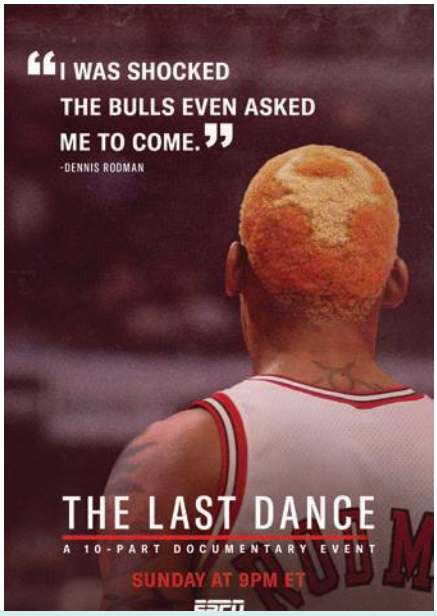
In the context of media and content creation industries, media artists may need to be aware of many types of regulation. Developing projects without the knowledge of this context of production could impact many aspects of a project's life cycle. The concept of media governance is a part of this context. Media governance encompasses all processes that aim to constrain, regulate, facilitate, monitor and influence media behaviour and practices. There are three main contexts that typically influence media:

1. The media landscape consists of individuals or organisations that send messages for various reasons, such as for profit, persuasion or creativity, or to educate, inform or entertain others.
2. The state or national government and its rules and legislation can be formalised or, historically, sometimes appear as vague directions or be enforced through legal avenues.
3. Societal expectations and demands from various audiences, interest groups, investors or partner organisations influence media behaviour in informal ways, including commercial support, boycotts, protests, petitions, complaints, praise, awards and public recognition.

What is the difference between social values, attitudes and beliefs?

Social values

Social values are principles individuals and social groups use to define personal goals and shape the class and practice of social order in a collective. A social value demonstrates what is acceptable and not acceptable, what ought or ought not to be, and what is desirable or non-desirable. For example, the social values of achievement and work ethic are seen in non-fiction sports films such as *The Last Dance* (2020) when investigating the Chicago Bulls and Michael Jordan's rise to success (Figure 2.14).



Album/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.14 Advertising poster for *The Last Dance* featuring Dennis Rodman. *The Last Dance* explores the Chicago Bulls' six-year winning streak and Michael Jordan's last season playing basketball. *The Last Dance* explores the shared social value of perseverance in the face of adversity.

Social attitudes

Social attitudes describe the general or specific opinions of people or other social groups about other individuals or groups. They can also be opinions about other social, political and economic issues that influence the behaviour and actions of others. Media products are vehicles for all sorts of social attitudes. For example, music videos often try to express values and beliefs that challenge widely held social attitudes towards particular subjects, such as gun laws in America, the gender pay gap or immigration.

Social beliefs

Social beliefs are built on people's attitudes and values about the world and how they belong in it. Social beliefs influence how people think, feel and act in different situations. They are based on religion, culture, ideology, morality, tradition or personal experience. Because of this, social beliefs often influence how people think, feel and act in different situations. For example, it is a common social belief that humans are the top of the food chain while animals are below. The non-fiction film *My Octopus Teacher* (2020) aims to challenge

that belief by exploring what an octopus can teach a man through her own behaviour and experiences.

How can the media be an influence?

We have lived in a media-saturated culture for the past 75 years. However, the media has become so ingrained in various cultures that its influence on people is often overlooked. Media influence is both direct and indirect in the way it presents information and opinions. The nature of this influence is often seen to be coercive, where viewers are convinced to passively accept a viewpoint or made to align with a viewpoint.

Media can be deliberate and direct, such as in advertising, where the goal of the media artwork is made clear by its message (what is communicated) and strategy (how it is communicated). Media can also be deliberate and indirect through symbolic representations in products such as documentaries and music videos that manipulate the audience's belief systems.

Music videos often portray a surreal version of reality with rapid editing and a lack of spoken dialogue (Figure 2.15). This creates a false sense and expectation of reality for viewers and enhances the drama. On the other hand, non-fiction films such as documentaries and docudramas are often presented as reality, and ask audiences to accept the representations on screen as fact rather than allowing room for interpretation.



Tony Norkus/Shutterstock.com

Figure 2.15 Musical artist Pink performing in one of her concerts. Pink often uses performance in her music videos. Music videos allow artists to use symbolic codes to create meaning through the costuming, acting and setting. Music videos contain minimal dialogue, allowing the media artist to explore the plot using the manipulation of the camera and editing.

Identifying society issues within a context

In modern society, social issues are shared problems that many people strive to change or resolve. A social issue is often the consequence of factors extending beyond an individual's control, which drives the desire for change.

Types of social issues

Many social issues evolve and change over time. Some might affect an individual, while others impact a broader community. This doesn't necessarily indicate the issues' importance, but rather it can inform the media artist of their own challenges for design and production. These issues can affect the following communities:

- **Youth** – Within and outside a school context there are various issues affecting young people. These issues might affect the individual but also smaller groups of youths.
- **Local and community** – There are issues that affect the local community. These issues would be specific to the community surrounding the school and would require the media artist to consider the context of production.
- **National and international** – There are broader issues that affect the nation and world as a whole. National and global issues are considered through three different lenses: environmental, socioeconomic and scientific.

Selecting an issue to comment on or critique

Selecting a social issue to focus on may seem like a daunting task, considering that there are so many social issues, each on so many different levels. Selecting a social issue allows the media artist to explore that issue by observing previous works made by other media artists. This leads to a deeper understanding of the appropriate context. When looking at previous works, it is important to appreciate the media artists' intention behind their media texts as well as design choices. To do this effectively, one must understand the difference between comment and critique:

- To **comment** on is to provide an opinion or explanation of the text.
- To **critique** is to provide a detailed analysis and evaluation of the text.

Table 2.2 A table containing examples of local, national and global issues. Certain social issues span multiple categories, while others are specific to a certain group or community. Broader issues such as school funding affect many local communities at the same time. This context requires the media artist to look for connections between their client's brief and community needs.

	LOCAL ISSUES		NATIONAL/GLOBAL ISSUES		
ISSUE	AFFECTS YOUTH AND SCHOOLS	AFFECTS LOCAL COMMUNITIES	ENVIRONMENTAL	SOCIOECONOMIC	SCIENTIFIC
BULLYING/CYBER BULLYING	✓				
DRUGS AND ALCOHOL	✓	✓		✓	
MENTAL HEALTH	✓	✓			✓
PEER PRESSURE	✓				
SOCIAL MEDIA	✓				
EDUCATION INEQUALITY	✓	✓		✓	
BODY IMAGE	✓				
FAMILY CONFLICT/ DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	✓	✓			
SEXUAL ACTIVITY	✓				
TIME MANAGEMENT	✓				
YOUTH CRIME	✓	✓		✓	
DISCRIMINATION	✓	✓		✓	
ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY	✓	✓			
ACCESS TO CLEAN DRINKING WATER		✓	✓	✓	
CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT	✓	✓			
POLLUTION		✓	✓		✓
LACK OF SCHOOL FUNDING	✓	✓		✓	
CLIMATE CHANGE AND GLOBAL WARMING		✓	✓		✓
LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY			✓		✓
POVERTY		✓		✓	
RIGHTS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES		✓		✓	
INDIGENOUS RIGHTS		✓		✓	
DISABILITY RIGHT		✓		✓	
LGBTQIA+ RIGHTS		✓		✓	
GENDER EQUALITY		✓		✓	
PANDEMIC	✓	✓			✓
DESTRUCTIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE	✓				✓
SOCIETAL COLLAPSE	✓	✓		✓	✓

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Immediate and wider contexts

When selecting a social issue to comment on or critique, the media artist must first consider their own position and agency toward that issue. As an author, the media artist actively circulates meaning about those social issues when making and distributing the media text. This is the immediate context. Also, whatever the media artist makes is not just an embodiment of the social issue but also a reflection of the various relationships the media artist is situated in when creating the product. There is a lot of exchange going on in this space. Because of this, media texts require particular scrutiny in how they adapt or amend the representation of social issues. But it doesn't just end there. Media texts are shared with communities when finished, so it is also important to consider how these meanings continue after the media text is published. This is the wider context. There is a lot to consider in the lifespan of a media text, but it is important because the media artist bears responsibility for the meanings that are circulated in the media landscape. They are making and contributing to a particular history of meaning. Once a text is out there, there is no taking it back. The broader social community engages with and consumes the media and its message. Care must be taken.

Purpose

No critique is complete without considering the purpose of the text. For example, when musical artists write their lyrics and create their music video, they consider the purpose of both aspects when making creative decisions. Sometimes, the purpose of an artwork might be to educate and inform, while others are created to elicit an emotional response.

2.2 ACTIVITIES

1 **Create** a PowerPoint presentation or short film that outlines the values, attitudes and beliefs that you feel are important to people of your age today. This can be done in small groups and presented to the class. **Consider** how these values, attitudes and beliefs affect society. Do you see these viewpoints represented in the media?
2 **Analyse** a segment of a non-fiction film, a series of short community commercials (e.g. Guide Dogs Australia) or a short film that deals with a societal issue. This can be done in pairs or small groups and reported back to the class. **Identify** the societal issue explored. Select three still images that you think communicate a message regarding this social issue. **Interpret** the meaning behind these messages. **Describe** the viewpoint that these meanings express.
3 **Analyse** an album artwork from one of the following musical artists known for making political statements or dealing with social issues: Bon Jovi, Briggs, Green Day, Gang of Youths or Taylor Swift. **Identify** the societal issue explored through still image. **Interpret** how the use of colour, texture and typography constructs meanings that communicate their message.
4 **Analyse** the opening sequence of the non-fiction film *The Deepest Breath* (2023). **Identify** the target demographic for this film using evidence from the opening sequence. **Describe** the personal viewpoint of the media artist based on the choice of interview, B-roll footage and sound. **Create** a storyboard or film clip for the opening sequence to a non-fiction sports film using *The Deepest Breath* as inspiration.

OPTION B: REPRESENTATIONS

Representations in the media

Representations in the media (see Chapter 11) are defined as the way in which media artists re-present the world through a personal lens of their own. Representations in the media are not necessarily reality but an interpretation of that reality because of how media conventions are manipulated to make representations. When designing and creating media artworks, the media artist has a role to play in the curation of ideas circulated by media texts they create. There is a responsibility in that space because representations can have an impact on communities. It is important for a media artist to foster relationships with local communities through the content they


stockphoto-graf/Adobe Stock Photos

Figure 2.16 The 2023 TikTok trend 'cozy gamers' brought together the aesthetic experiences of gaming with discourses of commercialism and consumerism. Viewers were invited to purchase the products that were being promoted.

produce. Much like contexts, representations also need to be scrutinised.

Created, altered and questioned realities

While representations within media are not reality, they can create new perspectives on reality. The representations created through media artworks impact the audience by inviting them to form new assumptions or beliefs that subsequently alter their shared viewpoints. For example, a TikTok trend in 2023 featured 'cozy gamers' showing their branded video game keyboard, desk and chair. Social media trends like this can position the audience to desire what they see. Viewers can act on those impulses by buying the products they see in the video. This has a ripple effect that impacts other contexts, such as increasing the sales of aesthetically appealing keyboards, warm lighting or seating. Through the audience's desire for belonging, representations embedded in a video become a kind of reality for viewers in the social media sphere.

Representations and social attitudes

People express their beliefs and opinions on social issues, norms and values through the content they share and engage with on social media platforms. Because media artworks have the capacity to reflect the world, media content creators have an ethical responsibility to represent the world equitably rather than through stereotypes or a sensational lens. For example, the animated web series *Zero-Point* (2019) features an Indigenous superhero as the main character and explores race and belonging in Australia, with the Indigenous hero at the centre of the plot.

Social media platforms occupy an important role in the circulation of a broad range of social attitudes, giving a voice to marginalised groups who often lack the means to make an impression on culture. Social media content also affords opportunities to construct representations of social attitudes suited to audience types, promoting values and attitudes that underpin marginalised communities. By telling stories that include overlooked or untold perspectives, media artworks can change the form of platform culture so that diverse representations find a place in the social media landscape.

Representations and social values

Social values are the thoughts, feelings and concerns that society shares. Social values are represented in media through the thematic elements explored in narratives and the behaviours and attitudes of represented characters. Other ways social values can be represented include symbolism via props, costumes, colour, music, audio and so on. Audiences have preconceived ideas about social values, and this impacts the media artists as they attempt to represent a particular social value effectively.

Common representations in media

Several common representations and portrayals frequently appear in various forms of media, such as films, television shows, promotional material and online content. It is important to recognise that these representations can shape societal perceptions and attitudes, and media creators have a responsibility to strive for accurate, diverse and inclusive portrayals.

Representing stereotypes

Common representations in the media begin with stereotypes. Some stereotypes begin with the media and spread to the audience, while others begin with the audience and find a place in the media.

Common representations in the media change over time and are often informed by the social, political or environmental issues in the world. *The Simpsons* (1989–current) represents a typical nuclear family in the late 1980s/early 1990s with a working father, homemaker wife and three children. After its 35 seasons of television, this nuclear family has remained frozen in place, a



f8 images/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.17 Rather than focusing on the product, McDonald's creates a brand by posting images featuring people enjoying themselves in memes and Instagram shorts (short-form videos). This creates a relatable brand or image for McDonald's and makes the audience feel like the business is a friend rather than a company on their feed.

reliable and unchanging family unit. However, change is still made clear through the evolving attitudes and beliefs of the characters. *The Simpsons* represents reality becoming fiction, as the real nuclear family in society has grown and changed over time. Because it has been running for more than three decades, what was a stereotype before has now become a thing of the past. This reconfigures *The Simpsons* series to have more in common with nostalgia than with an accurate portrayal of society as it is.

More diverse portrayals of family dynamics are also surfacing. Single-parent families, blended families, same-sex couples, multigenerational families, cohabiting couples and child-free couples are just a few of the more recent examples that have replaced the dominant nuclear family.



Allstar Picture Library Limited./Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.18 The nuclear family from popular television series *The Simpsons*. This typical family unit was quite common during the 80s and 90s, with the male working parent, stay-at-home wife and three children. Today's modern family has changed since the cartoon family's first appearance, making them no longer a representative ideal.

Representing stereotypes in social media

Like other social media platforms, TikTok can allow for both positive and negative representations. On one hand, social media provides a platform for individuals to express themselves and challenge stereotypical narratives. On the other, content on the platform can reinforce or spread harmful stereotypes. These stereotypes include but are not limited to:

- **Cultural stereotypes:** TikTok trends and challenges often involve mocking aspects of different cultures, sometimes in insensitive or stereotypical ways. For instance, videos imitating accents or making fun of traditional dress or customs can spread negative stereotypes about certain ethnic or cultural groups.
- **Gender stereotypes:** Some TikTok content reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes. For example, videos depicting women as solely interested in makeup, fashion, personal appearance or domestic tasks or men as being solely interested in sports, cars

or physical strength can reinforce limiting gender stereotypes.

- **Body image stereotypes:** TikTok's emphasis on short, visually appealing videos can sometimes spread unrealistic body image standards and stereotypes. Videos promoting specific body types or features as the 'ideal' can be harmful, especially to impressionable young users.
- **Stereotypes about marginalised groups:** Unfortunately, TikTok has also enabled the spread of stereotypes and misinformation about marginalised groups, such as LGBTQIA+ individuals, people with disabilities or religious minorities.

TikTok has also been a space for challenging stereotypes at times. Many creators use the platform to share their personal experiences, educate others and provide counterarguments for harmful narratives. Additionally, TikTok has implemented policies to remove content that promotes stereotypes.

Representations for social media platforms

Social media platforms have empowered audiences to become their own content creators, which, in turn, has also allowed creators to curate their own content. Through the use of media technologies – including artificial intelligence (AI) – users are able to manipulate reality more than ever before to construct unique representations for various purposes and contexts. The media technologies that play significant roles in content creation and user engagement include:

1. **Filters:** Social media filters are digital effects applied to photos or videos to enhance, modify or transform the original content. These filters can change the appearance of the user's face, add virtual elements to the environment or apply artistic effects to the visuals. On TikTok, for example, filters are widely used to create engaging and creative content, often informed by popular trends or challenges.
2. **Generative AI tools:** Generative AI refers to artificial intelligence algorithms that can create new content – such as images, videos or text – based on patterns learned from existing big data. On TikTok, for example, generative AI tools can be used to create unique visual effects, augmented reality experiences or even personalised content suggestions for users based on their preferences and viewing history.
3. **Sound bites:** Sound bites are short audio clips, usually music or spoken phrases, that users can incorporate into their videos. These sound bites often go viral, with many users creating content using the same audio clip. For example, on TikTok the popularity of certain sound bites can lead to the emergence of trends, challenges or memes on the platform, encouraging users to create content and engage with communities who gather around these shared audio experiences.

Definition of platform culture

'Platform culture' refers to the shared behaviours, norms and interactions that emerge among users within a specific online platform. Platforms such as social media networks, video-sharing sites and online forums create unique digital environments. It is a culture with significant implications for how individuals interact, consume information and form opinions in the digital age. Key aspects of platform culture include:

1. **Shareability/participatory habits:** Platforms rely heavily on content created and shared by users, fostering a participatory and interactive environment (Figure 2.19).
2. **Network effects:** As more users join a platform, its value and influence grow, leading to increased user engagement, including the continued shaping of the platform's culture.
3. **Algorithms and design:** Platform developers' algorithms and design choices can significantly influence user behaviour and the type of content that gains visibility.
4. **Community norms:** Each platform develops its own set of unwritten rules, etiquette and expectations that inform or influence user interactions and behaviour.
5. **Influence on offline behaviour:** Platform culture can extend beyond the screen, impacting users' offline lives, such as their social relationships, political views and consumer choices.
6. **Platformisation:** The process by which platforms shape and influence various aspects of society, such as communication, commerce and public discourse.

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7 **Platform governance:** The policies, moderation practices and content regulation strategies employed by platforms to manage user behaviour and engagement, and maintain a positive platform culture open to users of diverse backgrounds.



Panther Media GmbH / Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.19 Users play an important role in social media. Social media is intended to be shared and enjoyed by many. By allowing audiences to share content, it plays a large role in the way content is distributed and engaged with. It also allows audiences to directly affect the content they will continue to see on their personal feed.

TikTok

The social media platform TikTok (formerly musical.ly) originated as a karaoke app on which users could lip sync to their favourite songs. Now, users can use sound bites from movies, songs, interviews and other TikToks to reconfigure as their own to create their own representations and realities. Furthermore, with media transformations such as AI generators and filter technologies, content creators can explore new and innovative ways to be creative (Figure 2.20).

TikTok content creators can carefully create their own representations based on the technology available, intent on manipulating audiences into believing their portrayal of reality. For example, the 'Bold Glamour' filter on TikTok allows users to place this filter over their own faces, representing themselves anew with bold makeup, styled eyebrows, lipstick, eye shadow and contouring. A key feature of social media platforms such as TikTok is the 'follow' feature, which users click to engage with their favourite creators. Platform influencers have followers who can interact directly with the content creator to engage in comments, likes or to follow their content in a matter of seconds.



tom viggars/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.20 A young girl using the TikTok app to create a video. TikTok allows users to create vertical short-form content with the purpose of entertaining in short bursts. Users often use the selfie camera to take videos of themselves, adding music, sound effects or filters in the post-production phase.

Defining like and subscribe

The 'like' and 'subscribe' features on social media platforms have become integral to the user experience, fostering a sense of connection and engagement, and building a community. These features allow users to express their appreciation for content and connect with other users, forming a network of shared interests and interactions:

- **Like:** The like feature serves as a quick and easy way for users to show their appreciation, agreement or enjoyment of a particular post, image or video. Likes are a form of social endorsement, indicating that the content resonates with the user. The number of likes a post receives can also serve as a metric for popularity and engagement, influencing the visibility of the content as well as fostering business relationships with the marketing industry.
- **Subscribe:** The subscribe feature enables users to follow and receive updates from other users, pages or brands they find interesting or relevant. By following an account, users receive real-time updates on their feed, ensuring they don't miss any new content from the accounts they follow.
- This feature helps users curate their social media experience and stay connected with the people and topics that matter most to them.

The importance of immediacy in subscribing and liking cannot be overstated. When a user discovers an interesting account or piece of content, the ability to instantly subscribe or like creates a seamless experience that slots into the user's online flow. This immediacy satisfies the user's desire to connect and interact with the content creator or other users who share similar interests.

Users as followers

Social media users are frequently represented as driven by the instant gratification of following other content creators' accounts. This allows users to become part of a community or conversation in real-time. Whether it's a breaking news event, a live video stream or an ongoing discussion, the ability to follow and participate immediately enhances the user's sense of involvement and connection to the topic at hand. This immediacy fosters a feeling of being part of something larger and can lead to more meaningful interactions and relationships within the platform.

The instant nature of following and liking encourages users to explore and discover new content and accounts on a frequent basis. As users scroll through their feed or explore new hashtags, the ability to quickly follow or like something that catches their attention keeps them engaged and invested in the platform. This exploration and discovery process can lead to a more diverse and enriching social media experience.

Users as commenters

The comment section in a social media post is visible to all users but can also be 'limited' or turned off in order to further control a narrative. This might be observed when a content creator on social media is 'cancelled'. The instant nature of social media requires media artists to be self-aware in all representations they create, knowing audiences can interact directly with their content straight away. For example, TikTok allows users to create a 'duet' with another video, where it will play at the start of or concurrently to their own video, allowing them to react and comment face-to-face with the original content. A media artist has more responsibility than ever to ensure the representations they are creating are sensitive to the target audience and suitable for the choice of distribution. This implies an ethical dimension to content creation.

Instagram

Instagram is a social media platform that allows users to share photos and videos, connect with friends and followers, and discover new content through a personalised feed. Launched in 2010 and acquired by Facebook (now Meta) in 2012, Instagram has become one of the most popular social media apps worldwide, with over 1 billion monthly active users as of 2023.

Instagram has shifted the focus of social media from text-based to visual-based communication. The platform's emphasis on aesthetics and creativity has influenced the way users express themselves online. Much of the evolution of Instagram's technologies, such as its UI, has been attributed to the rise and dominance of the influencer economy, where individuals with large followings can monetise their content through sponsored posts, affiliate marketing and brand collaborations (Figure 2.21). This has led to the professionalisation of content creation and the emergence of new career paths.

However, as with other social media platforms, Instagram's emphasis on perfection and idealised lifestyles has been linked to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression and body image concerns. This has led to calls for greater transparency and accountability from the platform.



Prostock-studio/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.21 Influencers blur the lines between content creators and users. Social media influencers usually have a certain brand, identity and target audience for their work, and create content solely focused on these. Influencers can work solo or be connected to a specific brand, and may have links to advertising.

Representing platform influencers

Influencers are often represented in mainstream media as entrepreneurial individuals who have successfully leveraged their personal brand and social media following to achieve fame, wealth and influence. This representation of reality can be motivated by the desire to obtain a mass following in much the same way that celebrities – such as screen actors – often experience, making influencers comparable to celebrities. However, there are some important differences to note about the influencer lifestyle:

- The consistent portrayal of influencers' seemingly perfect lives on social media can promote a distorted perception of reality among viewers. Repeated exposure to similar media content can shape a viewer's beliefs.
- The staged influencer lifestyle, such as photo shoots, can be seen as a form of simulation or a representation that has no basis in reality. This blurs the boundaries between reality and fantasy for their viewers and, in some cases, for influencers as well.
- The reliance that influencers have on the attention and engagement of their followers for their earning potential is often compared to the concept of a parasite. This suggests that influencers 'feed off' the energy that attention provides to sustain themselves.

Representations for gaming platforms

Video game platforms are an online space where audiences have more control over their interactions within the gaming world. In most games, users can directly interact with other user-controlled characters, AI-controlled non-player characters (NPCs) and the world itself, and sometimes control the narrative. Because of this interactivity between the game and the audience, it is important to understand the representations of the characters and their worlds in order to build assumptions about the audience. This context can then be utilised during project development or when producing content.

Video game contexts

Video games, perhaps because of the word 'game', were often relegated to the domain of child's play and largely ignored by adults. This was certainly the case in the early stages of video game history, where adults and the mainstream media ignored the advancements and achievements of gaming technologies. When comparing video games and computer technologies, it is the computer that emerged the 'winner' in the business world, advancing much quicker because of the immense investment spent in this sector. There was no such focus for the video game industry because, unlike computers, video games could find no application to adult environments like the business sector. Video games were always meant for the domestic home environment, to exist in the informal spaces of everyday life, to be qualified as ordinary, simple and uninspired.

Gaming and marginalisation

Because video games were often seen as the domain of children – particularly as a result of marketing and advertising – adults who were self-identified gamers were categorised in the same way children were categorised. That is, adult gamers were perceived as immature and childish. One pervasive stereotype was that of the 'nerd' or 'geek' – a socially awkward loner, usually male, who spent excessive time playing video games at the expense of other aspects of social life (Figure 2.22).

These stereotypes persisted in screen representations in films such as *Revenge of the Nerds* (1984), while most films depicting gaming as a social habit featured children, further solidifying the association between gaming and immaturity. Television shows also popularised the image of the



Michelle Crawford/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.22 The original design of video game consoles often emulated traditional arcade games. The game design would also match the arcade by mostly being 'platformer' games that were designed to have a basic plot and objective for the gamer. This further encouraged the stereotype of video game 'nerds' as gaming was considered an antisocial activity.

game-playing nerd as immature and unsuccessful compared to 'normal' mature and successful adults.

As gaming shifted from arcades to home consoles such as the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), marketing increasingly targeted kids and portrayed gaming as a children's hobby. Games utilised cute mascots like Mario and Sonic. This positioned gaming as something you were expected to 'grow out of' and emerge into adulthood. This had a negative effect on adults who continued to make gaming a major hobby and were seen as not acting their age.

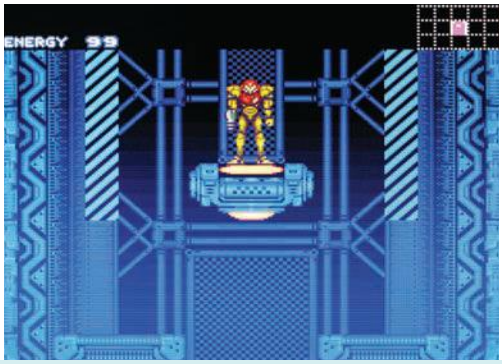
Representing gender and violence

While video games are in fantasy worlds, it is important to still represent compelling, dynamic characters that reflect the world we live in. Several modern video games now allow users to create their own unique avatar, with advancing custom design opportunities. For example, *Balder's Gate III* (2023) allows users to design their character from scratch, starting with a unique fantasy race and allowing customisable traits such as eyebrows, gender, voice, history and more. Being able to customise their own character allows audiences to effectively create their own personal reality and engage with the fantasy world at the same time.

Video games have often been accused of representing a violent society, which then merges with our own reality. First-person shooter video games especially are accused of encouraging violence as audiences can directly control the gun the character holds in their hands and see through their point of view. For example, *Grand Theft Auto* (1997) requires audiences to take on the role of a local thug where they can rob people, steal cars and harm civilians.

Exploring, challenging and/or referencing existing media representations

With the rapid growth of social media as a platform for individuals, the representations of society have increasingly moved away from simplistic stereotypes. Instead of representations being tied to trends like what audiences see in larger-scale productions (such as television and film), audiences get a more realistic look at the different spectrum topics such as gender and class.



ArcadeImages/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.23 *Metroid's* (1986–) female main character Samus. In this platformer video game, audiences play as Samus as she fights alien creatures to save the world. Her gender was not initially revealed, with many audiences assuming she was a male main character, before revealing herself at the end as a woman.

As the video game industry has evolved, so have the representations of their characters. Gender representations, while initially reliant on the 'damsel in distress' stereotype of women, have changed over time to adapt to our modern reality. For example, *Final Fantasy XIII* (2009) created a female main character, 'Lightning', who shared the personality traits of several of the male main characters of the franchise without being overly sexualised. Furthermore, the longstanding video game franchise Mario has seen minor changes over time, with 'Mario' still trying to save his damsel in distress 'Peach', but often resulting in the female character saving herself. The video game *Persona 5* (2016) explores a metropolitan representation of a male main character dressed in a school uniform and not reliant on brash masculinity.

As social media platforms continue to grow and change, the representations that content creators curate and create change alongside the medium. Social media trends are constantly evolving, with audiences embracing various new filters, music and sound bites that constantly challenge or create new representations of society. Social media is also a useful space for users and audiences to discuss representations in other mediums, such as film and television, and challenge them, allowing marginalised groups to challenge the representations of society and educate audiences. For example, there are various TikToks focusing on the perspectives of Indigenous Australians, where the content creators discuss their culture and interact with audiences by answering questions.



Everett Collection Inc/ Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.24 Peach and Toad in the *Super Mario Bros. Movie* (2023) as they embark on a journey. Peach is portrayed in the film as a strong and capable woman, switching out of her typical pink ballgown to a motorcycle outfit.

Choosing a context – social media or video games

Both social media and the video game industry contain representations that can effectively present the reality of the world but can also damage that same reality through stereotyping and inaccurate or offensive representations. When creating media artworks, to effectively communicate accurate or engaging representations, the media artist needs to consider the context of production along with the project's goals. For media artists, considering the method of distribution and the project's target audience ensures the media artwork is an authentic and ethical representation of reality.

Developing an artistic intention

The artist's intention refers to the purpose of the creative artwork. When creating any media artwork, the intention of the product should be at the forefront of every decision made – especially when considering the characters, places, emotions and ideas represented in the creative work. Media artists need to consider the following:

- Who is my target audience?
- Why am I making this media artwork?
- What representations will be shown in my media artwork?
- Do I have the right background to create this media artwork?

Audience engagement

If the artist's intention is clear, audience engagement will follow. Audiences appreciate when stories appear authentic, and are told through creative character development and representations. While social media content is heavily curated, using authenticity leads to interactive elements that audiences are drawn to. When using social media, audiences have such a wide variety of content instantly available to them that it is more important than ever to create authentic content that effectively communicates real stories.

2.3 ACTIVITIES

1 **Analyse** the opening sequence to *Modern Family,* introducing the three main families. This can be done in small groups, reporting back to the class in the form of a presentation. **Describe** the representations of the three different families: the nuclear Dunphy family; husbands Mitchell Pritchett and Cameron Tucker and their adopted child; and the remarried Jay Pritchett with his second wife Gloria and her son from another marriage, Manny. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of the opening sequence's exploration of stereotypes. **Consider** how you would improve the series if it were being remade today. **Create** a timeline of familial representations in different television family sitcoms such as *The Brady Bunch*, *The Partridge Family*, *Malcolm in the Middle*, *Fresh off the Boat* and *Everybody Hates Chris*.

2 **Compare** the cover of a video game or poster for a teen film with a still image of a character from that video game or teen film. **Consider** whether the character conforms to or challenges a stereotype in both the cover image/poster and the still image. **Analyse** why particular stereotypes are usually drawn to the type of character you have examined.

3 **Analyse** a TikTok trend/filter. **Describe** some of the representations that are created using this trend/filter. **Consider** the social attitudes or values communicated through this trend/filter. **Create** three alternative TikToks (short-form videos) copying a popular trend.

4 Representations of the character Lara Croft in the *Tomb Raider* video game series have changed drastically over the past few decades. Research the history of Lara Croft's representation throughout the series. **Analyse** the opening sequence of the video game *Tomb Raider* (2013). **Describe** the technical and symbolic codes used and how these represent this version of Lara Croft. **Compare** how this representation has changed from the original game in 1996. **Create** your own opening sequence for this video game with an alternative main character of your design.

OPTION C: COMMUNITY

What is a community?

Communities come in various shapes and sizes, but they all share a similar emphasis on connection. A community forms a connection between people and encourages those within that community to share experiences, stories and wisdom. Before modern media, a community gathered by people sitting around a fireplace and recounting stories. While this still occurs, there are now different contexts. In a modern context, media texts function to bring people together, to gather in a virtual capacity to recount stories. When someone posts a video on YouTube, a community of like-minded viewers gather to engage and comment on the stories recounted in the video. This suggests that the culture of content creation has an important role in society.

Online or real communities still play a large role in our society. They can be evidenced in fiction and non-fiction films alike. For example, communities are often a subject that appears in documentaries, sports films and the news in not only the content they create but also through their distribution methods.

School communities

School communities are designed for local residents who live in and around the school. School communities provide students and parents with various networks they can interact and engage with in the education sector. This involves several smaller communities such as:

- teachers – have communities that focus on their professional growth and development as well as communities that can connect students and parents with their teachers; for example, teachers can join external curriculum organisations or local P&C groups
- parents – have communities that help them keep up with the latest activities at the school; for example, the school's Facebook page and Facebook groups allow parents to stay connected to the administration of the school or discuss matters with other parents
- students – have communities that provide a sense of belonging at a school. Students can join various social or sporting groups, as well as other extra-curricular communities such as a Program of Excellence
- school administrators – are often stakeholders or members of various external groups and play an important role in bridging the gap between parents and the school. They are often part of the P&C as well, and run communities of engagement that focus on giving back to the local community
- businesses – local businesses often form partnerships with schools that provide mutual benefits such as a local restaurant connecting with the hospitality department to provide real-world experiences
- charitable organisations – provide communities for students and teachers that focus on giving back to the world or that community; for example, local youth support organisations such as Headspace might partner with the School Guidance Officer to run various community activities for students
- local neighbourhoods – form relationships with schools through various events in the local community where schools can participate; for example, schools can become involved in the local ANZAC Day parade and form connections with local community members.

Modes of communication

The school administration often releases weekly or fortnightly newsletters for parents to stay updated with the activities and achievements of students and staff. To build a sense of pride and community within a school, students could create a school-based podcast that shares the daily notices or updates with a student focus on the content and style of production – made by students for students (Figure 2.25). School administration uses the school website and social media pages for video sharing (distribution) opportunities through the creation of open day videos, athletics day highlights and information on excursions for parents and local residents to promote school pride.

Local communities

Local communities involve people who live in the same location who share similar interests, values or passions. These communities include:

- identity-based – communities that play an active role in supporting and understanding an individual's identity. This can include



Dmytro Zinkevych/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.25 A student checking the sound quality on her podcast microphone. Podcasts offer an opportunity to connect within the school community by sharing school news and achievements for students by students. Podcasts are an accessible mode of communication that allows for private distribution within the school community.

communities such as religious, LGBTQIA+ or veterans
- place-based – communities that involve people who are connected by a place they frequent, such as places of work, travel or residence. This can include communities such as local suburban communities or work-related communities
- communities of action – communities that connect people through their passions or drive for change. This can include communities such as volunteering organisations and community fundraisers
- communities of practice – communities with people who are passionate about a particular shared hobby or skill. This can include communities such as sporting communities and local hobby clubs (such as chess, boardgames or *Dungeons and Dragons* clubs)
- interest-based – communities that share certain interests. This can include communities such as language-learning communities and homeowner associations

Online communities

With the rapid growth of online platforms, online communities have continued to rise in popularity. Online communities still offer their participants opportunities to connect and engage with like-minded individuals. Online communities include:
- **forums and discussion boards** – such as television discussion threads
- **photo sharing** – such as Instagram groups
- **social tagging** – allowing connections with other groups through similar interests
- **video tagging** – suggesting similar videos for the audience to engage with (Figure 2.26)
- **ratings and reviews** – connecting through shared content
- **blogs** – travel, personal or thematic discussions that allow audience participation and interaction
- **virtual worlds** – virtual reality (VR) and gaming worlds
- **wikis** – informative spaces focused on specific content.

For example, content creators can create YouTube reviews, which are then distributed and posted on a sub-Reddit fan page to engage with the online community interested in that specific content. Likewise, TikTok allows media artists to post content that contains discussions and comments with hashtags, which allows audiences to filter their content to the subject matter that interests them.



Chris Ridley - Internet Stock/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.26 A YouTube page with suggested content for the user. These suggestions are based on current subscriptions, views and algorithms. The use of tagging when video sharing allows audiences to engage with content that is interesting to them.

Celebrating, advocating, informing

Celebrating a community

Celebrating a community is the act of organising a shared experience or event that showcases what is unique about that community to foster appreciation and a sense of belonging. When creating content for a community, it is important to celebrate that community by making content about achievements or significant moments within that community. For example, a local community might want to celebrate the achievements of a local longstanding butcher and request a video

exploring the original opening of the butcher's shop. Or a school community might release a social media post of photos celebrating the recent success of their dance excellence program. At the time of release, the *Barbie* movie (2023) encouraged online communities to use the hashtag #iamkenough to celebrate the release of the film.

Advocating for a community

Advocating for a community is the act of defending the rights of and promoting change on behalf of that community. This can be particularly important for marginalised communities where members may have a harder time defending or promoting their interests. Things to consider when advocating for a community include:

- **Identify** – consider what the issue is and what is the ideal outcome
- **Communicate** – see how the issue affects the larger community
- **Design** – plan the media artwork to best communicate the message.

Creating non-fiction films for a community might require the media artist to stand up for or against a particular social issue. For example, the local community might be trying to assist the homeless community in their area and ask for posters displaying information on how to donate to the local food drive.

Informing audiences

Informing audiences is the act of educating audiences about or highlighting a particular message relevant or important to that chosen community. All non-fiction content aims to inform the audience about particular social issues relevant to a community. The school community may want to promote and foster education and inform their audience about activities and opportunities available. The local community may want to inform their audience about issues in the local area, promoting change or information for all who live in the area. Online communities may want to discuss or converge on the same platform and begin a dialogue about various social issues or passions.

Selecting a community focus

The community focus for any media artwork is an important starting point in the content creation process. Understanding that this content has a target demographic and a specific purpose allows the media artist to better focus their content and tone for the moving image, still image or audio.

Context

A community's context is the settings and conditions in which members of that community live and work. A community's context plays a vital role in how that community operates. Understanding that every community has a context allows for authenticity in the creative work. For example, creating an informative news piece for Ipswich requires the media artist to understand the area's social, cultural and economic contexts to effectively bring the information that this community would desire. When making media artworks for different local communities, the context of those communities would vastly change the structure, design and process involved in creating the project.

Purpose

Every production needs to answer the question 'Why?'. If a media artwork has been created but there doesn't seem to be any strong purpose behind it, the media artwork will not reach the intended audience. If a media artist created a TikTok about the local gym intending to advertise the opening weekend but failed to understand the local area context, the values of the establishment and the targeted audience, this product would fail to connect with the local community and impact the success of the business.



fabrus/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.27 A gym influencer using social media to record his workouts. Having a clear purpose behind the media artwork is essential in ensuring the target audience is reached in an effective manner. Social media is diluted by so much variety in content that it is important to stand out from competitors.

2.4 ACTIVITIES

1 **Identify** the communities that you are a part of. **Analyse** why you feel a part of these communities. **Identify** a particular message that has been delivered through media about one of your communities. **Analyse** the methods used to communicate this message. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of this message as a member of the community.

2 **Analyse** two different advertisements made for free-to-air television, YouTube or TikTok that promote SnapFitness to a national community and a local community. This could be done in pairs, with each member focusing on one advertisement and reporting back to the other. **Consider** the target demographic for each advertisement – what decisions change when addressing a national community versus a local community? **Describe** how each advertisement manipulates technical and symbolic codes to appeal to these communities.

3 **Analyse** a school promotional video that is targeting parents in the community. **Describe** the techniques used by the media artist to connect to that community. **Interpret** the meanings these techniques create for their target demographic. **Create** two alternative promotional videos targeted at another community member of your choice.

4 **Analyse** a video created by your school's advertising team that has been posted on a platform such as Facebook. This could be an open day video or athletics day promotional video. **Consider** the platform and the target demographic. **Describe** the technical and symbolic codes used in the video. **Evaluate** whether these choices effectively market the event to the target demographic.

5 **Analyse** a segment of Myf Warhurt's *Meet the Neighbours*. **Describe** the techniques used by the media artist to connect to the community. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of the show's representation of the community's story.

OPTION D: PERSUASION

What is persuasion in media artworks?

In the context of media, social media and advertising, persuasion refers to the act of influencing or convincing an audience to adopt a particular belief, attitude or behaviour through the use of various communication strategies and techniques. Persuasion is a central goal of advertising and media campaigns, which aim to encourage consumers to purchase a product, support a cause or accept a particular viewpoint. Key elements of persuasion in media and advertising include:

1 **Appealing to emotions:** Media artists often use emotional appeals to create a connection between the audience and the product or idea being promoted.

2 **Establishing credibility:** Persuasive messages often rely on the credibility of the source, such as using expert testimonials or celebrity endorsements to build trust with the audience.

3 **Highlighting benefits:** Effective persuasion emphasises the unique benefits or advantages of a product, service or idea to demonstrate its value to the target audience.

4 **Targeting specific audiences:** Media and advertising campaigns are often tailored to specific demographics, interests or needs to increase their persuasive impact.

5 **Using persuasive language:** Carefully crafted messages, slogans and scripts are designed to be memorable, compelling and convincing to the target audience. Humour is a powerful, persuasive language.

6 **Leveraging social proof:** Persuasive messages often highlight the popularity or widespread acceptance of a product or idea to encourage conformity and adoption.

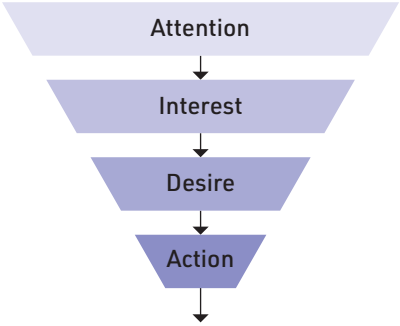
7 **Repetition:** Frequent exposure to a persuasive message across multiple media channels can increase its effectiveness over time.

Media artworks have the power to influence audiences through various technical and symbolic techniques. Media artworks such as still-image posters or video advertising can persuade audiences to purchase an item, change their opinion or sell an idea or emotion. Audience experience with these types of media texts is varied and complex.

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The marketing funnel

Advertisers work on the idea that the typical consumer goes through a set of linear stages from when they see an advertisement to making a purchase. This idea first appeared over 100 years ago and variations are still in use today. It is often termed 'the marketing funnel' (see also page 278).



https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/marketing-funnel-ghulam-ahmad/

Figure 2.28 The modern marketing funnel takes account of the internet and social media. Its end point is brand loyalty based on a customer being converted to the product and being willing to engage with it over the long term.

The AIDA marketing funnel

AIDA is an acronym for each of the four stages in the marketing funnel: attention, interest, desire and action (Figure 2.28).

1 **Attention.** Grab the attention of the consumer. In social media, advertisers:
   - create engaging and informative media posts
   - develop blog articles or videos that address common pain points or interests
   - collaborate with influencers.

2 **Interest.** Once potential customers are aware of your brand, develop their interest in what you offer. Strategies include:
   - providing valuable in-depth content, tutorials or case studies
   - engaging through comments or direct messages
   - re-targeting ads to previous interactions
   - offering special deals or rewards in exchange for information.

3 **Desire.** Potential customers are already interested in your product. You are trying to convince them that it is the best fit for their needs by focusing on the unique value proposition and addressing any potential objections. Strategies include:
   - creating comparisons or guides
   - sharing testimonials and success stories
   - providing free trials or samples
   - answering comment questions through FAQ pages.

4 **Action.** The final stage where the potential consumer takes action to become a customer. Your focus is on making the buying process smooth and easy by:
   - offering limited-time promotions or discounts
   - streamlining the checkout process and offering multiple payment options
   - providing excellent customer service.

Modern variations

Consumer behaviours and the needs of advertisers have changed in the age of social media and online commerce. The range and abundance of messaging and competitive environment means it is hard for advertisers to cut through to the potential consumer. Consequently, today a major achievement is consumer awareness of your product. Keeping consumers loyal is a very important marketing activity.

Ultimately, the marketing funnel is a helpful framework for connecting and engaging with audiences along their journey. Media artists can use it to:

- understand the audience and tailor the approach as necessary (Figure 2.29)
- identify and address weaknesses in the audience's experience
- understand the audience engagement to inform future practice.



Robert Kneschke/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.29 A photographer using framing, composition and lighting to frame sunglasses. When considering persuasion in photography, media artists can use various framing and visual techniques to engage an audience to purchase an item. A simple backdrop allows the photographer to showcase and focus on the product itself.

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Perceived value

Within advertising and persuasion, there is a psychological dimension to creating media artworks. For audiences, this is an understanding of perceived value. Perceived value is the audience's evaluation of the merits of a product or service, and its ability to meet their needs and expectations. For media artists, during the design process there is a responsibility to understand the impact it will have on the audience. When creating content, media artists use persuasive techniques to elevate the perceived value of a product or service.

In the advertising industry, products often have a 'stylist' – such as a food stylist – who uses industry techniques to make the product appear more seductive. Much like how influencers promote representation as a reality, many products in advertising and persuasion industries are equally guilty of promoting something that does not reflect reality. McDonald's is often guilty of using props to make their burgers appear better. They often use a combination of glue, styrofoam, toothpicks, glaze, paint and butane torches to achieve their desired perceived value in burgers. It only takes a few minutes to make a burger in-store; however, in a photo shoot, it takes two hours to make a burger.



i wayan leonardo/Shutterstock.com

Figure 2.30 Prop stylists use industrial materials like glue, paint, gloss and spray paint to make consumable food appear inviting to viewers. The perceived value is heightened because it looks real and delicious, motivating viewers to consume the product. However, the burger made in the store almost always fails in visual comparison.

Working with a client or brief

When a client hires media artists, there are certain expectations on both sides as to what kind of media artwork they want to produce.

A client will often create a brief with information about the intent of the project, the budget and the timeframe. For a media artist, knowing how to meet the brief of the client is an important aspect of the project life cycle. There is a balance between content knowledge and skill that allows them to meet these needs in the project. In order to create content effectively, media artists must sustain the requirements. A media artist must understand that the client's needs may not always match their own. The creator must establish an understanding and compromise when creating the media artwork. For example, a client might set the brief that the project must be done in a particular timeframe that the media artist believes is impossible based on the intent and budget of the project. At this early stage of the brief, the client and media artist need to find agreement to have a functioning working relationship.

Audience demographics and types

Audience demographics refer to the characteristics of a group of people who consume a particular media or are exposed to an advertisement. These characteristics include:

- **age** – the age range of the target audience (e.g. children, teenagers, young adults, middle-aged or seniors; see Table 2.3)
- **gender** – the gender of the target audience (e.g. male, female or non-binary)
- **income** – the income level of the target audience (e.g. low-, middle- or high-income earners)
- **education** – the educational background of the target audience (e.g. high school, college or postgraduate)
- **occupation** – the profession or job title of the target audience
- **location** – the geographic location of the target audience (e.g. urban, suburban or rural; specific countries or regions)
- **marital status** – whether the target audience is single, married, divorced or widowed
- **family size** – the number of people in the target audience's household.

Audience types refer to the classification of consumers based on their interests, behaviours and preferences. Some common audience types include:

- **Loyalists:** Consumers who consistently choose a particular brand or product over competitors.

Table 2.3 A table indicating the preferred marketing strategies and how these would apply based on age. There are certain marketing strategies that are more suitable for certain audiences based on their age. For example, a billboard would appeal to adults and the elderly but may not be the quickest way to reach children and teenagers.

	AGE				
MARKETING TRENDS	CHILDREN	TEENAGERS	YOUNG ADULTS	ADULTS	ELDERLY
SOCIAL MEDIA		✓	✓		
INFLUENCER MARKETING	✓	✓	✓		
AR AND VR ADVERTISING		✓	✓		
CONVERSATIONAL MARKETING				✓	✓
NEWSPAPER				✓	✓
TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS	✓		✓	✓	
BILLBOARD				✓	✓

- **Impulse buyers:** Consumers who make unplanned purchases based on immediate desires or attractive offers.
- **Bargain hunters:** Consumers who actively seek out deals, discounts and the best value for their money.
- **Trendsetters:** Consumers who are early adopters of new products, styles or technologies, and often influence others.
- **Quality seekers:** Consumers who prioritise quality over price and are willing to pay more for superior products or services.
- **Environmentally conscious:** Consumers who prefer eco-friendly, sustainable or organic products and brands.
- **Sceptics:** Consumers who are cautious about trying new products or trusting advertising claims.
- **Brand advocates:** Consumers who are highly satisfied with a brand and actively promote it to others.

Media and advertising professionals use audience demographics and types to:

- develop targeted marketing strategies
- create relevant and appealing content
- select appropriate media channels for ad placement
- tailor messaging and creative elements to resonate with specific audiences
- optimise ad spend by focusing on the most promising audience segments
- measure the effectiveness of advertising campaigns.

Marketing styles or trends for target audiences

Not every marketing style or trend is suitable for every target audience. For example, one form of engaging advertising for teenagers will not suit an elderly audience. Teenagers connect better with social media through platforms such as TikTok and social media influencers, while the elderly engage with more traditional forms of advertising through still images such as billboards, television or newspaper marketing.

Key persuasive strategies

In the context of persuasion, media artists are always trying to persuade their audience. It could be to persuade them to feel, to buy something or to change their worldview. Persuasive strategies are a collection of techniques used to shape a media project in particular ways to make its media products more compelling and influential to its target audience.

Persuasive techniques: *pathos*, *logos* and *ethos*

Philosopher Aristotle first conceived of persuasive techniques in Ancient Greece, but they have continued on into the industry of media advertising. Aristotle determined how certain techniques used in persuasive arguments fit into three groups: *pathos*, *logos* and *ethos*. This is also known as the rhetorical triangle in advertising and marketing, and it has been used as the basis for visual persuasion. A compelling and persuasive advertisement in visual language will use one or all of these techniques.

Pathos

This is a persuasive technique that aims to appeal to the senses, memory, nostalgia or shared experience. *Pathos* examples pull at the heartstrings and aim to make the audience feel something. A photographer might take an image of a suffering homeless child, hoping their audience will feel outrage and sympathy, prompting them to donate to a charity. A larger business or corporation might try and associate their brand with a particular emotion or

nostalgic memory to ensure audiences have a positive association with the product (Figure 2.31).

Logos

Logos is also known as 'the logical appeal' and often includes citations of statistics, facts, charts and graphs. Logos is the opposite of pathos and instead relies on the audience's intellect and rational understanding of the product or message. A car company may release a short advertisement showing its car driving around the hinterland while text appears stating the safety rating, mileage and other useful features of the car. This doesn't rely on emotion but the audience's logical desires.

Ethos

Ethos aims to convince the audience that the advertiser is reliable, trustworthy and ethical, and focuses on building credibility for the brand through this context. Using trusted celebrities to advertise a product (whether or not they have expertise in that area) is a typical way to build trust between the advertising company and the audience (Figure 2.32). These endorsements don't have to contain emotion or facts, but instead rely solely on a celebrity's value. Many celebrities have lost contracts with advertising companies when their own image no longer aligns with the values of the company and that element of connection and trust with the audience. For example, Australian cricketer Steve Smith had his contract revoked by Sanitarium (Weet-Bix) after the Australian captain and some of his teammates were exposed for cheating against the South African cricket team. This decision affected Smith's image and therefore his value for Sanitarium's brand.



migstock/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.31 This Coca-Cola advertisement relies on the shared experience and association that drinking a Coke is equal to happiness. Advertisements with larger images often rely on pathos as a means to sell their product – especially if the audiences know the product is not healthy for you. Coca-Cola instead wants to focus on the emotion behind drinking its product rather than the logical elements of the product itself.



WENN Rights Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.32 A billboard advertisement for Glaceau Smart Water with Jennifer Aniston. By using a famous face, companies can rely on the celebrity's status rather than the quality of the product itself. Using a celebrity puts a familiar face to the product and builds a relationship between the audience and the product.

Understanding persuasive techniques

Persuasive advertising works by making consumers feel smart. Persuasive advertisements convince people that they will be empowered enough to eventually make an informed purchase once they're informed about your product, brand or service. Once media artists have established a persuasive strategy, they can:

- build brand loyalty and customer support
- prove value for your products or services
- maintain credibility among consumers
- establish a positive association with your brand.

Persuasion purposes

Persuasion has a range of purposes when making media texts. This is highly dependent on the nature and conditions of the project. The advertising method attempts to frame products in a positive light and highlight their features. An example of

this can be seen through a photography portfolio created for a university trying to promote the campus. The portfolio would include various images of the university focusing on the amenities available, attractive architecture in the buildings on campus and the diversity of students attending the campus.

Promoting a product, service or event

Promoting a product

Promoting a product relies on showcasing the best elements of the product itself or the idea behind the product. A photographer trying to promote a new line of basketball shoes would use close-up or extreme close-up shots of the shoes, focusing on the best elements of the product that may set it apart from other shoes. Similarly, a photographer might focus on the celebrity promoting the product to showcase the popularity of the item among athletes.



PA Images/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.33 Nike basketball shoes worn by basketball players to promote the brand. When promoting a product, using celebrities helps garner trust between the product and the client. Products can also rely on the logo and branding to sell their product. The Nike swoosh has become so popular that Nike advertising can focus on the logo itself to sell the product.

Promoting a service

Promoting a service requires a different approach than promoting a product. Advertisers can't rely on logo design or branding when promoting a service. Audiences want to know that the service is reliable, affordable and will complete the task they desire. This links with how trust functions in persuasion. For example, a photographer offering a wedding photography package might advertise on social media with a portfolio of their previous work. This portfolio acts as a form of evidence that the service provided will meet the standards expected by the consumer. The photographer could also use their social media page to share client testimonials or offer early-bird deals throughout the year.

Promoting an event

Promoting an event requires the promoter to consider the target audience, the key selling points of the event and the platform of distribution. For example, if the local council is advertising a Christmas Carols by Candlelight, the advertiser understands that families would be the target demographic. The promoter could then consider who they would hire as the local celebrities to host the event as well as the singers. They would also ensure that there are activities for children promoted at the event. Facebook promotion of the event highlights would help spread awareness among the local community.

Raising awareness and a call to action

Persuasion isn't just about advertising a product, service or event, but also raising awareness towards a social issue or providing a call to action to the audience. Photographers can use still images to invoke sympathy in their audiences in order to promote social change. For example, an animal shelter would try to promote the adoption of animals rather than buying from breeders in order to raise awareness of the over-breeding of household pets (Figure 2.34).



Irr/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 2.34 A poster promoting the adoption (rather than breeding) of domestic animals. This poster uses a catchy slogan with the combination of humans and animals joining together to promote a call to action for the audience. This poster tries to invoke sympathy from the audience through the outstretched hand and paw and simple call to action phrase.

Human emotion

Constructing persuasion to encourage viewers to respond actively will often make use of human emotion. The top five human emotions commonly used in advertising to encourage action are:

1 **Happiness and joy:** Media artists will often associate products with positive emotions, showing how the product can bring happiness, joy and satisfaction to the consumer's life. Examples include ads for vacation destinations, food and entertainment.
2 **Fear:** Fear-based advertising plays on consumers' insecurities and worries, suggesting that the product can help alleviate or prevent potential threats or negative outcomes. This is often used in advertisements for insurance, home security systems and health products.
3 **Love and affection:** Media artists frequently use the emotions of love, affection and belonging to create a connection between the product and the consumers' personal relationships. This is common in advertisements for greeting cards, jewellery and family-oriented products.
4 **Desire and aspiration:** Many advertisements tap into consumers' desires and aspirations, portraying the product as a means to achieve a particular lifestyle, status or goal. This is often seen in advertisements for luxury goods, cars and beauty products.
5 **Nostalgia and comfort:** Some advertisements evoke feelings of nostalgia and comfort by associating the product with positive memories, traditions or a sense of familiarity. This emotional appeal is often used for food products, holiday-related items and brands with a long history.

2.5 ACTIVITIES

1 Find three different advertisements for KFC that advertise the same product (e.g. a Zinger burger) through three different platforms: still image, moving image and audio. **Analyse** how each advertisement manipulates technical and symbolic codes to promote the product. **Compare** how the three advertisements are different. **Consider** how the different platforms shape each advertisement.
2 Conduct a brief case study on a celebrity or social influencer that you follow who has promoted a product or service. This can be done through PowerPoint and presented to the class. **Analyse** how this celebrity or influencer is used to promote the product or service.
3 **Analyse** three different advertisements (still image, moving image or audio) for three local businesses. This can be done in small groups, with each group focusing on one advertisement and reporting back to the class. **Describe** the local businesses, their target audience and likely financial position. **Create** a potential client brief that communicates these factors to a media artist promoting the business. **Evaluate** how well the advertisement fits the brief you have created. **Create** a new advertisement for the business using the same platform that would effectively persuade the audience and fit the client's brief.
4 **Analyse** a still photograph that is trying to evoke a specific emotion. **Identify** the emotion that is being communicated to the audience through elements and principles of design. **Interpret** the meanings that could be conveyed through this image. **Consider** how this could be used to sell an idea.
5 Your school tuckshop wants to include more meat-free dishes and has tasked your class to create advertising material to promote the new menu. This can be done in groups and presented to the class. **Consider** how the tuckshop currently advertises their menu. **Create** a poster to effectively market meat-free dishes to the staff and students in your school community.

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Film, Television & New Media - Unit 1

Areas of study in this chapter and unit question addressed:

Foundation

Languages
How do signs and symbols, codes and conventions create meaning?

Institutions
How are institutional practices influenced by social, political and economic factors?

Technologies
How are tools and associated processes used to create meaning?

Media Arts in Practice

Topics in this chapter:

MEDIA ARTS IN PRACTICE

Media language:
- Elements and principles of design, style, symbols

Modes:
- Design products (Pre-production)
- Media artworks (Production)

Media technologies:
- Hardware
- Software

Media techniques:
- Scripting style and interview
- Soundtrack creation, voice tone
- Light manipulation
- Narrative sequencing and components
- Visual polish or realism
- Format purpose

PLAN MEDIA ARTWORKS

Analyse **purpose and context**

Solutions and strategy to achieve goals

COMMUNICATE IDEAS

Suit **purpose and context** in pre-production and production

Media language to communicate ideas (Representations, thoughts, feelings, experiences, observations)

EVALUATE MEDIA ARTWORKS

Written, spoken or signed, responding using media arts terminology

Judgements on planning, reflecting on strengths, limitations, implications of media artworks and ideas

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3 Language codes and conventions of moving-image media

ABOUT LANGUAGE CODES AND CONVENTIONS

The rules of spoken or written language cannot be used to understand the sound effects or visual images in movies and video games. All that unites these modes is that they are all acts of communication. This uniting factor provides a starting point for analysis. The study of visual language can be helped by using some of the ideas from written communication. However, there is a need for a whole new way of investigating visual communication.



donfiore/Shutterstock.com

Figure 3.1 The **universal film leader** was a set length of film that was attached to the start of a film reel. Leaders help thread the projector, without damaging the theatrical film, and allow the projector to reach correct speed and check for synchronised sound. In the digital era, the film leader is no longer needed. However, it survives as a tradition and convention.

Signs, codes and conventions

The study of systems of signs and symbols is called **semiotics**. At the most basic level, communication takes place through **signs**, for example gestures, sounds, grunts and drawn images. It is possible to analyse at this level, although it reduces media language to tiny particles of communication. However, the reduction to signs allows all print, sound and visual aspects of media communication to be studied together.

In semiotics, there are generally three agreed areas of study:

1 **signs** – the smallest unit of communication
2 **codes and conventions** – ways in which signs are put together
3 **meaning** – the cultural meanings that are given to signs and codes.

Signs

All communication can be seen as messages created out of signs. A sign can be a smile, rude hand gesture, photograph, laugh or letter of the alphabet. The audience for a message derives meaning from the message by interpreting the signs.

Signs refer to something other than themselves. They work as pointers or directions, guiding the audience towards thinking in a certain way. For example, the collection of marks on a page that is the word 'apple' bears no resemblance to an actual apple. The marks point us in the direction of thinking about a real apple. While a photograph bears a resemblance to the object it captures, it is not the object itself. Therefore, a photograph is only directing us to think the thought, just like letters on a page.

The meaning of a sign depends on its cultural **context**. Communications professor John Fiske gives the example of an ox. In an English-speaking context, an ox may suggest a beast of burden or something served between two buns with French fries. For a Hindu in India, where killing this sacred animal can be punishable by a jail term, the word ox carries a very different meaning.

Types of signs

Terms defining or relating to signs include the following:

- **Signifiers** are the signs. For example, the word 'apple' is a signifier. What is signified are the

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many meanings of 'apple' – some of these could include associations such as primary school teachers and education systems, or the poisoned apple from the fairytale *Snow White*. Signifiers can also be called 'connotations' (see below).

- **Icons** are signs that resemble the object they refer to. Photographs are icons because they are images of things that exist. However, icons can also be words. Onomatopoeia works like an icon because it makes language sound like the thing it signifies. For example, the word 'crash' sounds like the noise it refers to.
- **Symbols** are signs that do not resemble the thing they refer to. They derive their meaning from associations built up over generations of habitual use. The olive branch representing peace, or the cross representing Christianity, are both easily recognised symbols with roots in antiquity.



North Monaco/Shutterstock.com

Figure 3.2 A Mercedes-Benz car is a powerful sign with strong associations. Connected with it are connotations of wealth, luxury and status. But the Mercedes-Benz car is polysemous. It can mean a range of other things to different people. For some, it could signify unfairness, greed and potentially crime. However, the variations of meaning are not endless – they deviate within limits.

Denotation and connotation

Creating meaning around a sign is achieved through denotation and connotation.

- **Denotation** is the term given to the naming and describing level of a sign. This level defines or denotes what the sign refers to. For example, the word 'dove' denotes a small bird from the same family as the pigeon.
- **Connotation** refers to the associated thoughts that any particular sign brings to mind. These might be anything connected, suggested or implied by the sign. For example, a white dove brings to mind the concept of peace, while a turtledove is connected with the imagery of love.

Polysemy refers to the capacity of all signs to be 'many signed' (polysemous); that is, to have more than one meaning. A dictionary is a good place to discover this. The average number of meanings for a single word (or sign) in English is four to five. The word 'range' is one of the most polysemous as it has 17 different meanings. Within a particular culture, signs are not usually regarded as endlessly polysemous. The variations that occur are within limits set by the social and cultural context (Figure 3.2).

Codes

Codes are systems of signs put together (usually in sequence) to create meaning. As with a code used by a spy, a set of rules governs the way the code is assembled and the linkages that will be made. Members of the community who use the code consent to the rules, and in this way make sense of the communication. Codes are therefore a product of the social and cultural context.

Writing is a code that allows us to represent thoughts on paper. Carefully schooled agreement among users allows the code to be understood. In the same way, sequences of images in a television drama are a code that allows us to participate in the narrative genre.

Types of codes

Code systems may be classified as either technical or symbolic (Figure 3.3).

- **Technical codes** are codes of the craft or the profession. They are technical in the sense of being techniques of construction. Technical codes include camera techniques, journalistic techniques and editing techniques.
- **Symbolic codes** are systems of signs that are embedded within the text itself. These signs have strong associative or connotative meanings connected with them. Symbolic codes include actors' clothing and body language.

Table 3.1 (page 46) lists the technical and symbolic codes of the media.

Media encoding and decoding

As with all systems of signs, coded communications must be constructed (encoded) by the sender and then interpreted (decoded) by the receiver.

Weblink
Codes

Table 3.1 The technical and symbolic codes of the main media forms. Each media form/medium favours particular codes, and this may affect the final representation.

MEDIA	TECHNICAL CODES	SYMBOLIC CODES
Television, film, photographs, computer-based multimedia (images)	• framing • composition • shot type • camera angle • lighting • special effects • editing • camera movement • sound volume • sound fades and cuts • sound layering • written (structural; e.g. division into parts, words on the screen such as 'later') • computer screen design • computer interactivity • computer sequencing • computer navigation	• symbolic objects • set design • actors' body language • actors' appearance • lighting • dialogue • sound effects • music • choice of language
Games	• platform/device based entry • first time player set-up/sign in • log on/select character or attributes • screen loading time – utilised for audience engagement • levels of control (e.g. pre-animated move vs full body articulation) • navigation/character interface/game mechanics • retain progressive game levels/score/ rewards achieved • stored setting preferences and previous teams • inter-player chat availability during play of game (POG) • final outcome or endless quest	• environment/music aesthetic • graphics and on-screen displays • character selection • character customisation in role-playing games (RPGs) • non-player characters (NPCs) • skins appearance (earned) • supplied accessories/tools and downloadable content (DLC) • sequential game-based rewards (known or unknown) • game cycles (e.g. time of day, spawning characters)
Radio, podcasts, physical media such as CDs, etc.	• fades and cuts • sound volume • sound layers	• dialogue • music • sound effects • silence
Newspapers, magazines, computer-based multimedia (text), social media, blogs etc.	• sentence construction • headlines • columns and reading/scrolling direction • page design • story placement • photograph and infographic placement • placement of moving video thumbnail/GIFs • layout (also refer to the codes for photographs) • frequency of posts/updates	• choice of emotive words • symbolic typefaces or fonts (e.g. Medieval) • content within the visuals (also refer to the codes for photographs) • urgency of moving content for attention
Digital signage, events and displays	• physical location • static image/timed loop/interactive response • robust staging (vandal resistant) • hidden master operating control from 'front of house' • scaled volume/size for audience and context • audience turnover – facilitated by dynamic intensity (draw in and release crowd)	• actor's/presenter's body language • actor's/presenter's eyeline in relation to the venue • symbolic codes of props/costumes • lighting/signage brightness and hue • dialogue/music/silence • choice of text/language • themed colour (such as branding)

MAP SYLLABUS

- **Encoding** refers to the process of making codes. Producers of texts encode their messages using systems of signs. Institutional issues influence this process.
- **Decoding** refers to the reading of coded messages by the receiver. Issues related to audience have an impact on this process.



Courtesy Matchbox Pictures

Figure 3.3 Creator Benjamin Law with the cast of *The Family Law* (2016–2019). The television comedy is loosely based on his own teenage years, starring Tristan Ngo as the partly fictionalised young Benjamin Law. It is set in the Sunshine Coast, Queensland. Technical codes of production are those based on the technology – in this case, the camera taking the shot and the choice of angle, framing, etc. Symbolic codes are those in the image itself, including costume, setting, body language, etc.

Conventions

Conventions are habits or accepted ways of doing things. Through repeated experiences, often over generations, audiences become familiar with the procedures of conventions.

The media have hundreds of conventions. Each of them has been built up over so many years that the audience believes they are just common sense. In television and film, for example, a fade to black may indicate the passing of time. Had Hollywood developed differently, it could just as easily have been a fade to white (which instead tends to suggest death or a dream).

Conventions operate by general agreement with the audience. They are therefore the social and cultural component of signs and codes.

Binary oppositions

Thinking in terms of oppositions (e.g. masculine/feminine, black/white, active/passive, good/bad, rich/poor) is very human. Often we have to remind ourselves that things are not always black and white, but rather many shades of grey. **Binary oppositions** are an outcome of our way of communicating through signs, codes and conventions. Pairing opposites has an interesting effect on our thinking about power. Educators Emma and Sophie Robinson say oppositions have the effect of including or excluding individuals or social groups.

Binary opposites are not usually equal to each other. More often they are locked in a power struggle for dominance. For example, the gender opposites of male and female have been engaged in a 'battle of the sexes' since time immemorial.

Commutation

The meaning of a sign, code or convention can often be discovered by **commuting** it into something else. Movement, transfer or exchange of a code can result in vastly different meanings. For example, if the white clothes of the traditional melodrama hero were commuted to black, there would be a change in meaning. This change communicates to us the cultural significance of white clothes.

Meaning

Meaning derives from the cultural and social context just as much as it does from the text (Figure 3.4). Indonesian shadow theatre would have little meaning to a western audience because they do not have access to the cultural context.

Even within the same culture, different meanings can be read into one text. A text provides information-rich sequences that are rather like building blocks. Most people would use the blocks to build understandings that look similar, but each person's ideas would be a little different. Life

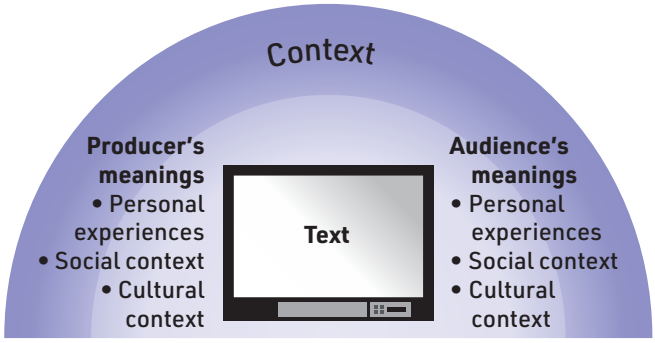


Figure 3.4 A text (e.g. a television program) exists within a social and cultural context. Producers and audiences within these contexts each contribute to the meaning of the text. Certain influences affect the producers, and the audience is subject to a range of other influences. Put simply, meaning is made on both sides of the text.

experiences, gender, race or class may all be factors influencing a person's 'construction'. Some people could build quite unusual structures, yet still be using the same set of building blocks. In the same way, people make different interpretations of the blocks of meaning that are media texts.

3.1 ACTIVITIES

Template
Activity 3.1

1 Title sequences of movies and television programs are often rich in meaningful signs, as producers show the key elements of the program and the audience to which they are appealing. **Respond** to the areas of activity in the following table. *Minority Report* (2002) has opening scenes of characters who themselves aim to interpret images.

ANALYSE	EVALUATE	APPLY
Analyse the main elements of the sequence, **dissecting** into individual scenes (or shots) and note the use of accepted **codes and conventions.** **Describe** any use of music or text that supports audience interpretation.	**Evaluate** the **strengths and limitations** of the title sequence using audience appeal as the criterion. Draw a conclusion about the broader philosophical issues this film may explore.	**Apply** the **terminology** from Table 3.1 (page 46). Cite a number of specific shots from the screen in sentences to explain how **signs, codes and conventions** have been expertly used to create meaning for the audience. Do this for **technical** and **symbolic codes**.

2 Collect images (or words) you believe are clearly more polysemous than most. The meaning of these signs will depend on context. You will be able to change the meaning to some degree by changing the context.
Design a numbered sequence of the images to communicate a narrative.
Analyse the range of potential meanings that you can see.
Apply an annotation about each, **clarifying** how the context could alter the meaning.
Create dialogue or voice-over captions to anchor the meaning to a particular interpretation you wish the audience to make for each image.

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4 Camera codes and conventions and *mise en scène*

CAMERA CODES AND CONVENTIONS

Moving-image media have been around for a little over a century, and in that time a number of codes and conventions have developed. These are associated with production elements such as shot size, camera movement and so on. Everyone now has grown up with the cinema, and so the codes and conventions are well understood by audiences.

The use of the camera in a narrative has the capacity to transform the meaning of the material being depicted. The main variables for the camera are:

- the shot itself
- shot distance
- camera angle
- camera lens and depth of field (focus)
- framing and shot composition
- camera movement.

The meaning of each of these is very dependent on the context. The use of a particular camera element is determined by the narrative. However, there are some very broad general meanings that can be applied.

The shot

The **shot** is the prime vehicle for carrying the narrative. In the visual language of photography, television and film, the shot is the smallest unit of communication. It is equivalent to a short sentence in prose. A typical Hollywood movie has between 800 and 1200 shots, or picture statements.

Like sentences, picture statements have subjects. The picture statement may be saying, 'Look at these great wide-open plains.' The next shot may say, 'Look at this man on a horse – see what he is doing.' Picture statements are usually changed for one of two reasons: a new subject is being introduced, or something different about the same subject is going to be shown.

In film, the term 'shot' has at least two definitions, and in the early days of cinema they were clearly distinguished. The arrival of computer-based media has tended to blur the differences between the two. In the first definition (camera on/off), a shot is the interval of time from when the camera is first turned on in a scene until the stop button is pressed. This definition includes any continuous movement within the shot. In the second, less common definition

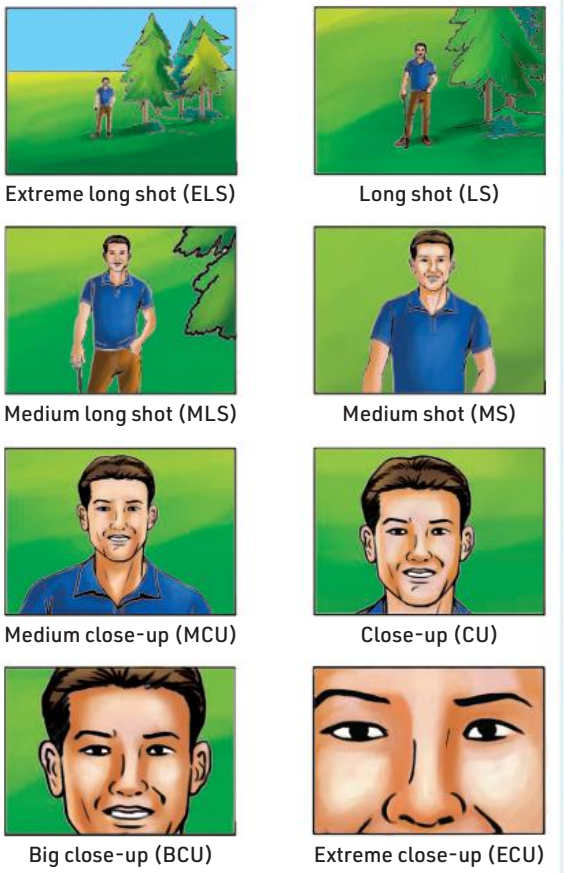


Figure 4.1 The eight shot sizes. The human body is traditionally used to define the size of the shot. We measure everything against ourselves.

Weblink
The 30 camera shots every film fan needs to know

Resource
The eight shot sizes poster

(position change), the shot is the duration of time until the camera is moved to another position. Depending on how strictly it is interpreted, this definition may or may not include continuous camera movement.

A filmmaker or photographer can consider five variables when creating a shot: shot size, framing, focus, angle and movement.

Length of takes

At the immediate opening of a film, the size of shots tends to be larger, and the same thing happens at the opening of scenes. Shot duration is often longer in the openings of individual scenes as well. Shots tend to be about five to eight seconds long, but the duration of introductory shots is often twice that.

When the narrative is in its early stages, audiences need to gather as much information as they can about the characters and setting. The pace of editing needs to be slower and the shot needs to last longer. Once the audience is familiar with the characters, the shot duration can be cut down.

Length of **take** falls under the umbrella of camera decisions because it requires the camera operator to perform it. However, length of take is also an editing decision. The editor may decide to reduce the length of take in order to increase the pace.

Uninterrupted shots of more than one minute are called long takes. One of the most famous long takes in cinema history is at the opening of Orson Welles's ***film noir*** classic *Touch of Evil* (1958). It lasts for three minutes. A bomb is planted in a car. The camera cranes up to give a bird's-eye view, then tracks off following the car. The man and woman in the car engage in ordinary conversation, while the audience is held in suspense. The shot closes with the inevitable explosion. Robert Altman pays homage to this shot in his eight-minute opening take in *The Player* (1992). An exceptionally long take begins the film *Gravity* (2013). This is a complex shot made with the help of computer-generated imagery. It lasts for 17 minutes and draws the audience completely into the world of the story. The art film *Russian Ark* (2002) was deliberately filmed at the Winter Palace as one single **Steadicam** shot that lasted 96 minutes: a ghostly narrator floats through various rooms of the palace encountering different characters from the 300-year history of the city of Saint Petersburg up until 1913 (just before the 1917 Russian Revolution).

Shot sizes and narrative purposes

Alfred Hitchcock once told French film director and critic François Truffaut that the size of an object in the frame should be roughly in proportion to its importance in the story at that particular time. Directors choose their shot sizes carefully to suit the narrative.

There are eight main shot sizes (Figure 4.1). Visual emphasis is directly related to the size of the subject in the shot. The shot size also determines the amount of visual material that can be included. Smaller shot sizes concentrate audience attention. Therefore, the choice of which shot to use is among the most fundamental decisions every director makes.

Extreme long shot (ELS)

The extreme long shot (ELS) shows a wide view of the complete setting, such as a coral reef in the middle of a vast ocean. In human terms, a person would be barely visible in the scene (Figure 4.2). The ELS is almost always an exterior shot. ELSs are often highly composed and use traditional techniques such as the rule of thirds and diagonals to focus attention on particular zones (see page 59). ELSs are usually held for a longer time because it can take a while for the audience to absorb all the information.

In the narrative, an ELS has several functions:

- An ELS gives a sense of scale and also provides location. ELSs are often used in those genres that rely on landscape: epic movies, historical movies, Westerns, road movies and science-fiction movies.
- An ELS can be used to provide a frame of reference for the closer shots that follow. For this reason, they are often used as **establishing shots**.
- An ELS can show spatial relationships and the way groups of people are going to come into play with each other. The ELS is also used for grand scale with massed human subjects. For example, an ELS is often used to show a battle scene.



Atlaspix/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.2 An ELS from *The Revenant* (2015). Some professionals will call these **wide shots**, especially without a human figure or if it is just a bit wider than a standard long shot. This scene was shot in Alberta, Canada, where the temperature rarely reached above –30 degrees Centigrade. Diagonal lines formed by the mountains direct the viewer's attention to the human figure. The character is a mere speck on the flat expanse of snow, but the attention is also drawn to him because of movement and contrast.

Long shot (LS)

A long shot (LS) is closer than an ELS but still shows the complete scene. On a human scale, a human figure is clearly visible, and the complete person fits easily within the frame. In a typical LS, the background still dominates the human figure. The term 'long shot' can be imprecise. The closest an LS gets to a person is to show the whole human body from head to toe. At its furthest, an LS keeps the human body as dominant in the frame. However, emotions are not easily read at this distance.

The LS is one of the most common shots in the cinema.

- An LS is used in narrative to establish the scene and introduce characters. Genres that focus more on character or the human figure and less on landscape tend to use a lot of LSs. Such genres include musicals, martial arts films and action movies. LSs are often used in these genres to allow us to see characters displaying their skills. An LS allows the audience to see the full body in movement.
- An LS can be used as an establishing shot, particularly to begin or leave a scene. It shows where all the characters are in relation to each other in the scene, establishing **eyelines**. It also gives a glimpse of the complete action.
- Characters in a group are often filmed in LS. This allows characters to be recognised, but facial expressions cannot easily be read.
- LSs can be used to limit emotional involvement with characters. For instance, antagonists are more often filmed in LS than protagonists are (Figure 4.3).



Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.3 The LS has several purposes in the narrative. It can introduce characters or work as an establishing shot. It also tends to create emotional distance because we cannot read facial expressions in an LS. In this image from *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2014), the characters filmed in LS would not generate the same level of audience distress were they to become casualties.

Medium long shot (MLS)

The medium long shot (MLS) still provides a great deal of information about the setting. Human characters can be seen in detail and almost all of the body (usually from just below the knees) is in the frame.

French filmmakers once called this 'the American shot', as it was very common in Hollywood Westerns and during the *film noir* period.

- A common purpose of the MLS is to provide for both dialogue and action. In *noir* films, a detective may be surrounded by a carefully arranged formation of underworld characters.
- An MLS is often used for **two-shots** because there is room in the frame for more than one character. This can save on editing dialogue in post-production.
- Some emotion can be seen, so an MLS is suitable when other characters and landscapes are involved in emotional relationships.

Medium shot (MS)

The medium shot (MS), sometimes called mid-shot, is defined by some as 'not too close, not too far'. On the human body, an MS would start at around the waist and include a little space above the head (Figure 4.4). Gesture and expression are now more clearly visible.



Retro AdArchives/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.4 An MS from a watch advertisement featuring the James Bond character from *Spectre* (2015). The MS is wide enough to allow extra information such as paid product placement in movies. *Die Another Day* was mocked as *Buy Another Day*, with so many sponsored products in shot. After earlier financial trouble, some of the later films in the spy franchise covered entire production costs before showing to any audiences.

The MS is ideal for

- showing conversations between one or more characters, often until a key moment arrives when there is a cut to close-up
- showing dialogue together with some limited action
- revealing aspects of body language and facial expression combined; a significant part of the body – the upper body – is still included
- providing the midway point in a sequence from LS to close-up.

Medium close-up (MCU)

The medium close-up (MCU) frames the subject moderately closely. The head and shoulders fit comfortably in the frame with a little room above the head (Figure 4.5).

- An MCU allows the audience to see facial expressions and emotions.
- An MCU also allows the audience to see body language.
- Background information is still visible, although it is often defocused. The director can still take advantage of *mise en scène* (e.g. props, costumes, landscape, lighting carefully placed in the scene).
- An MCU increases emotional involvement.



AAP Image/Supplied by Blackfella Films/Matt Nettheim

Figure 4.5 Eddie Mabo (Jimi Bani) and his wife Bonita (Deborah Mailman), in the kitchen of their Townsville house, from the television miniseries *Mabo* (2012). An MCU shows the head and shoulders. *Mabo* is a biopic about Torres Strait Islander man Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo, who was a gardener on campus at James Cook University in Townsville. He led a campaign all the way to the High Court of Australia that would eventually establish the principle of native title. Native title gave Indigenous Australians land rights. It established that the land was inhabited and owned before Europeans arrived. Before that High Court decision in 1992, it was assumed that Indigenous people had no system of ownership, and that the land was vacant (*terra nullius*).

Close-up (CU)

The close-up (CU) shows the detail of a subject. A typical CU shows only the head of a person, usually from the middle of the neck upwards. Close-ups often use a shallow depth of field. This is so the audience focuses only on the important details.



Johner Images/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.6 This phone framing *functions* as a CU, despite the frame showing more of the human body. A section of the screen is consumed by icons, comments or titles, leaving only an active CU area. Sign language also requires a section of the screen to be available, such as the 2021 world-first attempt at an **Auslan** activated filter from Optus. In some ways, this makes a section of the shot a different channel of communication to the close-up section of face remaining.

The existence of the CU is one of the reasons acting for film differs from acting for the stage.

- The CU is often used in narrative to show emotion. It is common in both film and television, but television narrative relies more heavily on it. Before the advent of film, a close-up view of a face was usually only seen in intimate real-life situations.
- Audience identification is much stronger when characters are shot in CU.
- A CU is often used at plot turning points and moments of high emotion.
- A CU can convey the importance of the subject – the more space is devoted to something in the frame, the more important it is in the narrative.

Still photographers may choose to use a **vertical format** to communicate these shot sizes. Some devices and platforms tend to impose a format on the user which must still accommodate shot size.

Big close-up (BCU)

A big close-up (BCU) – some say tight CU – shows the detail of its subject, with the emphasis on the most important features. For example, a BCU might show the area from the middle of the forehead to just above the chin; this would show the **social triangle** of the eyes and mouth.

The BCU fulfils a similar function to the CU, with more intensity.

- BCUs are used to show extremes of emotion.
- A BCU completely restricts background information.

Extreme close-up (ECU)

The extreme close-up (ECU) shows only a portion of detail or magnifies something that is minute.

An example of an ECU would be a dramatic focus on someone's eyes (Figure 4.7). Often an ECU is used to create a sense of mystery. It can be very effective in hiding what something is until a dramatic camera pull-back.

1 An ECU directs the audience to believe that the detail is extremely important in the narrative. It can often be useful for foreshadowing. Sometimes an ECU of an object means it is about to be used; for example, a close-up of a gun immediately suggests its appearance or use in the next shot.
2 An ECU is often used when a detail is symbolic.



iStock.com/janiecbros

Figure 4.7 ECUs can be used to show a detail of emotion, such as a tear drop. They are often used when the detail is symbolic. The use of ECUs indicates that the detail is extremely important in the narrative.

Camera angle and the narrative

The camera angle can often serve as a director's comment on the subject matter. It allows the director to manipulate the audience's reaction to the material in the shot. The camera angle sets up the relationship the audience has with the subject of the shot. Camera angle can also establish the power relations between characters on screen.

There are five main camera angles: eye-level, high, extremely high (or bird's-eye), low and canted (or Dutch).

Weblinks

Camera angles: the art of manipulation

AI for filmmaking

CineScale – a dataset of cinematic shot scale in movies

Table 4.1 The range of shot sizes used in selected films from the database of Australian film historian Barry Salt. ASL refers to average shot length of the 20th century (in seconds). Note the increase in frequency of BCUs and the decrease in ELSs over time.

TITLE	YEAR	ASL (SECONDS)	FREQUENCY OF SHOT TYPE						
			BCU	CU	MCU	MS	MLS	LS	ELS
The Birth of a Nation	1915	7	1	19	26	78	126	172	79
Battleship Potemkin	1925	3	32	75	67	69	71	160	26
The Birds	1963	5.3	59	127	111	69	57	58	19
Beetlejuice	1988	4.2	44	166	106	50	66	55	12
Dark City	1998	2	153	112	44	39	42	97	12
10 Things I Hate About You	1999	6.7	64	224	82	37	36	53	3
The Blair Witch Project	1999	15.8	96	74	70	93	88	79	0
The Sixth Sense	1999	8.6	91	135	93	59	59	60	2

Source: Cinemetrics.lv. http://www.cinemetrics.lv/salt.php

Eye-level angle

The height to which the camera is most often adjusted is eye level. This is how we experience the world, so shooting at this level creates a feeling of normality.

In a narrative, eye-level shots suggest realism. They are routine, everyday shots that encourage the audience to suspend disbelief and enter into the world of the story.

High camera angle (HCA)

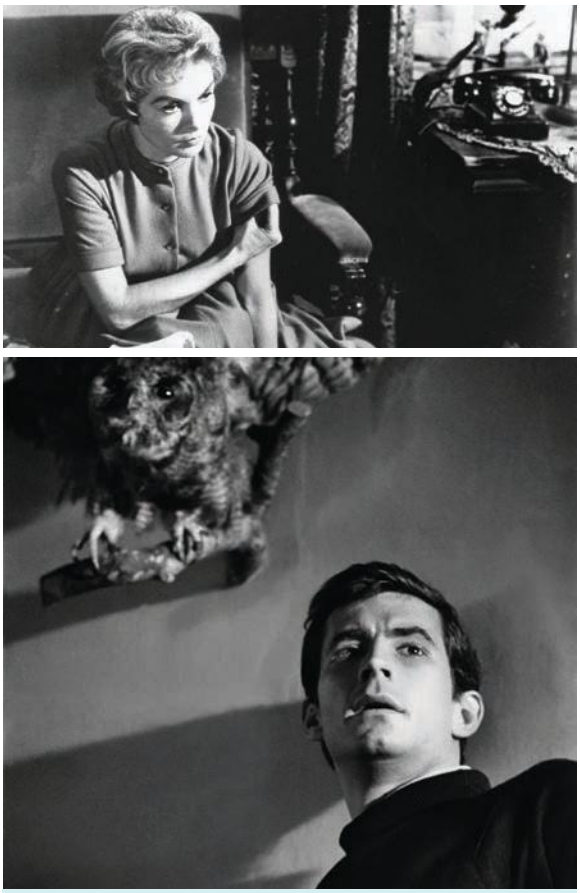
This angle is created when the camera is positioned high and tilts down on the subject. High camera angles (HCAs) tend to place the audience in the position of an adult looking down on a child. The subject looks inferior or unimportant and the viewer feels superior.

In narratives, HCAs tend to suggest vulnerability (Figure 4.8). A HCA also tends to slow down movement. It is not effective in giving a sense of urgency or speed. However, HCAs do increase the importance of the surrounding environment, making the person seem less important. HCAs can also give the audience the feeling that characters are overwhelmed or stressed.

Extremely high camera angle

If the camera is very high, almost overhead, it gives a bird's-eye view of the subject. This can create a feeling that the viewer is like a god looking down on events. This type of shot is sometimes called an **overshot**.

In a narrative, an extremely high camera angle is often used at the end of scenes. In certain cases, it can suggest impending death or punishment. A spectacular example of this occurs at the end of the cult road movie *Easy Rider* (1969). The overshot can



SHAMLEY PRODUCTIONS/RGR Collection/ Alamy Stock Photo

FlixPix/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.8 In the film *Psycho* (1960), Marion Crane steals $40 000 and drives out of Phoenix, Arizona, to California, where she stays in the Bates Motel. She has an uncomfortable supper with owner Norman Bates. She feels intimidated by Norman, and the high camera angle (top) has the narrative purpose of making us feel her lack of power and vulnerability. The low camera angle shot of Norman (bottom) gives him extra power and superiority. The audience also feels menaced not only because of the low camera angle shot of Norman, but also because of the low camera angle of the stuffed bird of prey in shot above him.

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be used to hide aspects of character, as occurs in *Psycho* (1960) when Norman Bates is filmed directly overhead on the staircase.

Low camera angle (LCA)

When the camera is low to the ground and tilts upward at its subject, the viewer feels inferior or threatened (Figure 4.9). The subject seems overpowering. A low camera angle (LCA) creates the perspective of a child looking up at an all-powerful adult.

In the narrative, an LCA can suggest someone is threatening (Figure 4.8) or it can suggest someone is superior or respected. The interpretation depends on the context. The LCA also tends to speed up movement, so it is good for violent scenes. It can create a sense of confusion. Information about the environment is limited because the LCA captures mostly ceilings and skies.



United Archives GmbH/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.9 An extreme LCA from *Batman Begins* (2005) makes the audience feel like vulnerable prey. The shot with a spiral staircase is an intertextual reminder of a shot in *The Third Man* (1949). LCAs are usually not so dramatic, as even a minor lowering can produce a narrative effect.

Canted (or Dutch) angle

When the camera is canted or tilted to one side so that the horizon is on an angle, it creates an effect that is disorienting and unsettling for the audience. It feels off-balance and therefore suggests a crazy world. Dutch angle was commonly used in **German Expressionism**.

In the narrative, Dutch angles create a sense of disorientation and confusion. If there is a sequence of canted shots, it is tradition to tilt from one side to the other, so a left-canted shot is followed by a right-canted shot. Dutch angles can be seen in the opening scenes of *Bagdad Cafe* (1987), where the angles add to the foreignness of the situation and reflect the domestic conflict between a German couple lost in the American desert. Dutch angles are also used in *The Third Man* (1949) to show the protagonist's disorientation.

Camera lenses and depth of field

Camera lenses allow the filmmaker to make the settings and spaces of the film suit the purposes of the narrative. Different lenses can make the subject matter of the shot look quite different.

Weblinks
Types of lenses

How different film lenses affect how we perceive movies

Favourite focal lengths of famous directors

Types of camera lenses

Camera lenses come in three basic ranges based on their focal length. Focal length determines the angle of view. It is basically defined as the distance from a midpoint in the lens to the focal point on the film or imaging surface (sometimes called the picture or



Corinna Huter/Shutterstock.com

Figure 4.10a The wide angle lens combines with the high angle LS to exaggerate distance. Riders at the back appear to shrink with the perspective.



Hafiz Johari/Shutterstock.com

Figure 4.10b A telephoto lens compresses the distance, making the riders seem even closer to each other than they are. The bikes behind appear the same size on screen as those at the front. 'Long lenses' are a common choice in televised sport to bring the audience 'into' the action. When heading towards the camera, the 350 kmp/h top speed is not obvious from any change in perspective.

focal plane). Focal length is measured in millimetres. The following ranges refer to 35-millimetre movie cameras (as the camera size format changes the impression given by each lens size).

- **Normal movie lenses** (focal length 27–75 millimetres) are roughly approximate to the perspective of the human eye. There is no distortion apparent.
- **Wide-angle movie lenses** (focal length less than 27 millimetres) provide a wider angle of vision than the human eye. They make the scene look wider and deeper. For example, the shot in Figure 4.2 from *The Revenant* (2015) uses a wide-angle lens. Characters and objects in the foreground look larger; characters and objects in the background look smaller (Figure 4.10a).
- **Telephoto movie lenses** (focal length 75–1000 millimetres) compress the distances between the foreground and background. This makes objects appear to be much closer together, flattening the perspective. These lenses also seem to slow down movement towards the camera. This is because distances are compressed, and close figures seem to be a similar size to more distant ones (flattened perspective; Figure 4.10b).

Depth of field

A filmmaker can use focus to make the audience pay attention to certain details within the narrative. Selective focus can be used to draw attention to someone's face, for example. The background and other details can be downplayed by keeping them out of focus.

The area of the frame that is in sharp focus is called the depth of field. The depth of this area is determined by the length of the lens and the size of aperture used. Generally, a wide-angle lens has a greater depth of field than a telephoto lens – that is, more of the image will be in focus with a wide-angle lens.

There are two main types and usages of depth of field: deep focus and selective focus.

Deep focus

The term 'deep focus' is applied to films that have everything in focus, from the foreground to the distant background. Deep focus films need lots of light, a small camera aperture, a fast wide-angle lens and fast film stock. Deep focus tends to favour long takes. With so much of the frame in focus, there is more information for the audience to absorb. Therefore, there is a greater need to linger on the shot. Deep focus also favours the 'invisible style' of **continuity editing** (see page 82). Movies using deep focus include *Citizen Kane* (1941), *Jaws* (1975) and *The Untouchables* (1987).



Collection Christophel/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.11 The deep focus technique is evident in this shot from *Citizen Kane* (1941) showing Kane (Orson Welles) in the foreground, addressing a rapt audience of businessmen at a long banqueting table.

Because deep focus mimics the operation of the human eye, it creates a greater sense of **realism**. The filmed image looks more like the real world. Some critics say this allows the audience to make up their own minds about meaning a lot more easily – just as they do in real life.

Selective focus

Most modern films use a selective or shallow focus technique, where only some of the shot is in focus (Figure 4.12). Selective focus or shallow focus relies more on quick cutting and lots of close-ups. It is therefore more suited to **montage** editing (see page 81) and the quicker pace of many films.



AF archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.12 Selective focus in *Avatar* (2009). Deep focus is disappearing from the modern cinema, says film analyst David Bordwell. Shot lengths are decreasing, and framing is getting closer. Modern dialogue scenes are often shot in MS or CU.

Selective focus is often said to be less realist in its approach, and more expressive and personal. Because the audience seems to see less of the real world, the director's personal view is strengthened. A film that exemplifies the selective focus approach is Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge!* (2001).

Changing focus

Sometimes the focus is changed in the middle of a single shot. The two main kinds of focus change are follow focus and pull (or rack) focus.

- **Follow focus.** The camera follows the moving subject, keeping the subject in focus while the background changes.
- **Pull (or rack) focus.** The focus suddenly changes in order to direct attention away from one subject and towards another. For example, a shot with wire net fencing in sharp focus may suddenly pull focus onto the prisoners exercising in the enclosed yard beyond.

New kinds of focus change have come into being since focus and perspective control lenses have become commonly available.

- **Digital defocus (miniature effect).** The impression of sharp focus can be increased by blurring the extremities of a frame with digital tools. Leaving an un-modified band of the picture in focus can be achieved during editing, or in camera; commonly called a miniature effect (see Figure 4.13).
- **Blurring the horizontal edge.** The addition of digital blurring is most effective as a horizontal top-and-bottom blurring of a high angle shot. It is most convincing when fairly zoomed in and avoiding human figures.
- **Blurring the vertical edge.** Digital blurring can also be applied to the vertical edge, matching the objects in a shot, such as a wall receding from the camera.
- **Tilt-shift lens** blurring. This achieves the miniature-look defocus effect by deliberately mis-aligning the **back focus** of the lens with the image sensor. Exaggerated edge blurring can be rotated for a section of sharp focus at any angle.

In the new kind of selective focuses, the cultural knowledge built up over generations growing up with traditional cameras prepares the audience to think that the lens 'struggles' to pick exact focus. We subconsciously interpret this as a miniscule model because we recognise how focus behaves when the camera is very close. This can be used in cinema to communicate insignificance. *Don't Look Up* (2021) features a number of montages of a world that ignores the predicted collision course of a comet. Forty-five minutes into the film a digital miniature effect is used on a freeway shot, reminding the audience that human civilisation is no match for the massive natural disaster.



Artur Kamalov/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.13 The miniature effect uses exaggerated blurring to imply the historic cathedral in Florence is very small. The church is so much taller than rest of the renaissance city, it risks spoiling the illusion with a blurred dome. Foreground objects can remain sharp by digitally tracing around them, or by combining image data from multiple **exposures** in still photography.

Framing

The photographic frame is not just a simple border, according to American film academics David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson. It is not like the margin of a page. The frame produces a vantage point. It gives a point of view and it selects some details over others. The frame lets us see some things and not others.

Bordwell and Thompson list four main ways that framing can influence what the audience sees:

1 aspect ratio
2 on-screen and off-screen space
3 angle, height and distance
4 frame movement.

1 Aspect ratio

The size and shape of the frame is called the aspect ratio because it is based on the ratio of width to height (gained by dividing width by height). The ratio must be selected according to the technology and the content: context and purpose. The old, retro television ratio is 4:3 or 1.33:1, the same as vintage **arcade video games**.

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These games used cathode ray tube monitors mounted sideways, selected for the context of a stand-alone cabinet. Cinema uses a variety of ratios, but most widescreen formats are slightly larger than 16:9, with 1.85:1 the most common. However, some epic films such as *The Lord of the Rings* (2001, 2002, 2003) use **CinemaScope**, with a ratio of 2.35:1. **Widescreen** television uses 16:9 or 1.78:1 and became standard during the 1990s and was devised as a compromise format between CinemaScope and 4:3.

dpa picture alliance/Alamy Stock Photo



Figure 4.14 Broadcasters may use the aspect ratio to frame for simultaneous live messaging to both hearing and deaf audiences during public emergencies. For the deaf community, vertical aspect ratios and framing are critical to allow signing space to communicate. This can be achieved using **video insets** (picture in picture) for interpreters or by live-framing the interpreter and the speaker within the one horizontal aspect ratio.

Orientation

Cinema and TV screens (and usually computers) have a fixed display orientation, which demands a '**landscape**' orientation. This means that the width exceeds the height of the frame. Still photography and other video applications may opt for a vertical or '**portrait**' orientation. Remembering that portraiture has its origins in painting, 2:3 vertical is common in photography and is one of the standard aspect ratios for full frame DSLR cameras. **Vertical formats** are assumed and often dictated by social media applications and tailored for integration with phone-based photography. Phones are often proportioned and designed for one-handed use in a vertical mode and not every platform will easily accommodate switching orientation.

Changing or fitting aspect ratios

- **Anamorphic distortion**: Developed to squeeze wide pictures onto a skinnier film, **anamorphic** lenses were used to squash and then stretch the image for projection. Digital videos can distort in this way, producing squashed characters, from having incorrect **pixel** information or selecting a mis-matched aspect ratio.
- **Maintaining aspect ratio:** Display settings can auto-detect changes and jump sizes during viewing. Some devices and applications will default to a particular aspect ratio or set to the first imported item. This can be a problem for productions that combine footage from different sources. One way to stabilise format is to fill the blank space. Vertical black fill at either side of the picture is called a **pillarbox**, and horizontal areas top and bottom is known as **letterbox**. Experimental cinema and webpages may use multiple aspect ratios or split-screens within one production. Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014) uses different aspect ratios for different eras in the story.

Table 4.2 Aspect ratio must match context and purpose, which includes technical constraints of the platform and communicating with a target audience.

	Channel 9	Facebook	Instagram	TikTok	Snapchat	X	LinkedIn	YouTube
Video aspect ratios	16:9 (25fps)	9:16 16:9	9:16	9:16 16:9	9:16	1:2.39–2.39:1 range	1:2.4 2.4:1	16:9 4:3 shorts 9:16 1:1
Video ads	16:9	1:1 4:5 – mobile only	1:1	9:16 1:1	Ads 9:16	16:9 1:1	9:16 4:5 1:1	9:16 1:1 16:9
	GH tech/Alamy Stock Photo	Multi Visual Project/ Shutterstock.com	Brilliantist Studio/ Shutterstock.com	AsiaParveen/ Shutterstock.com	Kiran Jyothi VP/ Shutterstock.com	Prehistorik/ Shutterstock.com	MariaLev/ Shutterstock.com	kimman/ Shutterstock.com

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2 On-screen and off-screen space

When the audience sees a shot on screen, everyone assumes that space and life continue consistently outside the frame and all around it. How a director uses this assumption can be important to the narrative. An example of this is the use of looking space or talking space. This is an area of negative or empty space in front of a framed person, which suggests someone else is outside the frame (Figure 4.15). Another way of suggesting space outside the frame is to use **eyelines**. A character can appear to look towards a point outside the frame.



Figure 4.15 Space outside the frame is suggested in both these shots. Shot A uses 'looking space' to suggest that the character is talking to someone outside the frame. Shot B has negative space behind the person, suggesting action is happening, or is about to happen, outside the frame behind the character.

3 Angle, height and distance

The idea of the frame as a vantage point suggests that framing places the viewer in a certain position – perhaps above or below the subject, or close or far in the distance. Each of these positions affects the narrative in some way.

4 Frame movement

As the camera moves, so too does the frame. How this happens in relation to the events on the screen changes our involvement in the story.



Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.16 Neo stops the bullets in *The Matrix* (1999). The shimmering trajectories create diagonal 'leading lines' all pointing to the main character. These direct the audience's attention to Neo and position him within the narrative as 'the hero' of the story.

Composition

Composing a shot is a matter of arranging the elements to create a desirable effect within the narrative. The following conventions are among the most commonly used.

- **Lines and diagonals.** Placing elements on imaginary lines can create interesting effects. The lines may be horizontal, vertical or diagonal across the image. In a narrative, diagonal lines build a sense of drama and may be used to direct attention towards a character or event (Figure 4.16). For example, the shot in Figure 4.2 (see page 51) from *The Revenant* (2015) uses diagonals to heighten the sense of emptiness.
- **Rule of thirds.** Some say the subject of a photograph should never be placed in the centre of the frame. Instead, the focus of interest should be at the intersection of imaginary lines that divide the frame into thirds (Figure 4.17).

Composition is placed in the camera section because it requires the camera operator to compose aspects of the shot. However, composition is also a technique of *mise en scène*. The director decides which elements to include and how to arrange them.

Weblinks

Ultimate guide to social media video sizes

Wes Anderson on the colours and ratios of *The Grand Budapest Hotel*

Movie theatres received instructions on how to project Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel*

Life of Pi 'flying fish' clip

Camera movement

Camera movement in a shot directs the audience to where the filmmaker wants them to look. It can help establish visual emphasis. But the movement of the camera can also be like our own movements. For example, when the camera moves in, it is as though we have moved closer. Camera movement

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Photo 12/Universal Images Group/Getty Images

Figure 4.17 *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima* was the most reprinted photograph of World War II. Victorious but exhausted, a small group of marines climbed Mount Suribachi to hoist the flag. Notice the use of strong diagonals and the application of the rule of thirds in the photograph. Notice also how inspired and triumphant this photograph is: the flag is flying upwards not drooping; all men are engaged in the struggle, the last reaching upwards, the first crouched down; the open sky dominates the space; and the wreckage of war forms a base for victory.



Abaca Press/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.18 The rule of thirds for composition adapts for different aspect ratios and 'weight' of objects in the composition. Note how the aspect ratio matches the changed angle of the flagpole when compared to Figure 4.17. Similarity to the famous Iwo Jima photo made this image carry great meaning for Americans and the war-like response to the 2001 9/11 terrorist attack.

is important in positioning the audience within the narrative.

Following are the main types of camera movements and their narrative purpose.

Panning shot

The term **panning** is derived from 'panorama' and means moving a camera in a long horizontal sweep from one side of a scene to another. For a pan, the body of the camera must remain in one place; only the lens moves. Since a long rotation from left or right can be difficult to perform, most camera operators use a tripod. Pans occur in real time; they cannot be edited down or shortened very easily. Therefore, pans are placed at moments in the narrative when there is sufficient time – often at the beginning of the movie.

Swish, zip or whip pans are extremely fast and tend to blur everything between the start and finish of the pan. They could indicate moving to another location at the same time in the story, or imply a fast forward in the same location. Both of these meanings are exaggerations of a standard cut, which can add a comic-book feel.

In a narrative, a pan helps to set the scene. For this reason, pans are often used as establishing shots. A pan can also be used to heighten the suspense in a narrative, as the audience scans the scene, waiting to be shown something. In this way, a pan can also be used as a point-of-view (POV) shot to show what a character sees as they scan the scene. Probably the most analysed pan in cinema history is the opening shot of *Psycho* (1960). At the start of the narrative, this pan across the city hints at the way 'evil' can randomly enter the lives of ordinary people.

Tracking shot

In a **tracking shot**, the camera moves along the ground: forward, backward, diagonally or from side to side. Small railway-like tracks can be laid where outdoor ground undulates, and a set path is required (Figure 4.19). Steadicams may be substituted for these shots if it saves set-up time.

In a narrative, a tracking shot moves the audience through the scene, making it seem more three-dimensional. It is also very precise about what is important: the subject being followed. Tracking and dollying lend narrative significance or importance to the subject. For instance, tracking shots are used to introduce the characters in *GoodFellas* (1990).

A **trucking shot** is sometimes used to describe a particular kind of tracking shot. It is specific to a sideways movement and usually implies following an object. *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) shows Indiana Jones from a low angle, trucking shot. Ironically, he is escaping under a moving truck in the scene. The



Film Victoria, photo by Daniel May

Figure 4.19 A tracking shot being filmed for HBO's *The Pacific* (2010) outside Flinders Street Station, Melbourne. Note that a small section of track has been laid down to allow the camera dolly to move smoothly.

stunt required a trench to be dug along the length of the road and was inspired by the horse chase in *Stagecoach* (1939). This scene also made use of trucking shots to keep up horses at full gallop.

Arc shot

Tracks can be set-up in a closed loop around the character to create a perfectly centred move. This can emphasise isolation by having the camera trained on a character in a fixed spot, while the camera travels around them in a circle. A digitally assisted shot in *The Avengers* (2012) shows the group pinned down at the centre of an arc shot using a wide-angle lens. The director, Martin Scorsese, executes a high-speed, long-lens **arc shot** of a professional pool gambler in *The Color of Money* [US] (1986). Being so zoomed in from a long distance means the camera has to travel a long way to complete the arc. The dizzying background shows a pivotal decision moment for the 'Fast Eddie' character, which won Paul Newman the Academy Award for Best Actor. The invention of **bullet-time** (slowing and freezing time in an arc shot) can be thought of as an evolution of this technique that amplifies the feeling beyond a realistic representation.

Steadicam shot

A Steadicam is a camera mount that smooths out camera movements. It uses weights, counterbalances and sometimes gyroscopes to allow the camera to float on a mechanical arm. The operator wears the Steadicam attached to a special harness. A Steadicam can mimic tracking shots and dolly shots, and allows the operator complete freedom of movement to circle 360 degrees around a character. It brought the innovation of cameras running up stairs, such as in a triumphant training montage in the boxing-based film *Rocky* (1976).

In the narrative, the fluid movement of a Steadicam allows the audience to feel they are really there, almost watching through the eyes of someone or some thing! This is known as a **subjective camera angle**. Because it is achieved in real time, the camera movement gives the audience the impression that something really important is happening and all editing has been slowed to allow its significance to be seen. Steadicams became common in horror movies because the floating movement was able to conjure up the sense of 'the monster' and create suspense (Figure 4.20). A Steadicam can also provide a useful camera reveal for closings; for example, a Steadicam shot is used to resolve the narrative in the closing scene of the film *Notting Hill* (1999). In *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (2001), it is widely used to follow characters, mimic the floating of futuristic transport and weave between the action in a dystopian circus ring freak show.

Weblinks
The first Steadicam test shots

Steadicam shot from *The Shining*



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.20 A Steadicam smooths out camera movements by mounting the camera on a counterbalanced mechanical arm. The Steadicam was invented in 1974 and made it to the big screen in 1976. It would transform possibilities for moving shots and dominate in the horror genre, famously in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980) [R rated].

Weblinks
Arc shot from *The Color of Money*

Arc shot from *Avengers*

Dollying shot

A dolly is a wheeled tripod or platform with the camera mounted on it. **Dollying shots** are similar to tracking shots but imply more in/out motion. This can be confusing as it is both a noun and a verb: the device and any movement made with it. Where flooring is smooth, such as in a studio, a dolly may be more efficient than having camera assistants (**grips**) set up tracks. Professional dollies can also **crab** sideways with four-wheel steering and

Weblink
Dollying shot from *Oppenheimer*

take multiple paths without resetting track. Like the Steadicam, it allows the shot to reveal where the camera has just come from, without tracks in shot. However, dollies can be smoother and more precise than Steadicams. Precision is an advantage when camera position **marks** on the ground must be perfectly synchronised with **focus puller** marks. When depth of field is minimal, focus setting needs to be near millimetre perfect, meaning both actor and camera positions have to be exact.

In the narrative, a dolly can be used to comment on the action. Often when a tense moment has arrived in the plot, the camera will dolly in on a character until they are shown in close-up. The movement heightens the tension and significance. Perhaps the character has to make a decision or has made a crucial discovery. Many subtle dollies are used throughout *Oppenheimer* (2023). One dolly featured in trailers is of three men in a corridor asking, 'Why would we go to the middle of nowhere?' The answer comes as the camera pushes in on the characters who believe in their project: 'Because this is the most important thing to ever happen in the history of the world.'

A dolly-out suggests leaving the scene, but often after something significant has happened – perhaps a crime. Dollies can also be used to move in on important evidence left behind. The Alfred Hitchcock film *Rope* (1948) begins with a murder victim being concealed in a room. The rest of the film plays out in a continuous shot as other people come to a party at the crime scene. Hitchcock uses a studio dolly, rather than different lens size, to move the camera in for close-ups, pull back for two-shots and crab sideways to follow actors.



Album/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.21 Crane and tracking shot for a film shoot. Note that a small section of track was laid down to allow the crane carrying the camera to move smoothly.

Crane shot

A **crane shot** is performed by a camera moving up or down on a mechanical arm or crane. For different effects, the camera can be raised or lowered at all sorts of angles. For indoor filming, a small version called a **jib arm** can be fitted to the top of a tripod.

In the narrative, crane shots can be used to give a sense of scale. They are often used as establishing shots for this reason. Crane shots give a feeling of entering or leaving a series of events. A crane shot up and away at the end of a scene gives an air of finality. Crane shots are dramatic and are usually reserved for significant moments in the narrative. A crane-up is used in *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) to underscore the freedom experienced on escaping prison. A crane-down can suggest that events are heaping consequences on an individual, or the realisation of being singled out. In *Barbie* (2023), the emotional effect of a crane-down is achieved by bringing Ken up the escalator to the camera. The character settles in a close-up, realising he has personally discovered the place of his dreams.



Hipgnosis/Shutterstock.com

Figure 4.22 A camera mounted on a crane boom. Some cranes allow the camera operator to sit up with the camera on a small platform.

Zoom shot

A **zoom shot** is similar to a tracking shot but the camera stays still. A zoom-in enlarges or magnifies an area of the frame, changing shot size from, for example, a long shot to a close-up. A zoom-out is the reverse, changing shot size from close-up to a long shot. A zoom does not have the effect of allowing us to move through the scene. Unlike a tracking shot, it does not add

to the three-dimensional feeling. Instead, a zoom enlarges or magnifies the subject. This is a physical property of the way a zoom lens works; without moving the body of the camera, there is no change in perspective. A zoom can be digitally simulated in post-production. High definition allows editors to manufacture separate close-up shots that were not filmed by zooming in on wider shots. Zooming in on a character suggests we should listen to him or her, gradually drawing more attention. Zooming out has the opposite effect.

First appearing in films in the late 1920s, the camera zoom is a technique that has no parallel in the human eye. Some filmmakers therefore consider it an unnatural technique and use the zoom sparingly. The first use of a zoom in a Hollywood film is believed to be in the opening scenes of *It* (1927) starring Clara Bow. For many years, the zoom was only used in non-fiction genres such as news or documentary. However, modern filmmakers are turning to it for its shock value, often using a rapid zoom called a **crash-zoom**. This technique can be seen in the opening scenes of Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996).

In a narrative, a zoom suggests a sense of urgency and often extreme danger. Because of its association with news (and its similarity to the contra zoom from horror), the zoom makes the audience feel a stronger sense of immediacy. It feels as though the action is happening now. Deliberately misframed zooms that 'hunt' for the subject, as if the action is a surprise to the filmmaker, is now part of the language of action and fight scenes. Once considered 'off-air' mistakes by television directors, this reactive framing combines with camera shake, zip-pans and focus error to imply reality in highly structured scenes. *The Force Awakens* (2015) uses this improvised-looking zoom technique as the hero's spaceship dives for cover in a derelict battle cruiser, a very different look to the neatly choreographed dogfights of the early movies in the *Star Wars* franchise.

Contra zoom (dolly zoom) shot

Horror movies often use a specialised zoom called a contra zoom. It can also be called the Hitchcock zoom, since he was the first director to use it, but it has many other names. Some refer to it as a dolly zoom, a triple-zoom reflex or even the trombone shot. In a **contra zoom**, the camera zooms in at the same time as it tracks out in the reverse direction, leading to a dramatically disorienting change in perspective if the speeds match.

In a narrative, the contra zoom is effective in portraying a reaction of horrified awe. The technique is used in *Jaws* (1975) when Chief Brody first spots the great shark's fin. This change in relative perspective of the background and character is caused by moving a physical camera and cannot be added as an effect without a great deal of processing to distort the entire image in a controlled way.

The shot can also be seen in *The Lion King* (1994) when Simba practises his roar and almost gets caught in a stampede. This animated example proves the shot has meaning beyond the optical illusion created by a lens and movement. The producers have deliberately mimicked a quirk of a real-world physical camera move in a hand-drawn environment.

Director Spike Lee also experiments with a similar disconnected feeling in several films by standing actors on a dolly to move with the camera. In a signature move, characters are shown as detached from the background world behind them, such as in *Malcolm X* (1992).

Tilt shot

A **tilt** movement swivels the camera up or down while it is mounted on the tripod. This movement is like a vertical pan. The tilt is also like a pan in that it happens in real time.

In the narrative, a tilt is often used as an establishing shot, just like the pan. The scene is introduced as the camera gradually tilts up or down to eventually reveal the character. This makes a connection between the character and their setting. Like the pan, the tilt gives the impression that something will eventually be revealed. It can also give the feeling of a scene gradually unrolling like a scroll, from top to bottom. In Italian director Bernardo Bertolucci's *Besieged* (1998), a tilt from the bottom of a stairwell to the top landing establishes the distance between an African servant and her wealthy British employer.

Handheld shot

Handheld cameras have tended to signify amateur productions for most of the history of television and film. However, the arrival of lighter

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cameras meant that handheld shots became quite common in news and documentary filming. In these genres, the information was seen as more important than the formal construction of the shot. From the 1960s, the ***cinéma vérité*** movement in documentary film strengthened the importance of handheld camera work in news and documentary genres. The handheld camera found new popularity in fictional films after *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) used documentary techniques in a horror movie.

In a narrative, use of a handheld camera often lends an air of documentary truth or creates feelings of frantic confusion; a kind of hyper-subjective camera angle. Digital stabilisation within cameras allows handheld cameras to be a valid alternative to a Steadicam. **Warp stabiliser** is one of the post-production effects that can smooth out footage after shooting. High definition allows for more detail to be sacrificed to achieve the smoothing.

Gimbal shot

Another way to stabilise a handheld shot is with a **gimbal**. Smaller than a Steadicam, they rely on gyroscopes rather than weight for stability. The operator is free to orient the grip handle in any way and the camera maintains its direction. The camera needs to be balanced on the device when setting up, and can then be adjusted for tilt, pan and roll. Each axis has electric motors to maintain orientation in space. Like a spinning top, the camera effectively defies gravity, resulting in a stable filming platform. It can be used in confined spaces and implies a slightly more **objective camera angle** than handheld, but less objective than a tripod-based shot. Without the weight of a Steadicam, a hand-sized gimbal has less of the floating inertia that suggests a ghostly pursuit.

Cable shot

Mounting the camera on a flying-fox device strung on a cable may have advantages over drones. High winds, heavy cameras or filming close to people may be reasons for a cable shot. The strict, linear move along a single cable suggests an objective view. In *Hacksaw Ridge* (2016), a cable rig guides the camera through the special effect explosions of the battlefield as it follows troops. Laws ban drones in certain situations where cabled cameras are allowed, such as over crowds. However, proper



Newspix/Adam Head

Figure 4.23 Keir Beck with a cable camera system at the Holden Performance Driving Centre at Norwell, Queensland. Beck also uses his rigging skills on people as a stunt coordinator on many films, including *Matrix 4* (2021) and *Fast X (2023)*.

rigging safety is important for cable set-ups (Figure 4.23). Seven people were injured when a cable camera collapsed in 2016 over an Olympic stadium in Rio de Janeiro.

Drone shots

Drones are tools that can create and combine traditional camera shots and moves. A ground-based camera is static with motion needing to be imposed on it, while drones inherently move fluidly, requiring software and effort to keep them still. Some operator control over the camera may be sacrificed by using a drone shot and they are not appropriate for synchronised sound takes. In *Skyfall* (2012), drone shots of the roof chase, featuring Australian stunt rider Robbie Maddison as a **stunt double**, are intercut with traditional footage.

Helicopters are needed for filming near other aircraft and extreme environments such as snow-capped mountains. But drones bring their own advantages and unique shot potential. These shots combine or extend ground-based camera moves and can borrow or exaggerate the traditional narrative meaning. Some shots specific to drones include:

- **Fly-through** shots allow the camera to pass through openings such as a series of windows and doors. There are no cables or tracks in the shot to be removed in post-production. Once a 'virtual shot' used in architectural computer designs and games, drones can film this move in the real world.

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- **Top-down shots**, as drone operators may call these, can be 90 degrees overhead. A top-down goes beyond an extremely high-angle shot to look straight down without using a crane or cherry picker to support the camera. Helicopter shots can produce large shadows and rotor downwash that is visible in shot. Helicopters are expensive, and they also present significant danger on set. If not filming with a **fish-eye lens**, a truly overhead top-down shot will exclude the horizon. A top-down drone shot can emphasise abstract patterns on the ground. For example, top-down shots can turn circular café tables into a simple polka dot pattern. However, because it goes well above normal eye height, the top-down perspective is not natural to the human eye.
- **Orbit shots** are circular tracking, or arc shots, around a subject (see page 61). With the drone camera oriented inwards on a fixed point, a high-angle arc shot is possible without dolly tracks in frame. Minimum safe distances apply to flying drones near actors, and a professional shoot may be required to use a stunt double.
- **Follow shots** are various camera moves that can be an automated function on different drone brands. These include keeping a fixed distance or fixed angle from the subject, while keeping it in frame. Because the drone can move or remain in one spot while rotating, follow modes can produce a tilt, pan, track, orbit, crane or any combination. Subjects can be programmed as a filming target by drawing on-screen frames or gesturing to certain drones.
- **Panorama modes** in digital cameras create a long image of the entire horizon. This is done by continuously recording as the camera is panned in a full circle. A tripod keeps the ground-based cameras level during the pan, so the starting point matches the end. Drones can offer an automated rotation to complete the panorama mode move. This allows the horizon shot to be exactly matched into a continuous circle if needed.
- **360-degree-sphere modes** enable a drone to 'stitch' the photography into a composite image. It works with its camera angle to perform a series of tilts and pans. The drone can remain at a fixed point and perform overlapping moves until all directions are scanned. Images can then be matched and processed as a single shot. Useful in location-based apps, they are sometimes used to select the most appealing backdrop for real estate advertisements. Labels can be added to emphasise proximity to locations of interest.

Weblinks

How to get stunning aerial shots without a drone

Intercut drone shot from *Skyfall*

Betty Boop in Ha Ha Ha: One of the origins of compositing

Game of Thrones breakdown reel

Gravity compositing: Making of *Gravity* featurette

Digital composite shot

Compositing is combining layers to form a shot. This can mean a **virtual camera** view is used in a digital scene. Compositing began with physically blocking and re-exposing film in the camera. Back projection of pre-filmed scenes as a moving background to be re-filmed was one way of combining layers. Disney's multiplane animation

Table 4.3 Frequency of camera movements in selected films, from the database of Australian film historian Barry Salt. Note that the total number of camera movements can fluctuate considerably between films and is not clearly dependent on the time of production.

TITLE	PAN	TILT	PAN WITH TILT	TRACK	TRACK WITH PAN	TRACK WITH PAN AND TILT	CRANE	ZOOM	TOTAL
Gaslight (1940)	7	34	27	29	20	3	41	0	161
Back Street (1941)	13	0	6	12	19	5	2	0	57
Dark City (1998)	15	10	11	22	1	6	35	0	100
10 Things I Hate About You (1999)	12	3	6	20	32	18	10	1	102
The Blair Witch Project (1999)	12	12	79	24	15	137	0	31	310
EDtv (1999)	15	3	11	29	9	11	3	5	86

Source: Cinemetrics.lv. http://www.cinemetrics.lv/salt.php

Weblinks
Mise en Scène in Films

Explainer: *mise-en-scène*

camera is another version of building up layers, aimed at immersing the audience in the film world. Digital tools allow more layers and realistic blending, even interaction between characters in these different layers (Figure 4.24).

Computer-generated special effects allow for all sorts of camera movements that are impossible to achieve in real life. Many of these are combinations of several traditional camera movements. A digital composite shot is used at the beginning of the science-fiction movie *Contact* (1997). The shot starts by zooming away from Earth into the solar system, through the Milky Way and finally comes out of the eye of a young girl! In *Gravity* (2013), compositors had to maintain the realism of modelling actual existing spacecraft. In endlessly tumbling shots, they rotated props and lighting in front of greenscreens, rather than subject the actors to the real G-forces. However, for shot layers constructed in *Game of Thrones* (2016), Emmy award-winning Australian compositors were free to invent a battle that never happened. Visual effects artists can be required to deal with hyperrealism, or hyper-fantasy, all revealed through camera angles and movements.



Warner Bros/Kobal/Shutterstock.com

Figure 4.24 For the movie *Gravity* (2013), Sandra Bollock's indestructible character swims with a scuba-diving camera operator. In the United Kingdom, compositors needed a green screen in the underwater studio for her escape from the capsule and its parachutes. When she surfaces, the astronaut is actually in a lake in Utah, in the United States of America.

Template
Activity 4.1

4.1 ACTIVITIES

1 **Create** a folio of still photographs that **illustrate** the main shot types and angles. **Systematically arrange** each photograph on a separate page of your folio. Title each page with the type or angle that the photograph illustrates (for example, *shot size – medium long shot)*. **Describe** the effect of the shot size or angle underneath each picture. Justify your explanation by referring to the traditional meaning of the shots.

2 Find a scene in a movie where lens choice or depth of field makes an obvious contribution to the narrative. **Describe** the effect of selective focus or lens choice. **Analyse** the scene and dissect it into shots. **Find parts** where choice of lens or depth of field is important. **Consider** the elements of the scene that are enhanced by the use of these techniques. **Make a judgement** as to the effectiveness of the choice of lens or depth of field based on the criterion of progressing the narrative.

3 **Analyse** the two photographs of US flags in Figures 4.17 and 4.18 on page 60. **Compare** the **codes and conventions** at work in each, listing **similarities and differences**. **Evaluate** the likely impact of the two **representations** for the audience within the historic **context.**

4 **Design** a scene for two characters to meet. Use a progression of **shot sizes** with framing to allow for at least one character who can only communicate in Auslan (sign language) as a design constraint. Have an actor learn to sign some basic greetings to play their part, if need be. Modify the **kinaesthetic codes** in conjunction with shots to allow body movement to **communicate** meaning. **Evaluate** the creative responses needed for **emotive** narrative **engagement** within the constraints.

5 View the pan across the city of Phoenix that opens the film *Psycho* (1960). **Describe** how this pan suggests that 'evil' can enter anyone's life, and **describe** how the pan develops the narrative of the movie. **Identify** the key points in the movement of the camera that reveal the limitations of the **available technology as a context of production** (e.g. one of them is at the entry into the window).

6 **Analyse** the dolly shots in the *Oppenheimer* (2023) trailer. **Identify** the number of dollies included in the trailer. Examine the scene **context** to **compare emotional** motivations for dollying in versus dollying out.

7 **Create** a smooth contra zoom shot (triple-zoom reflex/Hitchcock shot). Investigate a number of famous examples and **evaluate** the narrative impact. Apply this understanding to experiment with speeds and equipment to record a successful scene with a strong narrative effect.

MISE EN SCÈNE

Many terms in film have their origins in the theatre. ***Mise en scène*** was originally a theatre term that meant something equivalent to 'staging'. It is now important in the analysis of films. *Mise en scène* helps to create the narrative space and progress the narrative.

The main elements of *mise en scène* are setting, costume, make-up, acting and lighting. It is best to consider *mise en scène* as that which the director has control over (Figure 4.25). This would normally exclude the script, for example. Acting and lighting are discussed in more detail in other sections.

Each element of *mise en scène* influences how the audience experiences the story. Filmmakers use *mise en scène* intentionally in a systematic way to present character development and to establish themes and moods.

Mise en scène is French for 'put in the scene or frame' and refers to all the visual details a filmmaker can include in the screen image. Although the term is widely used, it is of relatively recent origin. French film critics coined it during the **French New Wave** of the 1950s. They saw *mise en scène* as a unique mode of expression for an *auteur* (author/director). It was very useful as a concept when most films were shot in studios or on constructed sets. The director, or *auteur*, had a lot of control over what went into the shot. This occurred from the early days of the movies until the 1950s. In modern film analysis, its use has gained more relevance as directors use more computer-generated imagery.



Entertainment Pictures/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.25 Aaron Eckhart in Australian director Stuart Beattie's *I, Frankenstein* (2014), filmed in Melbourne at Docklands. The film is based on a graphic novel. The director, production designers, location scouts and other crew prepared the *mise en scène* of the film well in advance of filming. *Mise en scène* refers to all the visual details put in the frame: the 'look' of the film. Note the amount of space or territory taken up in the frame by the main character. This use of the actor as a graphic element is part of *mise en scène*.

> 'In many respects, a film shot resembles a painting. It presents a flat array of colours and shapes. Before we even start to read the image as a three-dimensional space, *mise en scène* offers many cues for guiding our attention and emphasising elements in the frame.'
>
> **David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson**, University of Wisconsin

Mise en scène is the film's way of communicating a mass of information. It is equivalent to the descriptive passages in a novel – that is, everything in the novel except the spoken dialogue. One way to think of *mise en scène* is to imagine a still image from a feature film. If you sat down and pored over this image, extracting every bit of meaning from it and noting every detail, then you would be analysing the *mise en scène*. You would be studying every prop, every detail of furniture and every aspect of costume. As you did so, it would probably become clear to you that almost nothing is in that image by chance. It was all put there!

The look of the film

The *mise en scène* of a film is determined quite early in the pre-production and production stages. The director usually sits down with the production designer and they plan how the film will look before any filming takes place. Location scouts, art directors, costume designers and make-up artists all work together to have everything ready in advance. The director may even call in the actors and do some preliminary blocking of their movements. A choreographer may gather together

a team to plan out the action sequences or song and dance movements.

Composition

Composition in this text is described as both a camera technique and a *mise en scène* technique. It refers to how the objects, actors and spaces are composed or arranged in the frame. Composition in film is similar to composition in art. It tends to be based around symmetry or balance. This comes from the arrangement of dominant and non-dominant centres of attention.

- **Symmetry.** This refers to the balance of light, colour and objects or figures in the frame. A common rule of thumb in achieving this is the rule of thirds (see page 60). However, a director can also call attention to particular elements in the frame by creating an unbalanced composition.
- **Dominant centres of attention.** The viewer's attention can be guided to particular places in the frame in three main ways:
  - **Movement.** The audience will pay attention to whatever is moving the most in the frame: the speeding car, the dancing girl or the galloping horse.
  - **Colour.** Contrasting colours will draw attention. Bright colours will be dominant, while muted colours will merge into the background.
  - **Lighting.** The viewer's eyes will be drawn to the area of the frame that has the most light.

Location and sets

The setting is where and when the narrative unfolds. According to film theorist André Bazin, setting is much more important in television and film than it is in theatre. Theatre, he argues, is all about human beings: 'The drama on the screen can exist without actors. A banging door, a leaf in the wind, waves beating on the shore can heighten the dramatic effect.'



RGR Collection/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.26 Production designer Grant Major (far right) advises director Peter Jackson on the set of *King Kong* (2003). Setting is more important in film and television than it is in the theatre, according to film theorist André Bazin. Locations and sets establish the setting.

Setting

The setting establishes the place and time of the narrative.

Settings can be either natural or specially constructed for the purpose. From the setting, the audience can construct an array of meanings about the story, the characters and the genre. For instance, a Monument Valley setting immediately conjures up the Western genre.

In the *mise en scène,* the decor and props are also considered part of the setting.

Motif in *mise en scène*

A **motif** in *mise en scène* is a recurring prop or location or an actor as a shape or figure. It is repeated in the narrative and becomes significant or symbolic in some way. The word is of French origin and should not be confused with 'motive'. As part of *mise en scène*, a motif can be a way of linking aspects of the story, or revealing a character or theme. Motif also appears in editing, where it can be created with a recurring image or sound.

In *Psycho* (1960), both props and decor become motifs (Table 4.4). The shower curtain starts as decor, but its repeated appearance makes it a motif. The newspaper initially is just a prop, but then it too is used in the narrative as a repeated symbol, thereby becoming a motif.

Table 4.4 Object-, prop- and location-based motifs in films

FILM	MOTIFS IN *MISE EN SCÈNE*
Citizen Kane (1941)	Rosebud (the object)
Vertigo (1958)	Tunnels Spirals
Psycho (1960)	Birds The newspaper The shower curtain
Jaws (1975)	Barrels
American Beauty (1999)	Roses
Minority Report (2002)	Glasses

Costume and make-up

Costumes and make-up work in a similar way to setting in providing information about the place and time of the narrative. Like setting, they can be realistic or completely stylised and artificial. An

example of a film with highly stylised make-up and costume is the German expressionist film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920).

Costumes and make-up are also important in the development of character. Costume changes can indicate mood changes or alterations in the status of characters. For instance, in *The Godfather* (1972), both costume and make-up are used to show the ageing of Don Corleone. Romantic comedies often use costume to indicate that a character is 'coming out of their shell'. In *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001), costume is used to make statements about the characters. For instance, Richie Tenenbaum, a faded tennis star, still dresses in the costume of his professional career.

Costume can indicate character role. For example, many silent films used costume to establish who was the hero and who was the villain. In modern films, minor characters are sometimes branded on the basis of costume, and their character roles become more recognisable to audiences.

Costume can also play a causal role. An article of clothing can be important in the plot, either as a clue or as a signature item. When Richie shaves off his signature moustache in *The Royal Tenenbaums*, it is symbolic, and also causative, of his final transformation.

Acting – figure placement

Most definitions of *mise en scène* include acting and acting style. However, acting as an element of *mise en scène* can also be considered in a graphic sense – the actor can be considered as an object that takes up space. The actors' bodies become part of the visual field. The arrangement of that human space or territory within the frame is part of the *mise en scène*.

The blocking that directors do in rehearsal allows them to shift characters around and establish patterns of character movement. What the audience finally sees on screen can be careful and artful compositions that comment on character relationships and help to establish the narrative.

Characters and graphic space

The space allocated to people and objects is one of the most important resources in film (Figure 4.27). 'The way that people are arranged in space can tell us a lot about their social and psychological relationships,' says Louis Giannetti, Professor Emeritus of English and Film, Case Western Reserve University. He argues that dominant characters always take up more space in the



Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.27 In *Sweet Country* (2017), director Warwick Thornton chose Indigenous actors not on the basis of acting experience, but on their connection to Country. 'When the camera rolled, they were owning the landscape spiritually, mentally and physically', says Thornton. Arrangement of actors can be considered an aspect of *mise en scène* when the actor is considered as a figure in space. The actor becomes part of the visual field.

frame. This dominance refers to their importance in the narrative, not their importance in society. If the film is about peasants, a peasant will take up more frame space than the king, says Giannetti.

Similarly, the amount of open space in a shot can be symbolic within the *mise en scène*. A long shot with lots of clear open space suggests freedom. This can also be called loose framing. A close-up or mid-shot with lots of heavy shapes tightly framed around a character appears confining. This is also called tight framing.

Filming an actor in different positions can also suggest different relationships, not only with other characters but also with the audience. Louis Giannetti has identified five basic positions:

1. **Full-front** – most intimate with the audience. We tend to identify with the character, even if it is just momentarily.
2. **Quarter turn** – often used by filmmakers because it allows involvement with other characters, but it also allows the audience to feel intimate.
3. **Profile** – the characters seem to be unaware they are being observed. This is less intimate, but we are also free to stare.
4. **Three-quarter turn** – increasing remoteness, but still some degree of accessibility for the audience.
5. **Back to the camera** – least intimate for the audience and the most remote position for a character.

Colour

Colour in film can be thought of in at least two ways:

1. **Naturalism or realism**. Colour obviously reflects the real world much more closely than black and

white. Because of this, colour can simply be used to reflect the world as we see it. This makes the film more likely to gain audience acceptance as being realistic.

2 **Colour as spectacle**. In the early days of film, when colour first came out, it was often reserved for genres such as the musical; colour was seen to add spectacle and enthusiasm to those genres. More serious-minded genres, such as crime, kept using black and white for some considerable time.

Colour in modern movies is used both ways. It is used as a process of realism and as spectacle, in the sense of being highly symbolic.

Colour is often a subconscious element in film, says Louis Giannetti. Its appeal is emotional and expressive. Giannetti argues that people often see lines and diagonals of composition in a logical way. However, the audience often just accepts colour without noticing it. This allows colour to create atmosphere and mood subliminally.

Colours have different connotations, many of which are cultural. However, while there are cultural differences in interpretation, there is also evidence of a lot of agreement around the world about the 'temperatures' of different colours. Blues and greens tend to be seen as cool or tranquil. Reds and yellows tend to be seen as warm. In western cultures, reds can suggest violence or sex.

Cooler colours tend to fade back into the frame, whereas warm colours tend to stand out and be noticeable. Therefore, colour can be used to create dominant objects in the frame. Strong use of colour can be a compositional element.

Colour can be used as a sign of character. It can also be used as a recurring symbol or motif. For example, whenever the audience sees a certain colour, they might have particular associations.

Lighting

Lighting is considered part of the *mise en scène* because of its power to suggest ideas and emotions. Lighting helps the viewer to construct meaning. It can suggest time, place, mood or genre. Lighting is a powerful tool that directors can use to express their art.

In early cinema, natural lighting was all that was available. Filming took place outside in the sun or in studios with vast glass roofs. Some studios even had opening roofs. This partly explains why the early film studios moved to the sun-drenched Californian desert, and what was then the small village of Hollywood. Around this time, during World War I (1914–18), Hollywood film studios found a peaceful use for the arc-searchlights that had been developed to spot enemy aircraft. Thus began the expressive film lighting we know today. From around 1915, Hollywood's standard three-point lighting set-up was introduced, and practice has changed very little since then.

Features of lighting

Lighting has three main qualities: degree of hardness, directionality and degree of contrast.

Degree of hardness

The sharpness and intensity of the light can be classified according to degree of hardness. Hardness can also describe the sharpness of the shadow the light casts.

- **Hard light.** Light that is most similar to shafts of bright sunlight is called hard light. It is made up of strong parallel rays coming out from the light source and directly hitting the subject. Hard light casts sharp, clean, direct shadows. The shadows look crisp like those cast by strong daylight. Focused lights can produce very hard light. Car headlights or stage spotlights are hard lights.
- **Soft or diffuse light.** When rays of light are bounced in many directions, it casts soft and blurry shadows. This is called soft light. Soft light casts a broad and even glow. It is most like the light on cloudy overcast days. Soft light is gentle and hides wrinkles and imperfections. A diffuser can be placed in front of strong studio lights to filter the light and make it go in multiple directions, creating soft light.

Directionality

Where the lights are placed influences how the subject appears. The position of the light determines the angle at which the rays hit the subject and changes how the subject looks. The main directions are front, offset, side, backlight and angled or tilted.

- **Front lighting.** Full frontal lighting casts few shadows on the subject, but does cast shadows behind the subject. It tends to be neutral light and can flatten the appearance of the subject, making it appear bland. This can be intentional, however.
- **Offset lighting.** More shadows and therefore more interest can be added by offsetting the lighting somewhat. Generally, anything less than 90 degrees angled from the subject is called offset lighting.
- **Side lighting.** Full side lighting at 90 degrees to the subject is good for casting shadows and making features stand out strongly. Side lighting adds drama and casts shadows that reveal the depth of objects.

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- **Backlight.** When a light is placed behind the subject it makes it stand out from the background and look more three-dimensional.
- **Angled or tilted lighting.** The effect of angled or tilted lighting is best understood by its two extremes: top-lighting and underlighting.
  - **Top-lighting.** When the light comes from above, it casts deep shadows on parts of the subject. For example, on the human face, top-lighting will cast shadows over the eye sockets and make the character look threatening.
  - **Underlighting.** Light coming up from below is extremely rare in nature. When a subject is lit from below, it makes for an unreal or even horrific effect. On the human face, it gives a ghoulish look.

Degree of contrast

The degree of contrast is determined by the relationship between the intensity of the light and the sharpness of the shadows. This is called the lighting contrast ratio. A low lighting contrast ratio means that the light is fairly evenly distributed. This kind of lighting is commonly used in television studios for breakfast programs. High contrast lighting means there are areas of bright light and areas of dark shadow. This kind of lighting was common in *film noir*.

Codes of lighting

The American visual literacy expert David Groen has produced Table 4.5, which shows some of the codes of lighting.

Table 4.5 Lighting can have multiple meanings depending on the context. David Groen has tabled some of the more common coded meanings in lighting.

BRIGHT LOW-CONTRAST LIGHTING	DIM OR HIGH-CONTRAST LIGHTING
Innocence	Evil
Purity	Something hidden
Joy	Trouble
Life	Death
Discovery	Force and strength

4.2 ACTIVITIES

1. Select a film in which setting is an important element of *mise en scène*. Horror movies, Westerns and road movies are genres that particularly use setting as *mise en scène*. However, do not limit yourself to this list. **Describe** how the *mise en scène* builds the progression of the narrative. **Identify** the ways that the setting interacts with the characters, **providing examples** to clarify your explanation.
2. **Analyse** a still from a movie in which the actors appear to have important 'figure placement' as part of *mise en scène*. **Examine** dominant and subordinate characters based on the space they are allocated in the shot. **Consider** the position of characters in relation to the rule of thirds. **Consider** what might have been the effect if the director had placed the characters differently. Discuss how this would alter character relationships and possibly the narrative. **Make a judgement** about the effectiveness of the placements, using character role and importance as the **criteria**.
3. View short segments from one or more of the following films. Each is noted for its significant or historical use of colour. *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), *Pleasantville* (1998), *Schindler's List* (1993), *Rumble Fish* (1983), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005), *Wings of Desire* (1987), *Vertigo* (1958), *Amélie* (2001), *The Sixth Sense* (1999), *Big Fish* (2003), *Corpse Bride* (2005). Alternatively, select a film of your own choice. **Describe** how colour was used in the film in new or different ways, **illustrating** and **exemplifying** how colour becomes a symbolic code. Present your commentary to the class with the film segment playing in the background (sound off).
4. Examine the lighting in a shot from a black and white *film noir*. **Describe** how the use of light and shade is important to the narrative or develops a sense of character. **Identify** the justifications that are offered for the source of the light. **Analyse** how the different elements of light and shade contribute to the development of the narrative. **Examine** each in detail and consider how they interact. **Evaluate** whether you think this use of light is realistic or disruptive. What effect might the scene have if ordinary studio lighting was used? **Draw conclusions** about the role of lighting in these kinds of films.

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5 Game and new media codes and conventions

GAME SHOT TYPES AND PURPOSES

Games have developed their own codes and conventions. Despite being a visual and narrative based medium similar to film or television, games have developed separately. Game designers often do not have formal film training. They have their own way of naming and talking about their screen language.

As with traditional camera codes and conventions, the meaning of game shot types is dependent on the context. The use of a particular game shot type is determined by the narrative. However, there are some very broad general meanings that can be applied.

Point of view/first-person view

The use of **point-of-view (POV)** shots in traditional film is called a **subjective camera angle**: putting the audience view into the head of a particular character. For example, a POV shot following a close-up of a character looking into binoculars provides seamless screen language (see Figure 5.1a). The term **first-person view (FPV)** is normally used for games and drones, but the perspective is so common in new media it is often the default position, especially when combined with camera motion (see Figure 5.1b).

In games, a player POV is easily cued by on-screen props such as guns or car dashboards. This FPV helps the player assume they have control over these digital props, through keyboard and mouse control, or immersive virtual reality (VR) tools. Where the weapon remains in shot, the FPV game is also a **first-person shooter** (FPS; see Figure 5.2). The *Call of Duty* (known often as COD) franchise is an example of this game genre.



wiklander/Shutterstock.com

Pedro Costa Simeão/Alamy Stock Photo

Figures 5.1a and b In Figure 5.1a, a subjective camera angle is forced by the binocular-shaped camera matte surrounding the POV shot. *Capricorn One* (1977) uses this view as a politician looks around the rocket launch site at the start of the film. Double circle **mattes** were once needed to communicate this view, but to a modern audience, a hunting telephoto shot can mean the same thing. In Figure 5.1b, the out-of-focus foreground suggests a subjective view of the New York building. A similar shot in *Oblivion* (2013) tells the audience how to interpret a de-focused diamond ring as a marriage proposal. The zoomed in camera wobble and sequence of shots clinch it as a more subtle version of a character POV.

Weblinks

Subjective point of view in narrative from *Oblivion*

Individual gamer playing *America's Army*

Objective views

In most traditional screen narratives, POV shots are the exception. The audience is an unseen observer from a viewpoint that magically moves at each cut. This is an **objective view** of the

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story world. The game culture equivalent is a **third-person view**, which magically reframes. The character, background and game play are framed inside a continuous shot as a kind of default screen language.



Kylie Agnew

Figure 5.2 An example of the FPS game view from *Call of Duty*. FPS games raise particular concerns over **desensitising** the audience. Some games normalise violence in everyday settings, such as public spaces with civilians. *America's Army* ran from 2002 to 2022 for 20 million players. The free-to-play game was popular around the world, with some users not realising it was funded and published by the US Government, although this was not hidden. As a recruiting tool, it targeted younger players in what was called 'a strategic communication device'.

Third-person view/follow shot

Game views in the third person position the player to observe the character as they move. The orientation of the character generally determines the background framing. Because games do not interrupt the flow of play with different camera angles, the framing tends to be a continuous shot. The above and behind view behaves as a follow shot, dollying and panning to keep the character action in frame. Adjustments are often automatically made to accommodate game play in front of the camera. An FPS game may automatically zoom in to an **over-the-shoulder shot** while aiming a weapon. Third-person views are suited to an open-world scenario. The creator of *Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom* (2023), Shigeru Miyamoto, designed the game for creative exploring in a third-person view that was inspired by childhood forest and cave trips near his Japanese home (see Figure 5.3).

Some default third-person games allow the operator to change views within the scene for particular tasks. A racing game may permit a rear view, first-person driver view and a default third-person view from behind the vehicle.



Photo/D.Sinclair

Figure 5.3 *Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom* is an example of a third-person follow-shot view. The frame automatically cranes up during the 'grab' function to allow a clear view of the lightning-like animation.

In third-person view, there is a puppet-like control that suggests a separation, despite playing as that character. *Fortnite* finally launched in 2017 as a third-person game, becoming a hugely popular suite of games, but some fans wanted more options for the player viewpoint.

Isometric view

In gaming, the term isometric is often linked to an open-world format. Visually, it means that the horizontal lines, such as streets, are angled at 30 degrees to the bottom of a screen (see Figure 5.4). This is the stylistic representation of



Kylie Agnew

Figure 5.4 *Age of Empires* is considered a classic isometric/open-world game. The first release in 1997 was popularised by free giveaways in breakfast cereal, with a disc that would load the game on common home **personal computers (PCs)**. The original graphics show city grids of walls and streets at 30 degrees to the actual horizontal. Game play is easily seen, as objects do not get smaller with distance from the virtual camera. Australian ant researchers used a simple *Age of Empires* scene to simulate ant colony battles. By assigning different properties to soldiers, they hoped to better understand interactions between native and invasive species like fire ants, electric ants and yellow crazy ants.

Template
Activity 5.1

Weblinks
Hologram launch doll-house view: from Minecraft + HoloLens

Microsoft HoloLens demonstration shows off holographic *Minecraft*

How to add 3D doll-house to your 360 virtual tours

depth and distance without needing to show an infinite horizon. In the classic original games, these lines remain parallel, with no **vanishing point** for distant lines to 'converge'. (Modern versions of this view tend to add some perspective distortion.) Scenarios often involve building strategically onto this 30-degree grid.

The **isometric/open world** association is because this style of view suits the exploration of an environment at the player's own pace, without a predetermined path. For example, prior to completing the main goal, a player may choose to divert to a mini-quest. This could be to earn points or weapons, or to engage in multiplayer cooperative tasks.

Doll-house view

When an isometric view is looking inside a building with the roof off, this becomes a **doll-house view** (see Figures 5.5a and 5.5b). Versions of it will allow for adding some perspective distortion, or rotating, as if handling a model. Doll-house views are used in housing construction and real estate industries. The view can be used as a planning tool at a design stage. A virtual camera walk-through may be planned in this view for an architectural simulation. Some phones with **lidar** detectors are able to scan individual rooms and measure for depth while recording videos. These files can then be digitally stitched into a doll-house view.



olga_demina/Adobe Stock



LANDMARK MEDIA/Alamy Stock Photo

Figures 5.5a and b House plans are a common use for doll-house views, but they are an increasingly useful visualisation for manipulating objects digitally. Director Stanley Kubrick misleads his audience by priming them with a shot of a table-top scale model in *The Shining* [MA15+] (1980). The horror film suggests a sinister tone with the implied control that comes with a doll-house view.

5.1 ACTIVITIES

1 **Create** a sequence of at least three shots with shot 2 as a subjective point-of-view POV. Use codes to simulate a POV into a device, such as a microscope or camera. **Resolve** the narrative sequence with a reaction shot from the character.

NEW MEDIA SHOT TYPES AND PURPOSES

Some shots are filmed for use beyond normal screens. New media forms include different ways of imagining the frame, which come with new technical challenges and implied meaning. The new technologies and their use are part of an evolving shot language.

Shots for 180-degree and large-screen formats

Large-screen formats can include outdoor events, **augmented and mixed reality** and specialised cinemas. The technologies leading up to today's 180-degree filming have their own benefits and limitations. Shot types and composition in these formats often take advantage of their large **field of view** (FOV).

There have been many very wide and immersive format experiments:

- *Cinerama* used three overlapping cameras and three synchronised projectors onto a curved screen. Shots were composed to avoid actors standing at the two overlapping join areas and directors avoided close-ups due to distortion. Other variations followed from companies of the era as they competed with television, just as new technology is competing with traditional platforms. Some new media also increase the immersive experience through very wide aspect ratio (Cinerama was up

to 2.65:1). The viewer has realistic **peripheral vision**, resulting in composition for shots that aim to reinforce the feeling of presence at the story location.

- **IMAX** cleverly used the 70 mm film format sideways to create a large, high-quality image up to six storeys high. By sitting the audience relatively close to the screen on steeply tiered seating, a strong sense of motion was created for roller-coaster shots and the like. Some niche films were produced that emphasised long takes and landscape grandeur, such as *Everest* (1998). Director Christopher Nolan favours the IMAX format (1.43:1 aspect ratio), even for an intimate narrative film. He returned to it with a varying aspect ratio for *Oppenheimer* (2023). Cinematographer Hoyte Van Hoytema says, 'It is a format of spectacle … [but] the face is like a landscape.'
- **Video walls** are commonly used in large sports venues. Giant screens or linked **LED panels** allow a more intimate view of the action than can be seen from a grandstand. Most shots will concentrate on medium close-up reactions of participants and replays of wider action: not too close, not too wide. These large formats are usually set up to address a large audience with a real-life 'extreme long shot' view, rather than immerse an individual viewer.
- **Projection mapping** uses built environment backdrops to project images or video for public display (see Figure 5.7). This art form has been made possible with the advent of very bright projectors and **keystone correction** to compensate for the position of the projectors. If the projector is on the ground, distortion is introduced to the image on a vertical surface. Buildings can be mapped for their architectural features, like windows and doors. The shot size and shape is tailored to match the shape of the building. Stills and animated video shots can be designed with perspective that mirrors changes on the surface of the structures. Video content is often performance art, but the meaning can be strongly shaped by the institution or building being projected on. In Australia, the reflective white of the Sydney Opera House is used by festivals. The iconic nature of the building easily translates any image into a national identity statement when seen around the world.
- **Digital signage** *and scenery panels* are used outdoors, in foyers and in stage productions. Text is often combined with images and video in public spaces for informative or branding purposes. However, there is more experimental use in theatre. LED panels can replace traditional '**flats**' to dress a scene. This can allow very rapid scene changes. It may also feature historic photos, documents or moving video. Animations or abstract lighting effects can be assigned to individual panels distributed across a set. The panels can also present fragments of the same image. These video shots for scenery form part of the overall production design in a stage performance (see Figure 5.6).



Donald Cooper/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 5.6 Digital theatre scenery can also include video content as a large-screen format. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* features a full integration of recordings and live performance, resulting in '**Cine-theatre**'. Eryn Jean Norvill plays all 26 characters in the production, acting against her own prerecorded lines as other character personas, in other costumes.



Vova Pomortzeff/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 5.7 Architectural projection mapping can combine animation, video and photography in a disorienting spectacle. Shots aligned with natural perspective can produce convincing illusions, such as use of doorways. Mostly used outdoors, the realism relies on the projector brightness dominating ambient light, and the audience being positioned for believable perspective.

- **VR 180** in 2D and 3D viewing options gives control to the viewer to look around. Like previous large-screen formats, the subject composition remains in front of the audience. The camera movement timing is up to the viewer's head movements. **Stereoscopic** viewing sends a slightly different image to each eye on a separate channel, however, the 3D effect on objects tapers off beyond a certain distance from the camera lenses. The single image for each eye means there are no 'stitching' dead-spots to avoid, although a moving camera shot can undermine the depth illusion. 3D cinema was experimented with throughout the 20th century, peaking in the 1950s. Versions included different coloured lenses for each eye, vertical and horizontal polarising, and rapid shuttering of alternating eye views through the glasses. Shots were planned around the illusion of objects coming toward the audience. Shot construction emphasises the realism of foreground objects that are separate to the background. In some ways, 180-degree views function as an extended studio backdrop (**cyclorama**).

Weblinks
Google's Immersive light field video paper presentation

How Google is making streamable light field video a reality

Architectural projection mapping by Urbanscreen

360-degree shots

360-degree cameras present a different way of thinking about shots. While it is possible to extract a 'flat' 2D image from a 360-degree view, the images are usually intended to be 'navigated' through (see Figure 5.8). These contexts allow the viewer to control panning and tilting within the one 360-degree shot. The spherical images can be produced by purpose-built cameras or using fish-eye lenses and stitching software. Arrow clicking and dragging on a 2D framed section of the image is one version of a **user interface (UI)**. This produces a constantly changing frame from a single perspective. In this case, a viewer is constructing a composition within the frame, based on points of interest to them.



Go My Media/Shutterstock.com

Figure 5.8 Videos and photos in 360-degree shots look strange in a 2D form. The bathroom has four flat walls that all look curved in this image. When viewed in a 360-format, such as VR goggles, the walls again appear flat. The timber door on the left is the same timber door on the right: a complete wrap-around view.

Applications such as Google Street View use multiple 360-degree images. When the images are hyperlinked with the shot that was geographically next, user movements feel natural. Jumping to another 360-degree photo appears to move the viewer forward in space. The perspective changes, but the camera direction does not. This creates an illusion of movement through a frozen moment in a series of stills; a dolly shot through a point in time.

Interactive shots

Photographic advances allow viewers to effectively interact with the camera itself. **Light field** photography uses **micro lens arrays** on the picture sensor. It gathers information about which part of the main lens the light ray entered through. Recording multiple sub-images from each tiny '**lenslet**' with directional information allows for image changes *after* a shot is taken. With specific software, the point of focus in a shot can be changed, and even the amount of blurring from depth of field can be altered. This is possible due to the large amount of extra information recorded in a light field camera shot.

Light field video (free-view, deep view, surround 360 or augmented perception) uses the small differences between images to gather information about depth. This data is used to record the image as layers of increasing distance from the camera. By adjusting the view of these layers individually and what is blocked behind them, the camera appears to move through the scene. The result is that a view can be constructed from a point in space that the camera never actually moved through. While the video is playing, the viewer is able to tilt and pan, crane up and down, dolly in and out, track sideways and rotate the apparent camera position. This is referred to as **six degrees of freedom (6DoF)** (see Figure 5.9). Movement is limited by the extremities of the original recorded video; however, the perspective change allows the audience to look behind props and characters.

During a sideways camera move, objects closer to the viewer appear to move more than

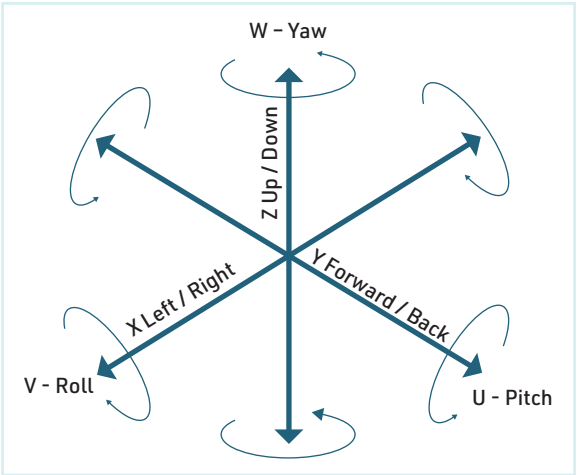


Figure 5.9 The six degrees of freedom (6DoF) possible in light field video recordings. Movements mirror the traditional camera moves. Each movement along the three axes and rotation on it allows for pan, tilt, dolly, track, crane and camera rotation for a dutch angle.

those in the background. This is called **parallax motion**. When that difference in size and relative movement happens due to a dollying motion into the scene, it creates **volumetric depth** the viewer can move into. This is different to the 3D feel of stereovision, which creates the *illusion* of depth.

Google and Meta (Facebook) are two of the companies with multi-lens camera systems for creating volumetric depth videos to allow for 6DoF. Data transfer rates are a consideration for use in streaming or social media applications. Training simulators are one of many uses for the technology. 360-degree photos and video can also provide elements for augmented and mixed reality.

Virtual and augmented reality framing

The use of **VR** or **augmented reality (AR)** headsets shifts more 'camera movement' to the viewer's control. To maintain the illusion, the trick is to keep the image or video looking like it *does not* move. Whether a 180- or 360-degree view, the scene must move quickly in relation to the viewer's head to appear still.

To account for instantaneous movement, combinations of various technologies may be used: electronic compasses to detect magnetic north, accelerometers to measure movement forces, real world cameras to compare external movement, gyroscopes to calculate orientation, infrared sensors to triangulate distance within the real room and eye tracking to monitor directed attention. The combined information determines the visual framing and creates the virtual camera movement. The processor must translate the information into the appropriate background move response: if a viewer suddenly looks right, a 360-degree background must move left in the **field of view (FOV)**. This 'pan' must match the speed and stopping point of the head move. Headsets also need convincing sound and goggle lenses that fool the eye into perceiving distance. As well as 3D offset depth for each eye, some also blur the edge of the peripheral vision.

Meaning is likely to come more from the environment as the virtual camera movements become less obvious to the audience. Symbolic codes implied by the **digital asset** props or **mixed reality** shape the experience. Even though many of the traditional camera moves can be similar to human motion in a VR setting, they may feel so natural that users do not notice them.

Composition needs to be approached very differently without a fixed frame. Audiences can be prompted to move to a certain 'framing' view by drawing their attention. Windows, cave entrances and similar 'frames' can also be used within the environment to frame a composition. By moving through the virtual world to complete a task, viewers or players may have to dolly, track or crane down as they navigate to complete a task.

Haptics and framing

The use of mechanically or electronically generated sense of touch is known as **haptics** (see Figure 5.10). A mobile phone that is set to vibrate while ringing is an example of this. Sony PlayStation controllers have long rumbled in users' hands when vehicles go off-track in racing games. Haptic gloves give tactile feedback to the user in a VR environment, mimicking the presence of an object. The composition of the frame is mirrored by an invisible haptic layout. *Ready Player One* (2018) demonstrates haptic suits within the dance club scene narrative, foreshadowing the real pain of a virtual fight scene to come.



Roman Samborskyi/Shutterstock.com

Figure 5.10 Mixed reality games can provide a sense of touch by aligning with real objects in the room. The 2024 release of Demeter on MetaQuest is a game that adapts to the unique furniture layout for each user.

Many game developers plan to expand the use of tactile elements. The CEO of Light Field Lab, Jon Karafin, says that projecting holograms is just the beginning, as users could one day feel '**volumetric haptics**'. Focusing ultrasound in midair could create a haptic shape in three dimensions that users could interact with as a hologram.

5.2 ACTIVITIES

1 **Design** a set for a 3D, volumetric video shoot. Assume the audience will have six degrees of movement in a virtual headset. Use a doll-house view to **sketch** the location of props in the room. Plan for the viewer to move freely to points of interest in the set. Include motivation to guide the viewer to a framed view, such as a window.

Template
Activity 5.2

Weblinks
First-person view transitions from *Ready Player One*

Johnny English Strikes Again virtual reality scene

Meta Quest holographic game reported in *Road to VR: Demeter, the Asklepios Chronicles*

NEW MEDIA CODES AND CONVENTIONS

Computer-based media combine traditional media forms with new digital versions. Through a process called **convergence** (see page 105), traditional media forms 'converge' with digital formats, accessed via computer or mobile device. Convergence has seen the combination of existing media and the creation of engaging and innovative new forms. Computer-based language shares elements of traditional media, particularly film, television, magazines and newspapers.

Basic units of new media communication

Computer-based media language units are text, images, audio, video and animation. These elements are combined to create **multimedia** forms, including the internet, interactive television and video games.

Hypertext

Internet websites and multimedia products typically involve a series of menus and document pages linked together in a web-like structure that allows non-linear access to information. Users select their own path to specific information by following a trail of related information – 'drilling down', click by click, to reach their objective. Any page, picture, paragraph or word can be linked to any other. Information can be accessed in whatever order the user chooses. This navigation system is called **hypertext**. Each link – whether a word, icon, graphic, picture or video – is known as a hypertext link or **hyperlink**.

Conventions of hypertext

Convention dictates that when a mouse pointer is positioned over a hyperlink, it should change appearance from an arrow to a hand. In this 'hover state', the link should also change appearance. When the link is clicked, it should temporarily change appearance again ('active state'), and the link content is loaded. A 'visited' hyperlink is also often represented by a different colour ('visited state').

Hypertext is a very efficient way to store information. It not only provides a link to specific content, but also gives contextual links to related materials.

User interfaces

A user interface (UI) is used to help navigate through computer-based media. The interface ranges from simple buttons and menus on the screen to more complex interface tools such as 3D goggles, motion sensors and even body suits with sensors allowing the user to 'feel'. The interface also includes the product's artificial intelligence, especially obvious in video games. UIs can be classified into three categories: symbolic, iconic and indexical interfaces.

1 Symbolic interfaces

This form of interface is commonly known as programming. A user must know the computer language used and the conventions of its use. Programming languages use textual 'code' in the same way that the English language uses words – to represent objects or actions. This interface features few barriers to hinder the user's creativity, but

is almost impossible to use without a thorough knowledge of the code.

2 Iconic interfaces

This interface style features icons that stand for actions and menus that allow the user to select from predetermined options. This interface is extremely productive and easy to use, but limits the user to a range of pre-programmed actions. The most common examples are the Windows and Mac OS interfaces with their metaphoric 'desktop' functionality. By using a metaphor that simulates a real-life environment, users of the product quickly become familiar with its functions.

3 Indexical interfaces

This style of interface is richly decorated with images and colour. It is immersive, becoming part of the production and not simply a way to use it, which enhances the overall effect and allows the user to become more involved with the product. This kind of interface is commonly found in multimedia and video game products. It provides a variety of navigation options, from simple iconic buttons to random artistic patterns or images that transform when clicked. Indexical interfaces allow a designer to artistically explore the possibilities of interface design.

Multimedia

Multimedia is a key aspect of all new media forms, including the internet, interactive television and video games. Multimedia is an environment in which more than one media type is used.

Multimedia elements

There are five main media elements used in new media: animation, video, audio, text and graphics. The combination of these media elements in an interactive form is known as multimedia.

- **Animation** can provide a multimedia work with a slick, well-produced look and feel, adding impact and creating visually exciting interfaces. Animation is also useful for demonstrations and presenting data. It is often used for artistic effect or for storytelling.
- **Video** is a familiar and proven means of effective communication. Video in websites, online advertising and games is common. It is compressed into smaller file sizes by 'stripping out' non-essential data, such as unused colour information, unchanged image areas from frame to frame and out-of-frame footage. However, relying too heavily on video can mean that users with slow internet connections do not wait for it to download.
- **Audio** can be integrated into a multimedia product in a variety of ways. One way is through narration. Speech can offer commentary without obscuring the information on the screen. Audio can also be used for providing a sense of place or creating a mood.
- **Text** for computer-based media is written in an inverted pyramid style, following the tradition of print journalism, with the most important information at the top. Where text is placed over a background, simple background colours and images should be used to ensure the text is legible.
- **Images.** Multimedia is highly visual. Like video, pictures are compressed to save space. Graphics may be content, but are also used in the UI and to establish 'look and feel'.

UI/UX design

UI and **user experience (UX)** design are two crucial components in developing digital products, such as websites, applications or games. UI and UX are closely related and often mentioned together, yet they focus on different aspects of the product development process.

What is UI?

The UI is what the user sees and operates with. The UI refers to the aesthetic and interactive elements of a product's interface. This is the point of contact for human-computer interaction. It involves designing the look and feel of the product, including stylistic choices such as colours, typography, buttons, icons, images and the overall layout. UIs typically follow a conventional pathway, where design elements are copied from previously successful UIs, or are experimental, where design elements take on a new look and feel. *Scrollytelling* is an excellent example of a novel UI design.

The primary goal of UI design is to create an interface that is visually appealing and intuitively usable. UI designers focus on creating a seamless and visually engaging interface that users find easy and enjoyable to use. This includes ensuring the design is consistent, coherent and aligned with the brand's identity.

What is UX?

The UX encompasses a user's overall experience with a product from the moment they discover it to the final interaction. It goes beyond the visual aspects to include the interface's functionality, usability and efficiency. UX design involves understanding the users' needs, preferences and behaviours to create a product that is easy to use and provides meaningful and relevant experiences. UX designers research user needs and behaviours, design the overall flow and structure of the content, and continuously test and refine the product based on user feedback. The goal is to solve users' problems and make their interaction with the product smooth, satisfying and effective.

UI/UX collide

UI design focuses on how the product looks and feels during interaction, while UX design concerns the product's overall effectiveness and satisfaction. Despite the apparent differences, UI is critical to UX. The visual and interactive elements support the outcomes. A UI/UX design is considered adequate only when these conditions are met. This implies active collaboration from both sides of the table, without which a project is ultimately doomed.

Design thinking

Design thinking is a user-centric approach to problem-solving that focuses on understanding user needs and generating innovative solutions that address those needs effectively. It involves several phases or stages – including empathy, ideation, prototyping, testing and iteration – to develop interfaces or experiences that are both useful and desirable from the user's perspective.

Phases of design thinking

Design thinking plays a crucial role in ensuring that digital products are aesthetically pleasing, functional and easy to use. There are six phases before reaching the desired outcome.

1 Empathy

Understanding the users' needs, challenges and motivations is the first step in the design-thinking process. For UI/UX design, this involves conducting user research, such as interviews, surveys and observation, to gain insights into the users' behaviours, preferences and the context in which they will use the product.

2 Define

Based on the insights gathered during the empathy phase, designers define the core problems to be solved. In UI/UX, this means identifying specific user needs and challenges that the design must address to enhance usability and user satisfaction.

3 Ideate

The ideation phase involves generating a wide range of creative solutions to the defined problem. For UI/UX designers, this can include brainstorming different design concepts, navigation structures and interaction models that could improve the UX.

4 Prototype

Prototyping involves creating quick and simplified versions of the solution to explore and test its feasibility. In UI/UX design, prototypes can range from paper sketches to interactive digital mock-ups. Prototyping allows designers to visualise and refine the UI and interaction before fully developing the product.

5 Test

Testing involves gathering user feedback about the prototypes to identify any issues or areas for improvement. For UI/UX, this can involve usability testing, where real users interact with the prototype and designers observe their behaviour and listen to their feedback to understand how well the design meets their needs and expectations.

6 Iterate

Based on the feedback from testing, designers iterate on their designs, making necessary adjustments to improve functionality, usability and overall user satisfaction. This iteration process may occur multiple times, with each cycle bringing the design closer to the optimal solution for the users' needs.

Visual hierarchy directly contributes to this process by ensuring the designs communicate the intended message effectively.

5.3 ACTIVITIES

1 **Create** a diagram showing the plan of an actual or imaginary website, **exemplifying** how each of the pages are linked via menus and sub-menus.
2 **Apply** your knowledge of the design thinking process to **evaluate** a UI or UX that you are familiar with.

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6 Editing codes and conventions

TECHNIQUES OF EDITING

A Hollywood movie contains between 800 and 1200 shots. For a narrative movie, the shooting ratio of filmed rushes to final selection is usually about 8:1. However, news and documentary genres, being less tightly planned than films, can have shooting ratios as high as 20:1. Editing is often thought of as a process of cutting down. However, editing can also be seen as a means of building up a story. Both are valid approaches.

In its simplest form, editing may be defined as the process of coordinating one shot with the next. This process of coordination of units of vision and sound creates the cause-and-effect chain of events in time and space that is the narrative. Editing is a process of combining images so they play off each other and create meaning.

Juxtaposition of shots

It is said the founders of film, the Lumière brothers, stumbled on one of the techniques of editing quite by accident. The camera broke down in the middle of filming. When they got it going again, they found the jump in **continuity** actually looked good. **Juxtapositioning** had been discovered.

Juxtapositioning of shots simply means the placing of shots side by side. The shots interact with each other and create certain meanings. The selection and sequence of shots has an impact on the audience's understanding of the message. Traditional Hollywood productions begin with a juxtapositioning of certain shot sizes. The opening sequence usually runs from an extreme long shot (ELS) through medium shot (MS) to close-up (CU).

Kuleshov effect



Weblink
The secrets of professional video editing

In the early 1920s, the film industry in Soviet Russia was very advanced and well funded. A number of experimental techniques were developed for the industry at the time that became the basis of much modern filmmaking. One such experimental technique was developed by Lev Kuleshov, a Russian film teacher and filmmaker.

The 'Kuleshov effect' is a montage effect demonstrated in the 1920s by Kuleshov, who showed how audiences can make different inferences about a shot depending on the shots with which it is intercut – this has become a central principle of modern editing.

The experiments

Kuleshov wanted to show that the meaning of a shot was significantly determined by the meaning of the surrounding shots. He invited passers-by off the streets to view short sequences of film, and then asked for their reactions.

- **The soup bowl experiments.** Kuleshov took a series of shots of a famous Russian actor named Ivan Mozzhukhin looking as calm and neutral as possible. He then cut these shots together with shots of a bowl of soup, a girl in a coffin and a (supposedly naked) woman on a sofa. In each case, the audience members thought the actor was experiencing a different emotion – hunger, grief or desire (Figure 6.1). The audience is said to have 'raved' about his acting, yet Mozzhukhin's image was exactly the same.
- **The White House experiment.** In what Kuleshov called 'creative geography', he took shots of a man walking from right to left across the frame in one street in Moscow, and a woman walking from left to right in another street. A third shot showed them meeting somewhere else and

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shaking hands. The man then points into the area off screen. Kuleshov cut into this series some shots of the White House in Washington, DC, in the United States. The audience believed the actors were actually in Washington.

- **The jigsaw woman.** To further demonstrate the Kuleshov effect, a shot of a woman was created out of images of the face, body, hands and legs of several different women.

Kuleshov believed his experiments proved that film had its own system of meaning that could be manipulated in a way that was unique to moving-image media. Time and space become the creation of the editing process.

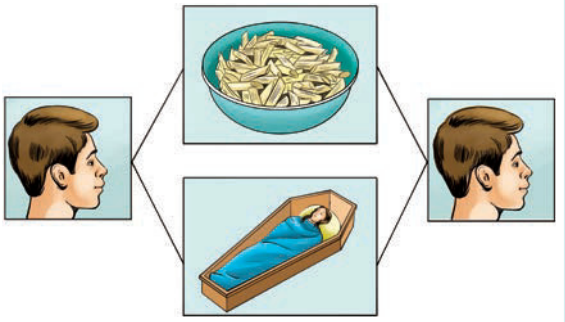


Figure 6.1 In Kuleshov's soup bowl experiment, the actor's expression was neutral, but the meanings for the audience depended on the shot that was edited in – hunger or grief.

Soviet montage

One of Kuleshov's students was Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein. Film historians credit Eisenstein with developing modern editing. Although he made only seven films, his influence has been greater than almost any other film director in film history. Eisenstein developed the montage approach to editing.

'Montage' is the process of using a collision of images to create an idea in the minds of the audience. Each image contains ideas and meanings. If separate shots with different meanings are placed side by side, even if they mean opposite things, then a third meaning can arise.

Collision of images was the basis of most scenes involving violence before the arrival of computer-generated imagery (CGI) in the 1990s. A classic scene might be a shooting. Imagine a shot of a man lying on the ground; next to this imagine a shot of another man holding a gun. Neither shot on its own indicates that a murder has occurred. However, the collision of the two independent images suggests this third meaning (Figure 6.2 a–d).

Eisenstein developed the theory of montage from the Kuleshov effect. He was also influenced by Japanese character-writing or pictographs. In Japanese writing, the intended idea might come from putting two symbols together, but the outcome is more than the sum of the parts. For example:

- child + mouth = scream (not 'child's mouth')
- bird + mouth = sing
- dog + mouth = bark.

Eisenstein worked with a film movement called **Soviet montage**. His technique became known as Soviet montage as well, to separate it from 'American montage'. Sometimes Eisenstein's technique is referred to as dialectical montage. 'Dialectic' is a term meaning a collision of opposing ideas.

Montage proved to be one of the most important developments of early cinema. Collision of images has formed the basis of almost all Hollywood special effects up to the development of CGI.

Editing as continuity

Editing involves a dilemma. The break between one shot and another interrupts the audience's attention. Each cut is a small jolt for the viewer. Every time a cut is made, there is a risk that the viewer will be brought back to reality. On the other hand, there is no other way of constructing a film. The filmmaker's problem is how to use editing, yet also control its disruptive power.

Classical Hollywood continuity editing

Continuity editing, favoured during the Golden Age of Hollywood, is sometimes called 'the invisible style'. It has the following features:

- **Shot progressions in the classical Hollywood style** – ELS, long shot (LS), MS, CU
- **Continuity cutting** – for example, cutting on action or movement to distract the viewer
- **Matching techniques** to hide cuts – for instance, eyelines are matched
- **Transitions such as dissolves** to smooth the remaining joins where necessary
- **Simultaneous time/parallel editing** (cross-cutting)
- **Point-of-view shots** – shot/reverse shot when filming conversation



Figure 6.2a–d Four shots from the Odessa steps sequence in Sergei Eisenstein's film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). The collision of these apparently unrelated shots of soldiers, guns, bodies and a woman carrying an injured child create a powerful emotional response in the audience. The technique is called montage.

- **Application of the 180-degree rule**
- **Use of standard three-point lighting** to naturalise appearances
- **Use of music** that is subservient to the story, reinforcing the meaning.

American montage

Hollywood directors commonly refer to montage as a series of shots that condense time. In early film, the classic American montage sequence might be a shot of calendar pages peeling off and blowing away as a character goes through a series of actions that might have taken months or years – such as growing up. American montages are also often used in training sequences to show a character getting more and more skilled. A famous example of American montage occurs in the British romantic comedy film *Notting Hill* (1999) during the marketplace scene when William Thacker (Hugh Grant) has just broken up with Anna Scott (Julia Roberts). A year without his girlfriend goes past as he walks through four seasons of the marketplace from summer through to winter and back to summer. The song 'Ain't No Sunshine' by Bill Withers plays throughout the scene, uniting the montage.

Cross-cutting (simultaneous time/parallel editing)

Cross-cutting (also known as simultaneous time or parallel editing) is the editing technique of cutting between scenes that are happening at the same time (simultaneously), but in different locations. Cross-cutting gives the audience extra knowledge that the characters do not have because the audience can see alternating shots of each scene. As a result, the audience experiences suspense.

Early filmmaker DW Griffith was one of the first to use cross-cutting in his famous 'last-minute rescue' scenes. As a result, the cliché of cross-cutting is the damsel tied to the railroad tracks while the train approaches and the hero rides to her rescue.

Weblink
8 essential cuts every editor should know

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A rule of thumb in cross-cutting is that the action in the separate scenes must eventually come together. In the clichéd example given, there must be a scene in which the train, the damsel and the hero are all together.

Many films rely on cross-cutting as an important feature of the film's narrative. Examples include Steven Spielberg's first film *Duel* (1971), cutting between a car and a menacing truck; *Jeepers Creepers* (2001), cutting between a car and a demonic vintage vehicle; and *Run Lola Run* (1998; Figure 6.3), cutting between a young woman extorting money and a young man about to hold up a supermarket.

Although creating suspense is one of the most common uses of cross-cutting, it does have other uses. Cross-cutting can be used to draw parallels or to create contrasts. For instance, showing images of wealth cross-cut with scenes of poverty can make the injustice much more apparent. Cross-cutting to create contrast was used in a memorable scene from *The Godfather* (1972). At a baptism, Michael Corleone (Al Pacino) accepts God and renounces Satan. Cross-cut with this scene, we see Corleone's henchman violently executing his enemies one by one.



Entertainment Pictures/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 6.3 *Run Lola Run* (1998) relies on cross-cutting to develop the narrative.

Transitions

The devices used to shift from one scene to another provide the equivalent of punctuation. They convey certain impressions. They also assist understanding and help to make meaning clear. Audiences learn to make meaning from these visual language conventions because they are constantly repeated.

Following are some devices used as 'visual punctuation'.

Cut

A cut is an instant change to another shot. In real life, this is similar to an abrupt change of attention – when we suddenly decide to inspect something else. A cut is the least obvious transition because it occurs so quickly and seems to work naturally. A cut can be regarded as the shortest distance between two shots.

However, there should be a reason for the cut, so the audience feels they want to look at the next shot. The motivation might be provided by the dialogue or an action from a character. Cutting on action is common because the movement in the shot distracts attention from the shot change. Cutting on dialogue seems natural because the audience naturally wants to see each person speak.

Dissolve

During a dissolve, one image gradually blends or dissolves into another. A dissolve is a longer route between two shots than a cut. For this reason, it introduces greater disruption. It can represent a dramatic pause. In a narrative genre, a dissolve can be used to suggest a smooth and gentle change in time or place.

Fade

A fade-out gradually fades the picture to an empty or black screen. A fade-in begins with a black screen and gradually reveals a picture. The fade is an obvious and disruptive transition. It signals a major change in the progress of the text. It is often compared to the curtain in a stage theatre, which opens and closes the show and separates the acts. The fade is the longest route between shots.

Defocus

Defocus shots provide transitions by gradually moving out of focus on one scene and refocusing on another. They are similar in character to the dissolve and are a more gradual way of easing the audience from one shot to another.

Wipe

During a wipe, a new image 'wipes' across the old one using a defined line. Digital effects switchers allow for a huge variety of wipes, including the flip frame and the page leaf. A wipe is the most unnatural transition and consequently is the

most obvious to the audience. It is commonly used in those genres that allow for disjointed presentation, such as news, documentaries and sports coverage.

Some cutting rules

Experienced filmmakers have some general rules that help to maintain the invisible style of classical Hollywood editing.

Jump cut

A **jump cut** occurs when a cut is made from one shot to another of the same subject without any real change in camera position or shot size. It is called a jump cut because usually some time has passed and the subject of the shot is doing something different, or is perhaps just shown in different lighting; the result is a perceptible jump that breaks the sense of continuity.

In classical editing style, the jump cut is regarded as poor form. However, many modern filmmakers use the jump cut as a deliberate technique to jolt the audience, or to increase the sense of unreality or chaos. The deliberate use of jump cuts in this way was first popularised in the French New Wave films of directors such as Jean-Luc Godard – most famously in his film *Breathless* (1960). Deliberate use of jump cuts is seen in the Guy Ritchie film *Snatch* (2000), and during the shaving scene in *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001).

Younger audiences in the 2020s have come to accept the jump cut because it is very common on social media. TikTok creators often use the jump cut to create interest or a sense of progress and story development in their videos. Many of these creators are unschooled in media traditions and make unintentional and unknowing jump cuts. Audiences of these short-form videos appreciate the rapid movements and have become used to jump cuts as a particular social media style.

Whip pan transition

Sometimes known as a swish pan or zip pan, whip pans can be created with the camera or in post-production. The transition effect is created by a blurry fast pan movement to one side out of a scene and then an equally fast motion-blurred pan into the next scene in the same direction. For example, a left to right whip pan out of shot one will need a left to right whip pan into shot two. Hidden in the motion blur of the pan is a cut from one scene to the other.

30-degree rule

Classical Hollywood editing style suggests that the camera should be moved at least 30 degrees away from its previous position when shooting the same subject to avoid a jump cut and appear **seamless**. Some editors demand that the camera should also change shot size, such as from an MS to a CU.

180-degree rule

One of the biggest sins against classical Hollywood editing style is to 'cross the line'. The line refers to the 180-degree line of interest between actors (or sometimes objects, such as moving trains or cars). Cameras should be placed or moved behind one side of the line only. Cameras should not be placed on opposite sides of the line. If they are, it looks like the characters have reversed the direction they are facing. The 180-degree rule is a function of screen geography (see page 74).

Weblinks
What the 180-degree rule is and how to break it

Breaking down edit-speak

Cutaways and cut-ins

Two useful editing techniques are cutaways and cut-ins.

- **Cutaway.** A cutaway is a shot of something other than the main action that can be inserted to hide a jump cut or to condense action. These shots are therefore cuts *away* from the main action to something related, but different. Sporting coverage often uses cutaways to audience members in order to compress time or make the action appear quicker. In films or television, directors often insist that camera operators get shots of general activity around the main action, so that these shots can be used as cutaways. For example, if two characters are walking down the street, the camera operator might collect cutaway shots of street art, shop windows, kids playing, buskers, stray dogs and so on. These could be inserted to hide cuts in conversation or to speed up the action without the audience noticing.
- **Cut-in.** A cut-in shot is used for the same purposes as a cutaway, except that it represents a further cut into the action – usually with an MS or a CU. A cut-in can also be used to hide a jump cut or to compress time. For example, in a scene involving characters walking down the street,

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the camera operator may have picked up some shots of one of the actors taking a drink from a bottle, looking at a watch or pushing their hair away. These shots represent a cut *in* to the main action, but could be especially useful if the editor needs to shorten the conversation between the characters and wants to cover up the cut.

Shooting ratio

The **shooting ratio** is the total amount of footage shot compared with the actual length of the completed production. The ratio varies widely between different productions, depending on the overall budget and the type of finished product.

It is said that there were 31 miles (50 kilometres) of celluloid film shot for the classic film *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962). However, most modern drama productions have a shooting ratio of between 5:1 and 15:1. The shooting ratio in a drama can depend on a number of factors apart from budget. These could include shot coverage of conversations, the number of takes, the number of scenes and the number of camera angles. Non-fiction programming, such as reality television, news or documentaries, tends to have quite high shooting ratios.

Shooting on digital cameras has meant that shooting ratios have risen across all types of productions. This is because digital footage is inexpensive. With more footage, the editor has more 'room to move', although the downside of this is that there is also a lot of footage to sort through and log.

Template
Activity 6.1

6.1 ACTIVITIES

1. View some action films and find examples of collision of images. Take a still of each image that makes up part of the technique. **Describe** how the collision of images sequence works. Provide **additional information** about each image in the sequence describing what the viewer sees. **Identify** the shot sizes and the arrangement of the people and objects in the frame. **Clarify** how the sequence works as a set of **codes and conventions**.
2. Record some examples of visual language punctuation (transitional devices), using them to **illustrate and exemplify** at least three of the techniques. Present them to the class. **Describe** their purpose and effect, **recognising the particular qualities and characteristics** of each.
3. Manipulate time in a short filmed sequence. Film an event where time is an important factor and then edit the footage into a short sequence. You could try an American montage to compress time, or film a moment of shock or extreme tension to expand time. **Structure** the sequence **systematically** to expand or compress time to create the desired effect. Provide **reasoning** for your choices in a brief written response after you have edited.
4. The use of cross-cutting (simultaneous time/parallel editing) has changed over time. **Analyse** the use of simultaneous time in the scenes involving the truck chasing the car in Steven Spielberg's *Duel* (1971) and in *Jeepers Creepers* (2001).
5. Refilm some of Kuleshov's early experiments and test them on an audience who is not aware of the intended purpose. **Create** two to three sequences using Kuleshov's original ideas as the basis for your own experiments, **making adaptations** to suit your purposes. **Describe** the findings of your Kuleshov experiments in a presentation to the class, **providing information** about the survey audience and their responses to the footage.
6. Film a short (10- to 15-shot) video sequence on a topic of your own choice. The sequence should attempt at least one example of each of the following:
   - **Create** an edited sequence using collision of images to create an idea that isn't in either shot.
   - **Create** a sequence of simultaneous time created by cross-cutting, with the two sets of action coming together in the last scene.
   - **Structure** into the sequences at least two different types of transitional devices.

SOUND CODES AND CONVENTIONS

Sound creates the feeling that you are in a 360-degree world that extends far beyond the frame and surrounds you in your seat. Movies have never been without sound. Even in the silent film era, there was always musical accompaniment (Figure 6.4). Sound is fundamental to creating the world of the story.



Everett Collection/Shutterstock.com

Figure 6.4 There never really was a truly 'silent era' of mass audience film. So-called silent films always had a musical accompaniment. Sound has been a partner with vision in creating a story world for audiences since the beginning.

Elements of sound

Sound has three elements in film and television: dialogue, sound effects and music.

Dialogue and voice-over

The main sound we hear in film and television is the human voice. Dialogue and voice-over move the narrative forwards. Without the human voice, we would not know what the characters were thinking, feeling or hoping to do. Dialogue and voice-over make the following apparent to the audience:

- character motivations
- character response to events in the cause-and-effect chain
- character relationships
- conflict with sources of opposition and blockage.

Both dialogue and voice-over are said to work best when they are not the exact mirrors of what the audience can already see in the image. In other words, dialogue should not state the obvious.

Dialogue

Dialogue is defined as what is spoken by the actors, and only happens in the story world. It is such a powerful element of film sound that it is rarely trumped in volume by music or sound effects. Dialogue almost always takes precedence over the other elements.

There can be two extremes of television and film dialogue. At one end of the spectrum is highly staged theatrical dialogue. At the other end is mood dialogue in which it is the characterisation the words convey, rather than the words themselves, that is important. Most modern dialogue is a blend of the two.

Dialogue is important in establishing character. The way someone talks reveals their background, culture, age, authority and social class. Dialogue also reveals the character's emotional response to events.

Voice-over

Voice-over is narration that is heard only by the audience. Voice-over narration allows the director to guide the audience through events that might be too hard to understand otherwise. There are two types of voice-over:

- **Subjective voice-over.** This gives the audience access to the inner world of a character. For example, in *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) we listen to the character Joe Gillis reflect on the events that led up to his murder. *American Beauty* (1999) uses voice-over in a similar way. *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) uses voice-over to give insight into other characters. *True Grit* (2010) uses voice-over to explain character motivation. A documentary uses subjective voice-over when the filmmaker involves themselves in the action.
- **Objective voice-over.** An objective voice-over is a narrator who is not one of the characters in the story. Objective voice-over is less common in modern films, but is commonly used in documentaries.

Voice-over is said to work best in films where the audience can still follow the story without it. Instead, the voice-over works as a kind of commentary that provides additional insights.



Weblink
Designing sound

Aspects of voice

There are four key qualities that give the human voice its power, say Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis of North Carolina State University:

1. **Volume.** A louder voice usually indicates more emotional intensity, suggesting that a character may be experiencing anger, fear or passion. Softness can suggest tenderness or even sneakiness.
2. **Pitch.** This is the frequency of a voice – whether it is high or low. Deep voices are often associated with power or authority. However, they can also be associated with evil or menace.

High-pitched voices can convey weakness or fear.

3 **Speech qualities.** The way a character speaks says a lot about them. The following are important aspects of speech quality:
   - **Accent and dialect.** These can indicate cultural background and social class. A character's accent can also explain setting and even character motivation.
   - **Diction.** The choice of words that come out of a character's mouth, and the way they are said, are both very revealing.
   - **Vocal signature.** The actual sound and rhythm of an actor's voice may be important in creating character. Many actors have signature styles of speaking.

4 **Acoustic qualities.** The way a voice sounds can indicate the location and setting. It can also suggest distance between characters. Sound engineers working on a film can manipulate the acoustic qualities of the voice to create the right perspective and degree of warmth.
   - **Sound perspective.** The sound perspective lets the audience know how far away a sound is. It also tells the audience what kind of environment the sound is travelling through. For example, there could be an echo if the sound is travelling through an empty room.

Sound effects

Sound effects and background noises help create a sense of reality in a visual text. They also build the idea of a real space in which the action is taking place. They give character to the environment. The following are the ways in which sound effects are used to build a scene:

- **Defining location.** Sound allows the audience to identify the location. Sometimes this can just be a generic location, such as a city. At other times, a particular sound may mean a specific location.
- **Lending mood.** Sound can have an emotional effect on the audience's response to a scene. It can build the sense of mood in a scene. For example, horror movies often add the sounds of violent thunderstorms to provoke fear in the audience.
- **Signalling impact on characters.** It is very common for sound to be used to show how characters are being affected by the action. The sound seems to stand for how the characters feel. For example, in Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959), a crop duster plane is heard humming in the background, but as it approaches the character Thornhill, the sound gets louder and louder and then the plane begins firing bullets. The rising sound makes us feel his panic.



riekephotos/Shutterstock.com

Figure 6.5 A film crew recording dialogue. Notice how the microphone on the end of the boom pole is held just above the characters but just outside the frame of the movie shot. The large foam 'zeppelin' or 'windjammer' that the microphone is contained in is designed to reduce wind noise.

Music

The power of music to manipulate emotions has always been acknowledged. It is often the music that makes an image come alive, producing an effect in combination with the image that is greater than each element on its own.

In modern movies, popular songs are used more often than scored orchestral tracks. These have the advantage of bringing to mind other cultural meanings and connotations. Popular music can suggest a time period or even a location. Popular music lyrics can also be used to underscore the meaning of the image or dialogue. What the singer is saying is commenting on what the audience can see.

Sound sources

The Greek word 'diegesis' was used by Aristotle to describe the world of the story that is created by the text. In movies, the diegesis is the fictional world that is shown on screen. This fictional world of the diegesis is the one experienced by the characters. It is not the same as the world experienced by the audience, which may include other elements such as orchestral music

or voice- over narration. The diegesis can include all of the events that the characters in the story experience, whether in the past, present or future. Thus, the diegesis of a soap opera would include the 'bible' that outlines all the character histories as well as their likely future paths.

In television or film, sound can come from one of only two sources. It either comes from inside the story or it happens outside the story. These two sources of sound are labelled diegetic and non-diegetic sound.

Diegetic sound: inside the story world

Sound from within the story is called **diegetic sound** because it happens inside the diegesis (the world of the story). This means the story characters, as well as the audience, must be able to hear the sound. It could be a gunshot, or music from a radio in the scene, for example. Usually the audience can see the source of the sound. Diegetic sound comes from the on-screen action that we observe and that the characters participate in. There are two types of diegetic sound:

1. **External diegetic sound.** This is sound that has an external source in the world of the story. A character is talking, for example, or a gun is fired.
2. **Internal diegetic sound.** This is sound that is still in the world of the story, but comes from inside the mind of a character. Just as we cannot hear another person's thoughts in real life, internal diegetic sound is not available to other characters.

Non-diegetic sound: outside the story world

Sound that is imported into the movie but is not related to the on-screen action is called **non-diegetic sound**. Non-diegetic sound may contribute to the story, build atmosphere or enhance the emotional power of a scene, but its source is not seen on screen. If the characters cannot hear it, it is non-diegetic. Voice-overs and narration are non-diegetic sound.

Types of sound

Two types of sound are used in the visual language of television and film. Film theorists have come up with a variety of terms for these types of sound. For example, Karel Reisz uses the terms 'synchronous' and 'asynchronous'. James Monaco uses 'parallel' and 'contrapuntal'. Monaco argues that music, sound effects and speech can either work with the image or comment on it.

Parallel sound

Parallel sound (or synchronous sound) is logically connected with the image. The sound comes from within the scene or emphasises some aspect of the scene. The classical style of Hollywood's Golden Age relied on parallel sound, using music, sound effects and dialogue to underline and support the image.

Contrapuntal sound

Contrapuntal sound (or asynchronous sound) provides a commentary on the image and may be unconnected to it. The sound may work against the image to create a third meaning. Contrapuntal sound can come from outside the scene. Stanley Kubrick's films *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) both use contrapuntal music. In *A Clockwork Orange*, Beethoven's symphonies are contrasted with futuristic scenes of stylised violence. Hitchcock used contrapuntal sound in *Psycho* (1960). Scenes of apparent ordinariness were given high tension through the use of a disturbing orchestral soundtrack.

Transitions for sound editing

Sound editing has fewer transition choices than vision editing.

- The **fade** is the most important sound transition. A fade-out is a gradual decrease in volume until eventual silence. A fade-in is a gradual increase in volume. In sound, a fade can represent an easy means of starting or finishing something. It gives the impression of infinity, or that the sound is going on forever somewhere if only the audience could hear it. A fade can also mean that a sound is moving closer or further away.

  Audiences will accept almost any change in sound as long as it is gradually faded in or out. This is why sound editing is often not noticed as readily as vision editing. Since the fade is so common, audiences expect gentle transitions as a matter of course.
- The **cut** is not as readily accepted by audiences for sound productions. As a result, the most common use of a cut in sound editing is to create a sudden shock. Sharp sounds, explosions, door slams and so on are useful ways of suddenly cutting from one sound to another.

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- A **segue** (pronounced *seg-way*) is a smooth transition from one piece of music or sequence of sounds to another. It is rather like a dissolve in vision editing. Segues are usually achieved by first matching the beat of two sound sequences, and then fading down one sequence and fading up the other.
- A **sound bridge** occurs when sound from one scene is carried over into another. This is why a sound bridge is also called **overlapping sound**. The sound can be overlapped either before or after a scene.

6.2 ACTIVITIES

1. Select a movie that you are very familiar with. Identify two or three highly climactic points in the movie. **Describe** the nature of the music at these points. **Clarify** how the music makes you feel and describe your own reactions to the sound at these points. **Describe** how the sound supports the progress of the narrative and the filmed action.
2. **Create** your own top five, all-time best voice-over narrated movie openings of the 21st century. Collect sample openings from online sources. Play them to the class. **Describe** why you think the voice-over is so good, referring to the features of dialogue in this book. **Identify** the different elements of voice-over and **explain** how they work in each example.
3. **Create** a list of actors you would employ on the basis of their voice quality. **Justify** your reasons for including them in the list, describing their voice, and **provide additional information** that **illustrates** these qualities (e.g. other roles they have played). **Identify** suitable new roles for them.
4. Find a movie scene in which a sound effect is used to establish location. Decide whether this sound effect establishes a generic location (e.g. a city somewhere) or a very specific location. **Describe** the elements of the sound effect that work to suggest either generic or specific location, **identifying particular characteristics** of both the sound and the location.
5. Create a quiz for your class based on selected scenes from movies. The scenes should contain either diegetic or non-diegetic sound. They should also contain parallel (synchronous) and contrapuntal (asynchronous) sound. Play each scene and ask the class to **identify** which type of sound it is. **Justify** the reasons for the answer yourself or ask the class members to do it. The person with the most correct answers is the winner.
6. There are four key qualities of the human voice. For each quality, find an example in a film. With these in mind, respond to the areas of activity in the following table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe how the voice quality is illustrated in the example you have given. Identify possible reasons the director may have sought out these qualities.	**Analyse** the narrative purpose behind the choice of voice quality, **examining** the story needs of the movie and **considering** the effect of each quality.	**Evaluate** the effectiveness of each quality, **drawing conclusions** about the **significance** of each of these to the audience.

MUSIC IN MOVING-IMAGE MEDIA

Music in film is sometimes considered (or even dismissed) as just a background element to support everything else. However, music can add cohesion to a scene by filling the silences in between dialogue, or it can provide a convenient sound transition between scenes. The soundtrack is often composed to complement the imagery, but not be so noticeable to an audience that it detracts from the rest of the action.

Functions of music

In addition to playing a supporting role to the visual elements in a film, music can also enhance the narrative or create extra layers of meaning and emotion for an audience. Music can contribute to the complexity of the film in five main ways, according to film scholars Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis. Film music can establish historical context, represent space, define characters, shape mood or provide a distanced or ironic commentary on a scene's visual information.



A. F. Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 6.6 A mulleted Adam Sandler fronts a cover band in *The Wedding Singer* (1998). The opening song 'You Spin Me Right Round' (1985) is immediately recognisable to an audience as a classic 1980s tune. This performance, combined with the *mise en scène*, quickly establishes the setting of the film.

1 Establish historical context

A resourceful way for a filmmaker to establish a time period in a film is to use music that was either composed or popular in that era (Figure 6.6). If the music is diegetic, this historical context can be further supported through the means of performance or sound delivery. For example, if music is playing from a mobile phone or other digital device, depending on the style of the technology, this suggests the film is set from the mid-2000s onwards.

2 Represent a scene's geographical space

The geography and locations of a setting can also be distinguished through diegetic music. For example, as a character moves from a loud party scene to another room, the music dims in volume to reflect the room's proximity to the party. Film music can also suggest a country or region. In the *Braveheart* (1995) soundtrack, the symphony orchestra sound is augmented by the use of traditional Celtic instruments such as uilleann pipes, Irish whistle and bodhrán.

3 Define characters

The type of music favoured by a character can contribute to that character's representation. A character's musical taste, or the musical motifs associated with a character through a non-diegetic soundtrack, can signify their personality or importance in the narrative. The term **leitmotif**, first used to describe a technique in Richard Wagner's operas, is a melodic phrase that is associated with a particular person, situation or idea. Composer John Williams often used the leitmotif technique in his orchestral scores to link a particular melodic idea with a character. Decades later, many people can still hum 'The Imperial March' that is associated with Darth Vader in the *Star Wars* franchise, or the triumphant 'The Raider's March' in the *Indiana Jones* franchise.

Weblink
Leitmotif

4 Shape mood

Music plays a powerful role in how audiences 'read' a scene or react emotionally. Film music can reinforce the heartache of unrequited love or have the audience on the edge of their seats, waiting for something bad to happen. In the 1998 film *The Truman Show*, this effect is illustrated 'live' as the fictional executive producer, Christof, directs a scene for the reality show. As Truman hugs his long-lost father, the simple lamenting, almost questioning piano melody is combined with soaring violins. Christof directs his editors and composer to increase the volume of the music to cue the fictional audience's emotions.

5 Provide a distanced or ironic commentary on a scene's visual information

The contrast between sound and image is sometimes manipulated by filmmakers to make a point or draw attention to a particular moment (Figure 6.7). In *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003), Pippin is commanded to sing to entertain Denethor. As the moving refrain continues, this scene cross-cuts between CU shots of Denethor as he feasts, men riding into battle, the orcs preparing to annihilate them and Pippin's reluctant performance. The disgusting, ravenous feasting is in stark juxtaposition to the beautiful song, and it suggests how indifferent Denethor is to the people he's sending to their deaths.

Attributes of moving-image media music

When unaccustomed to studying music, it can be easy to fall into the trap of using ambiguous or simple terms such as 'passionate' or 'scary' to describe film music. However, Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis argue that even non-musicians can still analyse and write about



Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 6.7 *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014) characters are being processed for incarceration at a high-security prison. Peter Quill (aka Star-Lord) confronts a prison guard for using his Walkman, Peter's most prized possession. The prison guard tasers Peter into submission to the tune of Blue Swede's 'Hooked on a Feeling' (1973). This upbeat 1970s rock number distances the audience from the violence and also highlights that Peter's treatment is the exact opposite of a 'loving feeling'.

film music by focusing on five key attributes of film music: patterns of development, lyrical content, tempo and volume, instrumentation and cultural significance.

1 Patterns of development

Musical motifs can be associated with a character, place or idea. Musical themes are repeated during a film where they signify important character or plot developments. Melodic motifs can also be used to foreshadow events in a film or film series. For example, in *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones* (2002), Anakin Skywalker fails to rescue his mother and lays waste to the sand people in a fit of rage. Yoda feels this disturbance in the Force, and the main theme from 'The Imperial March' is clearly audible in the soundtrack. This motif reinforces Anakin's struggle with the dark side and foreshadows his character development in the following *Star Wars* instalments.

2 Lyrical content

From the 1960s onwards, some filmmakers started to use individual popular songs in their film soundtracks instead of the traditional scored orchestral works. The lyrics of the song usually (but not always) support the visuals in some way.

3 Tempo and volume

The tempo (speed) and volume of film music can contribute to the pace and energy of a scene. For example, chase scenes in films are often accompanied by loud, up-tempo music to reinforce the sense of danger and excitement for an audience. The tempo of a soundtrack usually links to a character's movement, whereas the volume of music often symbolises the space (emotionally and physically) around a character.

4 Instrumentation

Even for those not completely familiar with specific orchestral instruments, terms such as 'low brass', 'percussion' or 'high strings' are more descriptive and useful in analysing film music than just saying 'the orchestra'. The type of ensemble that is creating the music is also important in creating specific sounds. For example, a film score played by a symphony orchestra has a very different sound to a rock band.

5 Cultural significance

Audiences can derive additional meaning from a scene through the intertextual references in the soundtrack. When audiences make an intertextual link, this can lead to further enjoyment or a feeling of superiority at understanding references that give extra meaning. In *The Matrix* (1999), when Neo first arrives at the Oracle's home, an instrumental version of a traditional jazz standard is playing in the background. For audiences who recognise the tune as Duke Ellington's 'I'm Beginning to See the Light' (1944), this adds additional meaning to the scene as Neo is about to learn pivotal information that influences his development as the 'saviour'.



Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 6.8 The song 'Young and Beautiful' by Lana Del Ray was used as a reccurring theme throughout *The Great Gatsby* (2013). The haunting melody and refrain symbolise the intense longing of both Daisy and Gatsby. The melody becomes a motif in the film and is woven into Craig Armstrong's score. The song is even used as an up-tempo foxtrot and performed by a jazz ensemble at one of Gatsby's grand parties.

6.3 ACTIVITIES

1. For each of the five functions of music in media, **identify** a moment in a film or TV series that shows music being used in that way. **Analyse** how the music functions in those scenes to create meaning.
2. Select a short excerpt of a film that leads up to a climactic or important moment in the narrative.
   Describe the features of the music by describing the instrumentation, tempo and volume of the soundtrack. **Analyse** how the soundtrack creates meaning for audiences in this scene.
   Draw conclusions about how the music contributes to the climax or pinnacle moment of the scene.
3. **Experiment** with different types of music in editing a scene to create specific moods or genres. For example, film and edit a chase sequence, then experiment with different music selections to suggest the genre of action, romance, science fiction or comedy.
4. Choose a film that uses mainly popular music in the soundtrack, such as *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999), *Juno* (2007) or *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2* (2017). Respond to the areas of investigation in the following table.

DESIGN	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Design the plot/character developments and associated songs using a diagram, illustrating key plot/character developments and the popular songs used at each stage.	**Analyse** the lyrics of each song and compare the lyrics with what is happening visually at those moments in the film.	**Evaluate** the significance of these song choices by assessing whether the lyrics: • provide an appropriate 'mood' for a scene (but may not be strictly related to the story developments) • match the action/storyline of a scene • further or enhance the narrative • provide a distanced or ironic commentary • contribute to how a character is represented.

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7 Elements and principles of design

ELEMENTS AND PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

The basic visual communication tools, their combinations and the relationship they can have to each other can be described using the elements and principles of design. These fundamental building blocks allow artists to discuss the work of others using shared terminology about visual and interactive technology.

With a vocabulary to describe both still and moving-image media, screen-based artists can identify their own aesthetic preferences, draw connections to works that may influence them and refine their work for the intended purpose.

Visual language

Visual artists use imagery to communicate their ideas to audiences. Artworks can be interpreted through different contexts, such as personal experiences, contemporary perspectives or cultural beliefs. When visual artists are interpreted in a formal context, codes, conventions, signs and symbols can be used to analyse how their work transmits ideas. The formal organisation of visuals can be described using the elements and principles of design.

Elements of design

The visual 'ingredients' to be placed in the frame are the 'elements'. In media language, each framed shot may sometimes be thought of as the equivalent of a word. The elements of design might be thought of as the individual letters that spell out those words. In most examples of screen composition, several elements will be working together within a frame.

Line

Line can be imagined as the one-dimensional element. It has length but, in theory, can exist without height or width. Lines combine to create shape and form (Figure 7.1). They can define the boundary between two shapes. As most screen media imagery has its origin in the real world, lines will often be formed by adjoining textures or colour sections.

Broken or continuous lines may be seen in shots of roads. Wires can show straight or curled examples. Lines may present as very precise, like a circuit diagram, or roughly sketched out, like marks in the sand. Whether manufactured or natural, linear forms on screen tend to lead the viewer's eye.

Shape

Lines that cross or return to a point create a closed shape. The purest version of shape is found in two-dimensional (2D) visuals. Some animations exaggerate this lack of depth as a stylistic choice, choosing to avoid three-dimensional (3D) realism. Some 20th century artists also embraced more 2D shapes in their work as a reaction against the realism of photography.

Filming in most urban areas is dominated by geometric shapes. These can be straight-lined or curved constructions. Truly random shapes can be hard to find, as even intricate natural shapes are

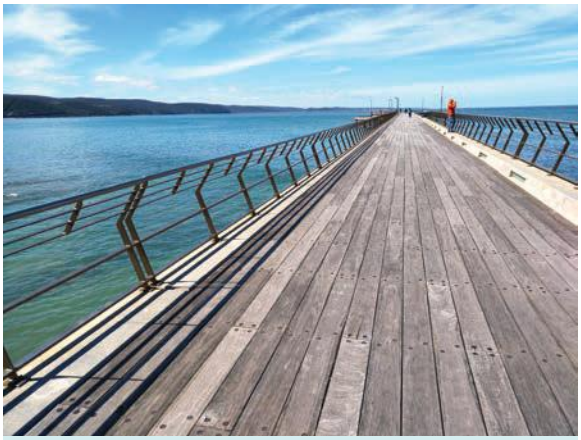


Photo supplied/D Sinclair

Figure 7.1 Converging lines direct attention towards the **vanishing point**.

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largely pre-determined. When filmed 'front-on', shells or leaves present as fairly 2D shapes to the camera. Naturally occurring shapes are referred to as organic and tend to create a more tranquil response in the audience than artificial shapes.



Photo supplied/ D.Sinclair

Figure 7.2 Silhouettes and shadows are real-world examples of a moving 2D shape in filmed scenes.

Form

Shapes combining to suggest 3D objects create what is called 'form'. Most screen media works, such as painting and photography, *imply* depth with shadow or perspective. Sculpture, however, allows the exploration of the *actual* depth of form. In the moving image, the actual experience of 3D form is possible with virtual reality (VR) equipment or in volumetric, 3D video. Moving into the *illusion* of depth is easily simulated by any change in camera position during a take. Therefore, dollying or craning reveals the form of the objects in shot. Unlike painting and photography, objects on screen can rotate to accentuate their form. Audiences read these forms as a world they can map out and be drawn into.

Space

Hollow shapes can have space inside the 3D form. This internal space can make objects seem more fragile than a solid shape. The temporary nature of a tent seems to amplify the potential violence depicted in the art installation *The Consequence of Chance* (2011/2018) by Julie Gough. Using cinema-like storytelling through projected 'shots' on each wall of the canvas allows Gough to explore colonisation themes. Audience perception of the space inside the tent, created by the silhouette



Dmitry Naumov/Shutterstock.com

Figure 7.3 Space generates relationships between other elements like shape. Relationship to the viewer is also changed by the emotional distance of being in the space *outside* the tent.

shapes and the fragility of the boundary to that space, adds to the drama.

The external space around forms and shapes is referred to as **negative space**. Negative space is anywhere the objects are not present. In practice, film often uses distant horizons or an out-of-focus background behind subjects. Without any significant point of interest, these backgrounds function as empty or negative space. Empty visual spaces are often the stage for action or anticipation of something happening in the void.

Tone (value)

Black and white footage is the purest media example of tone. Without colour, different shades of the **greyscale** construct the picture. In the days of black and white television, a bright green shirt, for example, looked exactly the same as a bright red one on screen. An extreme version of avoiding colour is tone drop-out. When contrast is very high in black and white, the mid grey tones disappear, leaving solid black and solid



paolo de santis/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 7.4 Variations in tone can generate depth within a single colour.

white. Sometimes used as a tool for creating a masking matte in editing, it can also be used to replicate lightning. Varying tone within the one **hue** (colour) can bring a painterly, surreal aspect to real-world settings. Images dominated by darker tones are read as sombre or mysterious.

Texture

Texture is the physical contours and properties of the surface. The angle of lighting is the most important factor in communicating texture on screen. Lighting from a 90-degree angle will accentuate the texture visually. Backlighting an object will exaggerate fluffy or wispy textures. Lights from the direction of the lens flatten texture. This is why lens ring lights are commonly used to 'fill' wrinkles on face models.

Intersections of texture in nature add drama. Large-scale textures can document movement during a narrative or present visceral barriers to character progress, such as razor wire in prison films.

Skimming light across the texture accentuates the ridges and crevices, but like still photography, it is a simulated or **implied texture**. Haptics in VR are closer to a genuine experience of texture, although still a simulation. Subconscious impressions of texture will often require subtle audio support to help make a texture repulsive or dangerous to an audience. Textures can equally be implied as warm and inviting or cold and sterile.

Colour

Emotional mood is strongly suggested by colour. Each colour or hue can be manipulated in editing by adjusting **saturation**, or the colour intensity. This can change a scene to make it look more vibrant or gloomy in the post-production. Colour can be set by physical objects or the light that falls on them. **White balance** is the function that corrects for the colour of light in the scene, and automatic white balancing can fight against filmmakers attempting to 'paint' their set with lighting colours to achieve an emotional effect. Light colours mix differently to paint colours (**additive colour**). However, the colour wheel provides standard colour schemes that can be used to plan for a striking mood. **Monochromatic** schemes explore different tones of a single hue, feeling unnatural. **Triadic** colours can be energetic. **Complementary** colour schemes produce contrast and can sometimes occur in the natural world, without digital manipulation.

Point or dot

As the very smallest mark possible, some artists regard the theoretical point as the fundamental element of design. This concept is at the heart of the pixels that make up our screens and the silver halide crystals that brought chemical-based images to film. In visual art, Pointillism experimented with allowing the eye to mix colours at a distance (see Georges Seurat). Up close, the dots were the constituent colours, packed tightly together.

While Aboriginal dot painting on canvas is a recent evolution, the dot appears as an element of design in ancient cave art and body painting. Structured use of dots is now a distinctive feature of some styles of Australian Indigenous art (Figure 7.5). Random placement of dots to generate shading is known as **stippling** in western art, and comic books use **Ben-Day dots** to create tone.



James D. Morgan/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images

Figure 7.5 The tourism experience called Wintjiri Wiru uses new media projections to tell stories, supported by a 1000-drone swarm. Dots of light from the drones combine to build other design elements of line and shape over the night skies of Uluru.

Principles of design

Arranging visuals within an artwork forms what is called 'the composition'. The arranging can follow guidelines established by artistic practice. This organising of the elements of design within an image can be categorised under various principles. If the 'elements' are like letters in a word, the 'principles' are the order those letters are put into. The same elements can convey a different meaning when re-arranged within the frame, just like an anagram; the word *MORE* means something very different when rearranged as *ROME*.

Some artists work to expanded categories for the principles of design, and others combine several together. There are at least seven principles of design

and up to a dozen, depending how definitions are grouped and overlapped.

Unity/harmony

Overall cohesion of an image is the effect of unity. The most obvious way to achieve this is with one simplified object in the frame, such as an archway of light at the end of a tunnel. When multiple shapes are in the shot, they may have similar sympathetic elements to each other, which creates a visual harmony. An example of the use of sympathetic elements could be framing some moons of Jupiter with the sphere of the planet behind.

For audiences, a sense of stability can come from echoes of one recurring shape in limited colours. De-cluttering the background reduces conflicting visuals, increasing harmony. Unity can also be created through other elements of design.



Photo supplied/D.Sinclair

Figure 7.6 Similar shapes, angles, and colours bring a unified effect to separate high speed machines.

Proximity

Sometimes considered within the principle of unity, proximity is how close objects are placed. In visual composition, placing objects close to each other creates a connection. Shapes are sometimes overlapped, allowing the proximity to create one unified shape. The placement of objects away from each other can force the audience to alternate attention to different areas, emphasising the frame's aspect ratio.

In narrative scenes, proximity can be a powerful expression of emotional relationships between characters. In screen language, proximity to the camera can alter mood for the audience. A close-up (CU) shot on a long-lens, zoomed in, has a more detached feel, despite the shot size. The same-sized CU on a wide-angle is more intrusive on the character space, almost fish-eye. The CU on the wide-angle feels more disturbing to the audience, perhaps even claustrophobic because of the uncomfortably close camera proximity.

Balance (including symmetry, asymmetry and radial balance)

The visual weight of objects within a frame can be placed to achieve different forms of balance. This weight can be generated through the actual size of a prop, for example, or its relative size on screen. Different colours can also imply size or mass. An example is the dark monolith in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968; Figures 7.7a and 7.7b). Revealed in the movie as an alien beacon, the exact same object would convey less weight in a lighter colour. 'Heavier' visuals may sit more naturally for viewers at the bottom of the frame. The colour and shape of a giant woman in *Barbie* (2023) can't portray the same mass as a black rectangular prism.

An invisible set of scales can be thought of as sitting horizontally within a wide screen. The simplest way to balance these scales is with the exact same image on each side of the frame. This is called 'symmetry'. Symmetry can be either vertical or horizontal. Vertical symmetry can be arranged so that the top half of an image is balanced by the bottom half. This is often achieved by including such views as reflections in water. Horizontal



LANDMARK MEDIA/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 7.7a Lateral symmetry is enhanced by the partial vertical symmetry of the two semicircles facing each other.



LANDMARK MEDIA/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 7.7b Visual weight from the silhouette and position of the clouds adds to the impression of balance.

symmetry is arranged by balancing the left and right sides of an image. However, Stanley Kubrick and Wes Anderson are directors known for centralised symmetrical balance. These shots can be used to indicate many ideas, including conformity, separation or an inevitable destiny.

When balance is asymmetrical, the visual weight of an object is 'traded off' against the other object(s). The resultant image feels balanced, although the sides may not be identical.

Rather than a kind of vertical or horizontal fold-line to reflect the symmetry (axis of symmetry), radial symmetry features a central point of focus. All of the elements in the image seem to converge on one central point. This was popularised in the 1930s by the over-head shots of the 'Busby Berkeley musicals'. The choreography of synchronised swimmers and dancers were simply tools of spectacle to create geometric patterns, which were parodied in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005). Shots of snowflakes or car wheels rely on radial symmetry and the effect on the audience can be entrancing, especially with a rotating motion.

Weblink
Mao, Buddah and I

Repetition/consistency

Exact copying of screen visuals is more common in the digital era. Epic shots of assembled screen armies show uniform characters, often in a consistent stance. This is a highly controlled form of repetition. Less regimented versions may be plantation forests or container ship ports. This principle of design can communicate compliance or the solidarity of a crowd. Worship or adoration may be underlined by actions of a leader that are imitated by followers. Pink Floyd used hammers marching in unison for *The Wall* (1980) as powerful commentary on political symbols. Repeating visuals within a frame may increase the unity of the image and, with perspective, is often used to depict the near infinite. Pointing a live camera feed at its own screen is a novel way to produce repetition. *Interstellar* (2014) replicates this feel when the protagonist is depicted entering an 'engineered' black hole.

Some artists regard pattern as falling under the principle of repetition. This view of repetition as pattern could also apply to editing pace, which can have a hypnotic effect on the viewer.



geogif/Shutterstock.com

Figure 7.8 Each of the balconies presents the camera with repeated colour and shape. Framing out the edge of the building emphasises the repetition.

Rhythm

Echoing versions of lines or shapes in a frame produces a visual rhythm. Sometimes regarded as a sub-set of repetition, rhythm is not necessarily a literal repeat of a feature; it implies a progression (Figure 7.9). The Sydney Opera House is a good example of rhythm in architecture, without directly repeating visual elements. Geometrically speaking, each of the 'sails' of the building is part of a sphere, producing a predictable rhythm to the overall shape. As each of the intersections is at a slightly different angle, there is a progression in the design for each part of the building. This produces a pleasing rhythm in the visual composition when filmed from the side, even in a static image. Consecutive desert sand dunes might be framed as an example of this static rhythm in the natural world.



Vicky Jirayu/Shutterstock.com

Figure 7.9 Rhythm is sometimes grouped under repetition but brings a liveliness through placement or a progression of the element being repeated. Narrative assumptions about the subject can also start to suggest movement.

Like music and dance, moving-image media can go beyond 2D artwork and use time to build rhythm. Editors can develop a 'feel' for when to cut, based on cues in the frame. Zooms and pans should be left to settle before cutting away; objects may be allowed to leave the frame or a painter may complete a brush stroke within the action.

The most studied example of editor's rhythm is the shower scene from *Psycho* (1960). The sudden sequence of closer framing on a screaming mouth in shots 14 to 16 heralds the start of the rapid pace editing that the scene is known for. However, the almost subliminal close-ups of a knife-clenching fist coming at the camera reveal the editing subtlety. Shot 30 shows the fist plunging through the shower water in a blur. After a cut-away, it repeats in shot 32. After another cut-away the fist comes again, this time arriving in sharp focus for just a frame. This small pause on the third version of the shot is like a musician's emphasis on a beat, providing a full stop for the mini-sequence. It subconsciously communicates that the knife has hit its mark. The effect of this seamless rhythm is to conceal the editing strategy the audience has been subjected to. The viewer is immersed in the experience of the event, rather than the filmmaking.

Movement

Not every artist needs to regard movement as a separate principle, with repetition of movement widely used to generate rhythm. Like rhythm, movement can be thought of on two levels for screen media: movement suggested in a static framed image and genuine movement, including the camera itself. Movement in the static frame can come from compositions that lead the eye around the frame.

Repeated movement of the subject itself can be seen in the early abstract film by Fernand Leger, *Ballet Mecanique* (1924). Fascinated by industrial machinery and influenced by the Cubist art movement, Leger experiments with swings, pendulums and kaleidoscopes to build rhythm through movement.

Alignment

Important for graphic design and text placement on screen, alignment can be thought of as a rhythm of placement or a repetition of margins. Objects or text can line up centrally or according to an edge margin, suggesting a relationship between the aligned features. Graphic designers also consider the



steeve-x-art/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 7.10 Capturing movement in a still image was the aim of futurist painters, as seen in Umberto Boccioni's painting of a horse in *Elasticity (1912)*.

white space between text and infographics in the layout. Aspects of the image or location props may be used to align graphic overlays.

Tenet (2020) was the first film release to test audience interest in returning to cinemas after the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. The visually striking poster (Figure 7.11) uses an angled alignment of the text with the Dutch (canted) angle image. Body language is also aligned in the image with the axis of symmetry. This symbolises an aspect of the narrative, and even the name of the movie gives a clue to the nature of the story. 'Tenet' is a palindrome (a word that reads the same backwards or forwards). Dealing with alternative timelines



Album/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 7.11 Movie posters often align text with images that are an extension of the film's aesthetic.

Weblink
Ballet Mecanique

is portrayed in the combination of bi-directional asymmetry of the images. The audience is offered a cohesive reverse 'z' shape of image and text to scan. The poster presents a slight bias of weight to the bottom and a slight bias of looking space to the top-centre. The eye is drawn to connect with the human face and led around the disorienting composition, much like the movie itself.

Scale/proportion/hierarchy

Most first- and third-person video games use size of objects to indicate perspective distance. However, film language has often used on-screen proportion artistically. Allowing a single camera free access to the set enables the camera position to manipulate relative size. Multi-camera shoots cannot accommodate another camera in shot, resulting in traditional television tending to avoid extreme scale experimentation.

Weblink
Title sequences and proportion from *No Time to Die*

Decades of James Bond title sequences used female silhouettes as a motif. These dancers are regularly portrayed interacting with out-of-proportion props from the movie. For the title sequence of *Casino Royale* (2006), playing card motifs are used by title designer Daniel Kleinman to explore scale. Bond actor, Daniel Craig, insisted on performing the live action basis for the animated sequences of characters running over playing card iconography. The *No Time to Die* (2021) title sequence also manipulates scale across a wider variety of props.

An example of scale and proportion being central to the narrative is the fantasy story of *Gulliver's Travels* (1939, 1996, 2010), about a race of humans of a different size. A speculative fiction version using the same visual effect is *Downsizing* (2017). The narrative of the film is concerned with saving money and resources by shrinking people. In one film, audiences identify with the giant; in the other, viewers sympathise with the tiny world. Scale can be a source of spectacle as well as symbolism. This is the case for Australian hyper-realist sculptor, Ron Mueck, who reproduces human figures at various scales.

Framing an object to dominate the screen through size is one way of stating its importance and drawing the viewer's eye. For this reason, *hierarchy* is sometimes considered an aspect of this design principle.



Nils Versemann/Shutterstock.com

Figure 7.12 Objects of different scale confuse the audience's sense of distance from the subject with contradictory information.

Emphasis/focus

The main message of the shot needs to be emphasised to be brought to the viewers' attention. Within the overall composition, emphasis can be given to items in a number of ways (Figure 7.13). Variance in scale compared to other similar objects can single one item out as special. Variations in shape or colour can also pick one item out from less striking options. Strong contrast against the background of one of the elements of design can also direct attention. Arranging one prop or character away from others uses the isolation of visual space like a frame around them. The lack of proximity suggests difference if other items are grouped together. Brightness of one part of the frame can draw attention in the same way a spotlight on-stage restricts the audience view of the rest of the stage.

One of the technical limitations of traditional lenses is the need to focus. This choice is taken from the audience and rests with the filmmaker. Depth of field is a way of reducing the importance of detail in areas less relevant to the story. Although blurring or smokiness (**sfumato**) can be used in other artforms, true depth of field is unique to the camera-based arts. With a shallow depth of field, the audience *must* comply with the emphasis imposed by the camera's plane of focus.

Each of these emphasis devices have the effect of guiding the gaze of the viewer. If a human face is visible in the shot, the eyes and mouth as a **social triangle** has a powerful pull on the audience eyeline and will compete for emphasis. Screen artists should decide what information their audience must take away from each composition.

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nito/Shutterstock.com

Figure 7.13 Bright areas, contrast and sharp focus dominate attention in the frame to trump repetition and true scale.

Variety

The break from a pure pattern is variety. Visual interest in repeated aspects of a picture can be increased by variations in colour, tone, size, texture or shape (Figure 7.14). A high-angle shot of a shopping centre carpark may hold audience interest for longer than a sales yard of brand new cars due to the variety of form and colour. A queue of people tend to deserve more screen time than a line of robots as there is less new information in images of conformity. But too much variety can spoil an image. If all the objects in the shot have significant variation across multiple elements of design, the principle of unity/harmony may be undermined.

Variety *of* shots and variety *within* shots adds to the sense of journey for the audience, like travelling a varied landscape.



Photo supplied/D.Sinclair.

Figure 7.14 Within limited shape and texture, partial framing and colour give variety on a single theme.

Contrast

A stronger statement than variety, contrast is juxtaposing opposites. Selections from the elements of design which apparently contradict each other lead to a vibrant energy. This can be seen at the boundary of complementary colours (opposite on the colour wheel), such as in the signature image from *La La Land* (2016; Figure 7.15), where a violet sky contrasts the yellow dress. Similar tension can be created between bright and dark areas, smooth and abrasive textures, or large and small objects.

Ironically, contrasts can also prompt an audience to look for similarity. Again, the complexity of screen meaning is that the principles of design can be applied across a scene, not just within a shot. The opening scenes of *Oppenheimer* (2023) feature drops of rain that ripple in puddles. This shot was a last-minute improvised inclusion, yet it speaks strongly about the ripple effect of the actions of the title character and events in the lead-up to the development of nuclear weapons. The contrast of red shockwaves in the burning atmosphere and the gentle ripples in water puddles allow the audience to search for metaphor. Editing contextualises these images as an intellectual process of imagination. The extreme contrast of scale, texture, colour and temperature empower the audience to read both the differences and similarities presented.



Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 7.15 Colour is one contrast easily exaggerated by filmmakers through adjusting saturation.

The fourth dimension

The filmic arts share an aspect in common with music, dance and drama: they rely on time.

Without the elapsing of time, animation and movies become drawing and photography. Some of the elements and principles of design already need modification and extension to apply to the screen arts.

Additional four-dimensional (4D) principles

Working in the fourth dimension of time requires additional principles to be added to design considerations, according to Ellen Mueller, Director of Programs at Arts Midwest, in the USA. Under the headings developed by Mueller, the artistic notions can be contextualised for various forms of screen media. Building on her list of additional principles, narrative, documentary, expressive or game productions can be analysed using time-based factors on top of the traditional elements and principles. The three dimensions of real-world solid shapes can be represented in 2D or 3D digital works, but some principles can *only* be applied once time is factored in, in what Mueller refers to as 4D.

Duration

Each shot and the entire production has a chronological length. The 4D audience may have no control over a linear time progression. With a linear production, viewing in real-time may be the only option.

Speed

Footage can be recorded or replayed in something other than real time. Speed can be applied to analyse an aspect of camera movement, as well as the props and actor motion on screen. Editing pace can bring its own aspect of speed to a production, even if the other forms of movement from the camera or the on-screen talent is slow.

Direction

Standard camera movement is categorised by direction, however, this can be in contrast or in sympathy with directional movement within the frame. This directional movement may itself change over the course of the shot length, leading the viewer's eye. Just as line can do this in a still image, direction of movement uses time to create additional audience prompts and meanings.

Simultaneity

Screen media has the apparent ability to present the past or future to an audience. This 'time machine' aspect can also be applied to concurrent timelines. Two things can happen in parallel action, as with the classic **simultaneous time** editing technique (see page 83). Equally, two or more different time periods can be visualised as if unfolding simultaneously.

Screen media may present sections of a story sequentially or with simultaneous storytelling. Game play may continue in locations unseen by a player who is in a particular location in the story world. Characters in massively multiplayer online (MMO) games may have a simultaneous but different viewpoint of events as both participate in the one scene.

Energy/intensity

Vibrancy can be addressed with traditional elements and principles. The addition of time and movement can incorporate energy in the action (Figure 7.16). Moving-image media can add intensity to that action with jump cuts, crash zooms, choice of fonts or rapid changes in multiple font style every few frames. Other artforms may employ an enthusiastic performer, select a 'busy' backdrop or visually frame triangular shapes for a sense of energy. However, the actions used to construct the screen media themselves – through camera, editing, lighting and audio choices – adds further energetic possibilities.

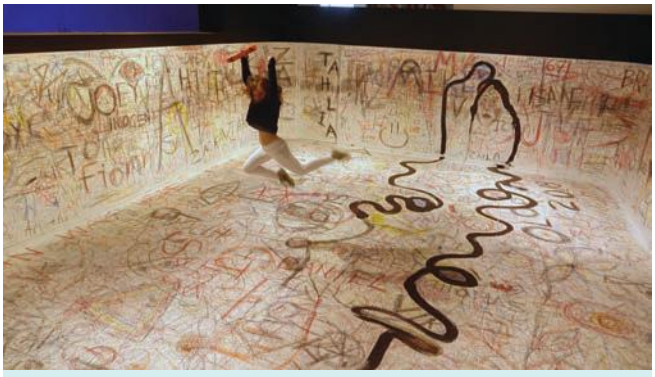


Photo supplied/D.Sinclair

Figure 7.16 Portraying energy through time-based aspects goes beyond artwork limited to three static dimensions.

Transition

Change between scenes or revealing something under an image through changing transparency relies on the passage of time. **Transition** is a type of juxtaposition for images (see page 84). In a traditional gallery, this can be done by placing pictures next to each other on a wall. Media artworks have the option of being side by side temporally (in time), rather than physically. Just as the meaning may be affected by which image

is above the other on a gallery wall, so too the sequence of the images in transition helps construct the meaning.

Musicality

Screen images can accompany soundtracks that shift the meaning. Ellen Mueller considers melody, pitch, volume, tone and chords in the music to contribute to this communication. But the visuals can also reflect this musicality with the overall sequence of the screen text.

Following cues to cut on the beat in the music sometimes seems obvious, yet film structure can also behave like a song. Repeated images or group scenes can function as a chorus, while shots of an individual aspect can be like an instrumental solo. Editing may have crescendos and rests to pause on, like the varying intensity within a musical composition.

Interactivity

Participant control over a media text may fall along a wide continuum. Viewers may have no control over broadcast times for live streams. They may have the ability to pause for a short time, or consume at will any size 'chunk' of story. An open-world game may have no determined path to achieve the goal, whereas a sims game may leave the audience to set their own goals. Some platforms allow fan feedback to shape character decisions or entire future installments of a narrative. Audience exchanges may be with other users or the creators of the media content, and the feedback mechanism could be anywhere along this continuum of interactivity.

Causality

The flow of time in a work allows connections to be developed between the start and finish. Character actions can have cause-and-effect impact in narrative and historical facts can be shown as if one event inevitably leads to another. In a sense, one scene leads to the next because that's how they are experienced.

Time-travel stories have often experimented with changing outcomes by altering a causation scene from the past. Interactive media allows players to contribute causality choices with genuine cause and effect. An individual's decision may cause outcomes for other participants or characters within a game world.

The 4D principles from Mueller are aspects of design that are not available to other artforms such as photography, painting, drawing or sculpture. Her elements and principles of 4D allow creators to consider meaning-making aspects that are particular to screen and new media.

These design factors may have to be 'traded off' against each other to find the best resolution for an idea. Australian writer and **showrunner** of *NCIS: Los Angeles* (2009–2023), Shane Brennan, felt the original series was almost too exciting; it was edited at a very rapid pace.

Reducing the speed and duration of shots allowed Brennan to take a story-telling point of view. More emotional character back stories were able to be introduced. Consciously changing two of the 4D principles grew the audience from 8 million viewers to 22 million per episode, through concentrating on the narrative purpose of the production.

7.1 ACTIVITIES

1 **Create** a collection of recorded images that exemplify the **elements of design**. **Construct** compositions that **systematically** demonstrate a contrast of one of the elements within a frame. **Manipulate** objects and camera framing to achieve your composition, capturing the opposite extremes.

Template
Activity 7.1

DESIGN A SHOT FEATURING	RESOLVE A COMPOSITION TO CONTRAST:	
Line	Broken or straight	Continuous or curved
Shape	Geometric	Organic
Form	Solid or heavy	Transparent or thin
Space	Crowded	Isolated
Tone	Black and grey area or a single dark colour	White and grey area or a single light colour
Texture	Exaggerated actual texture with angled lighting	A smooth, reflective finish
Colour	A vibrant colour	A complementary, opposite colour
Dot	Tightly packed dots that begin to merge	Widely spaced dots in a rhythm

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2 **Create** a shot portraying radial balance. Use a flat surface and high angle of the area. **Set up a camera device** on a tripod for a stop-motion **experiment** under consistent lighting and exposure conditions. Layout pencils and pens or LEGO blocks in a radial fan. Animate their placement and movement frame by frame. Edit the sequences of frames to music with reverse and repeat sections to mirror the beat of the audio track.

3 **Evaluate** a historical clip from a Busby Berkeley musical. Draw a conclusion about the worth of this genre for modern audiences. **Analyse** the context of the era through research.

4 **Create** an establishing shot of the exterior of a workplace or school. **Apply** your understanding of **alignment** to precisely place text over the image. **Design** your shot before visiting location, and frame to suit the amount of text required. Imagine an alternative or exaggerated function for the buildings to shift the meaning through the aligned text placed over the image. **Apply genre-specific** knowledge and **graphic design** considerations to **select** a font and colour **appropriate** to the scenario.

5 **Create** a focus pull along a range of similar objects. Locate a set of similar objects, such as a line of cars or a group of letterboxes. Set up the camera as far away as practicable to allow a fully zoomed-in shot. Use the widest possible aperture. With the narrowest depth of field possible, record sharp focus on one of the objects. Record a focus pull through of the shapes to emphasise the variety in the compositional arrangement.

6 **Evaluate** the use of colour by Wes Anderson in a couple of scenes. Use 'directed audience attention' as a criterion to make a judgement about the importance of colour as an element of design. Locate a potential interior location that is dominated by a narrow range of colour. **Create** a long shot or extreme long shot from a static point of view, **systematically arranging** camera angle, height and shot size, along with props, to exaggerate one tone or colour. **Design** a prop or costume item to be introduced to the scene that features a strong, complementary **contrast** of **colour** with the **purpose** of directing audience attention. **Plan** actor movement, timing and actions to **manipulate** the audience focal point with no change to the camera at all. **Experiment** with an appropriate **aspect ratio** by exporting different versions of the shot. **Apply** technical skills in post-production by adding versions with a pillar box and a letterbox to suit the **context** of the shot composition.

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8 Media institutions

ABOUT MEDIA INSTITUTIONS

> 'Though a highly consumer-oriented good, [the media] is very different from most other such goods, like cars, toasters, washing machines. Whereas the latter provide the means, the former trades in the meanings of life.'
>
> **JG Blumler**, media theorist

The media have been called the consciousness industries, selling ways of thinking and ways of seeing or talking about the world (Figure 8.1). They are engaged in the production and distribution of states of mind. There can't really be a neutral position on the media; this is because its social function is so profound and so central.

Media institutions are different from other knowledge institutions (such as schools, churches or art galleries) in several ways:

- They carry all types of knowledge, including on behalf of other institutions.
- They are open to all members of society.
- The relationship between sender and receiver is often more complex.
- The media reach more people, for longer (over a lifetime) than any other institution.

Convergence, divergence and remediation

Three terms used to describe the impact of the new communications media are convergence, divergence and remediation.

Convergence

The blurring of the boundaries between different telecommunications media is termed **convergence**. The boundary between television and the computer has already blurred. So too have the traditional boundaries between newspapers, radio, computers, mobile phones, video game systems, and surveillance, identity and global positioning systems.

Media convergence can occur in two main ways:

- **Textual convergence.** This occurs when the genres and programs become hybrids and merge their textual characteristics together. This can also happen when the media products from one platform become influential in another. For example, movies and video games have experienced a convergence in recent times.



Golden Dayz/Shutterstock.com

Figure 8.1 The media are consciousness industries. They help shape our individual thoughts from an early age. The media are a key factor among those who are influencing our society and culture.

Media companies such as Sony Entertainment have products and franchises that span multiple platforms, such as both films and digital games.

- **Platform convergence.** Many news organisations have experienced platform convergence. This occurs when a new digital platform, such as online newspapers, takes on elements of other platforms. For example, news websites now contain print stories from newspapers, video footage from television and sound-only stories from radio. Platform convergence sometimes produces new media forms. For example, it could be argued that converging digital photography, the internet and mobile phones produced Snapchat and Instagram.

More and more, computers and smartphones are becoming the basis of all communication and entertainment. Convergence has also affected the major media and internet companies, with many forming alliances or merging to attempt to capitalise on, or survive in, new media industries.

Multimedia represents the convergence of text, pictures, video and sound into a single form. In the same way, the internet represents the convergence of television, radio, newspapers, literature, movies, video telephony, video games, telephone services, surveillance and tracking systems into a single form.

Divergence

Technological developments are increasingly allowing many forms of media to be delivered through one device. The mobile phone is the most successful. However, the smart TV also represents the same process of technological diversity.

Multiplying the forms of delivery of a media product is called **divergence**. For example, television is delivered in many ways: free-to-air, cable, satellite, the internet, handheld devices and ordinary household appliances. All of these are connected to the same global information networks. Divergence has also affected media owners, allowing a wide range of media content to be delivered by more than just the few media players in traditional media spaces.

Remediation

When new media became a significant force, it was thought that old media would die out. Instead, both new and traditional media have survived and borrowed from each other.

Nowadays both new and traditional media are constantly making references to each other and showing each other on screen. New media is especially good at this – redistributing and remaking older forms of media such as movies and television shows.

New media has borrowed most of the codes and conventions developed in traditional media. It has also added its own conventions (such as hypertext – see page 78).

Remediation occurs when the codes, conventions or texts of one media platform are re-presented in another (Figure 8.2). The media is constantly borrowing from and refashioning itself, say Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, the media academics who came up with the term.

Remediation can be either invisible or visible.

- **Invisible remediation**. When a comic is made into a movie or when a movie becomes a television series, this is invisible remediation. Usually, no reference is made to the original product – it just appears in another form on another media platform. The original media text is absorbed completely into the new. Movie adaptations of books are another example.
- **Visible remediation**. This occurs when the original media product is shown or referred to on the new platform. The audience is aware of the original text but sees it in a new context with new meanings. For example, when a music video clip includes news footage of the 9/11 attacks and shots of President Bush or Osama bin Laden, this is visible remediation. Sometimes codes,



A.F. Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 8.2 When Simba roars and reacts in shock and awe to the stampede in *The Lion King* (1994, 2019), the animators chose to show this with a contra zoom (see Chapter 4, page 63). The contra zoom is a camera technique. There is no need for it in computer-generated animation – there isn't even a camera lens. However, the film camera techniques are 'remediated' into the new medium of computer-generated imagery.

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conventions or even technical features of other mediums can be incorporated into the new. For example, old-style television signals of 'snow', 'static' or test patterns are often incorporated into editing transitions, or new media graphics and title designs.

Globalisation

Globalisation has its recent history in the development of multinational corporations. These huge business empires, such as Disney and Google, have capital resources larger than the economic output of many small- and medium-sized nations. Movements to encourage freer world trade have also encouraged trade in media products and the spread of multinational media corporations. Technology has contributed to the process by making it possible to access media content from anywhere in the world over the internet.

Global McCulture

The US imports about 5 per cent of its media products, while the worldwide average for imports is upwards of 30 per cent of the total schedule. Australia imports around 45 per cent. Many small developing countries import more than 90 per cent. Most imports are sourced in the US, leading to accusations of cultural imperialism. However, some audience researchers believe there is little cause for alarm in these figures and argue that audiences interpret American media texts in ways unique to the local culture. Others believe this is swinging the pendulum too far. Audiences have *some* power to make interpretation, but the producers still set the agenda in subtle ways.

Producer power depends to some extent on the genre. News is less open to audience interpretation, and therefore the producer has more power. Global news networks such as Cable News Network (CNN) undoubtedly are successful in relaying an American, first-world point of view. Entertainment genres could be regarded in a different light. Soap operas may be somewhat more open to local definitions.



A.F. Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 8.3 Globalisation means more television programs are aimed at a world audience. The BBC news has had a global reach for decades. *The Simpsons* is another example of an effective global program. One reason for its success has been that a cartoon can be dubbed into any language. The show was devised in America and animated at cartoon studios in South Korea.

When people watch an entertainment program, they enter an imaginary world. In contrast, information genres may be saying, 'This is how it is!' Australia has been described as a dumping ground for overseas media products.

Weblink
Trevor Barr

Loss of nation

In the past, commentators worried about a society that might become dominated by a handful of media. Now, however, we are faced with a society in which no one is on the same page. Governments find it difficult to reach voters because there are so many different media sources. Everyone is watching something different.

Other commentators have wondered whether the forces of globalisation and the forces of localism will need the surviving nation more than ever – to mediate between the two extremes! Only the nation can make laws to regulate how multinational 'big tech' corporations such as Google, X or Facebook must treat citizens.

8.1 ACTIVITIES

1 Survey the class on the extent to which their media consumption is based on a convergence approach. Consider the responses to the following questions:
- How many have the computer set up either in conjunction with the television or to function as the main television?
- How many use a mobile phone in a similar way?

Dissect and describe the survey information, giving some idea of the nature of the respondents and the conditions of the survey. **Analyse** the quantitative (numerical) results, considering the percentages for each constituent part of the survey. **Make judgements** about the extent of convergence and its effect on your respondents.

2 Compare your media consumption with that of your parents or guardians when they were your age, or even your grandparents. **Describe** how it has changed in reference to globalisation and localisation.

GLOBAL MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

New technologies have led to new patterns of distribution. Digitising screen content and then distributing it via the internet has become the dominant form of content delivery.

Online distribution

The online distribution industry went through three stages of development:

1 **Pioneering stage.** In the late 1990s, a number of small start-up firms began trialling online distribution. They found that the technology did not allow for easy distribution of content because bandwidth was limited. Many of these early firms went broke and disappeared.

2 **Hollywood majors enter.** After seeing what had happened to the old music companies once online distribution of music took place, the big Hollywood studios attempted to enter the market in the early 2000s. At that time, the market still did not have a strong enough basis. People were not willing to pay for shaky distribution across limited bandwidth. By 2005, most of these companies had failed as well.

3 **Market leaders arrive.** In the late-2000s, the current market leaders first appeared: YouTube, iTunes, Netflix, Amazon and Hulu. Smaller independent distribution sites have battled to make headway against these giants.

Traditional media companies that have dominated until now may struggle to maintain dominance. Companies that run the platforms delivering content to huge audiences now have a competitive advantage, and may be the first global online television networks.

YouTube

It may be that YouTube is shaping up as the world's first global television station, with 2.5 billion monthly users in 2024. YouTube is a media company that is primarily an 'aggregator'. It is not a significant content producer, but rather a collector of content produced and developed by others. YouTube is not actually in the video business to any great extent – its real business is the provision of a platform to supply content.

YouTube's business model is to provide an easy-to-use platform that allows online video sharing. This content then brings in audiences and other new participants. They supply more content, and the business continues to grow. YouTube offers participants the chance of wide exposure and even fame. The business makes its money from advertising based on its high volume of visitors.

Context

YouTube is based just outside San Francisco. It was established in 2005 by three former employees of PayPal, an online commerce website. It was very much a part of the Silicon Valley 'tech start-up' culture. YouTube's innovation was to use technology to allow widespread sharing of video online. A simple interface allowed users to upload streaming videos without requiring a lot of technical knowledge.

Ownership

YouTube started with humble beginnings and was purchased by Google in 2006 for $US1.6 billion. YouTube fitted Google's aim of being able to organise the world's information and make it accessible.

'If content is king, then distribution is King Kong. The power and profitability in screen industries have always resided in distribution'.

Stuart Cunningham, Professor of Media and Communications, QUT; **Jon Silver**, Senior Lecturer, Creative Industries Faculty, QUT

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Copyright issues

Existing media companies and the major Hollywood studios have argued that YouTube has been encouraging online video piracy. YouTube was profiting from copyright infringement, they argued. Many of them have restricted or blocked content. Some of them have signed revenue-sharing agreements with YouTube and Google.

YouTube allows copyright holders to submit a copyright infringement notice if they spot unauthorised content that has been uploaded. The site also uses an **algorithm** called Content ID to scan uploaded videos for high-quality video files and potentially copyrighted music. It checks these against a database of copyrighted material. The copyright owners can then choose to either take the video down or to monetise it through paid advertising.

Areas of operation

YouTube operates in the following areas:

- **User-generated content (UGC).** YouTube is a video sharing site that allows users to upload videos and share them with other users. Users can also rate videos and add them to their favourites lists. Users can subscribe to the channels of other users.
- **Professionally generated content (PGC).** Although YouTube started primarily as a UGC site, many of the videos now uploaded are professionally generated. This occurs through negotiations with major production studios. However, much of the PGC content is restricted to the US. The aim is to distribute video in an ad-friendly environment.

Audience and social impact

The YouTube website is the most popular entertainment platform in Australia, the UK and the US – easily gaining more visits than traditional broadcast websites, such as that of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). It is always in the top 10 most visited websites globally, and in 2023 was the second-most popular site in the world.

YouTube has had a profound effect on what most people think video on the internet looks like. The videos are short, often humorous and accessible with very little effort – usually just one click. The videos often have some kind of visual sensationalism, such as a skateboarding accident, or are instantly recognisable pieces of mainstream media.

YouTube has a team of moderators to review content with the aim of protecting advertisers, creators and users from inappropriate content. In 2018, there were approximately 10 000 moderators. Moderating is an extremely stressful and potentially disturbing job with a high turnover rate. Many moderators are hired from temporary employment agencies. However, YouTube overwhelmingly relies on algorithms to police content that might violate its guidelines. Violent extremist videos are often targeted by algorithms. YouTube claims that 98 per cent of the videos removed for extremism are removed automatically by the algorithms.

The videos that YouTube algorithms recommend have the power to influence people around the world. Every day, people watch more than a billion hours of YouTube content worldwide. The algorithm creates personalised playlists and recommendations based on previous views. According to YouTube, these drive up to 70 per cent of the viewing time that people put in. On some social media sites, such as Facebook, people choose to follow certain newsfeeds. On YouTube, the algorithm pushes content to people. Critics say these sometimes get more and more extreme as the recommendations progress.

Netflix

More and more viewers are consuming film in the comfort of their home rather than in the theatres. This is not an expression of some kind of dislike of public arenas. It is a by-product of the combined technologies of convenient online streaming and comfortable home

> 'Not only has YouTube created the largest online video community in the world, it's shaping the way video is produced, distributed and monetised.'
>
> **Hunter Walk**, Head of Product at YouTube

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theatre rooms. Netflix has influenced the way in which media is consumed – to the point that older forms of receivership are under threat of extinction.

Netflix's dominance is not just a matter of internet convenience. Netflix has shifted the value of television content in new directions. Through non-traditional finance models, Netflix is capable of producing big-budget films and television shows for exclusive release on its network. These texts, called Netflix Originals, often boast A-list actors and directors and are capable of rivalling big studio productions. Brad Pitt appeared in the Netflix Original *War Machine* (2017) and Baz Luhrmann directed production of Netflix Original *The Get Down* (2016).

The fact that Netflix is capable of attracting A-list talent to produce high-quality cinematic content means the medium of television has undergone radical shifts in value. This is new. Previously, if a big-screen actor made the switch to small-screen television, it was always considered a demotion; for the most part, this was due to the lack of quality that television produced. But the recent shifts in the quality of television have led to a new kind of exchange. Actors are able to cohabit television studios and major film studios without concern over the direction of their career.



Netflix Inc.

Figure 8.4 The Netflix series *Boy Swallows Universe* (2024) was filmed in Darra, Beenleigh, Chelmer, The Gap and Wavell Heights. Netflix is able to attract local audiences with locally sourced authentic stories that can also attract big international followings. The series was the fifth most viewed English language production in the week of release, and top 10 in 47 countries. Filming the series injected an estimated $33 million into the local economy. In 2024, the Australian government passed regulations requiring international streaming services to fulfil local content quotas.

Areas of operation

Netflix rose to dominance because of the ease in which quality viewing could be accessed over the internet. Since it is made available on portable devices, viewers simply view their favourite programs whenever they like. But while viewer choice seems empowered by Netflix, Netflix also restricts choice. When viewers sign in to Netflix, they are confronted with rows of thumbnails of various movies and television shows. Each of these thumbnails are guided by a particular algorithm that determines content choice. The content choice is an expression of two key inputs: viewing habits and a small questionnaire when first signing up. This data is then used to personalise the viewing experience by predicting what the viewer may watch next.

An essential characteristic of Netflix is binge-watching. Netflix often launches its programs as events in themselves. This turns them into something that people feel compelled to watch – in other words, making them binge-worthy. One means of achieving this is to release all episodes from a complete season simultaneously.

Context

Netflix began as a DVD sales and rental business in 1997 in the town of Santa Cruz, California. It was founded by Reed Hastings, who is now the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Netflix entered the streaming video market in 2007 and now operates in 190 countries, with millions of subscribers. In 2013, Netflix began producing its own content. The first production was the political thriller *House of Cards* (2013–17). The organisation has now moved its headquarters to Silicon Valley, California.

Netflix is a company with shares owned by a large number of private individuals and investment firms. One of the largest shareholders is its founder, Reed Hastings.

Audience and social impact

The cinema once held the monopoly on quality viewing. Netflix has altered the landscape of media, and the viewer's personal lifestyle has shifted as well. The theatre offered viewers a social experience because they are part of a crowd. Over time, home theatres have encroached on the quality of the cinema. Viewers can attain a cinematic experience without paying the cost of a cinema ticket. This has empowered the viewer, who now controls where quality content can be viewed. Viewer choice is underpinned by the convenience offered by streaming media.

For audience members, there can be an issue with algorithmic culture. In some ways, the data does not

account for eclectic taste, and might not be a true reflection of viewer choice. Algorithmic culture and the taste communities they produce are coming under increasing scrutiny. In particular, attention is being directed to the way in which cultural viewing habits are being shaped by computers rather than humans.

Mixed distribution

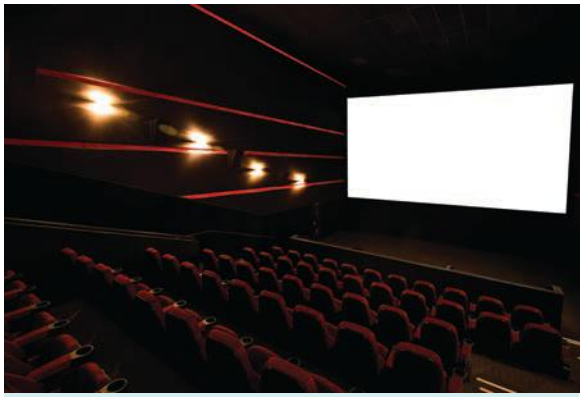
The mixed distribution strategy, born out of necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic, has had far-reaching effects on the film industry, audiences and how films are consumed. While it provided a temporary solution to the challenges posed by the pandemic, it has also raised questions about the future of theatrical releases and the balance between streaming and traditional distribution methods.

Before the pandemic, films typically followed a sequential release pattern, starting with a theatrical release, followed by a home video release and then availability on streaming platforms. However, with the onset of COVID-19 and the closure of cinemas, studios began to experiment with releasing films simultaneously on streaming platforms and in theatres, or in some cases, exclusively on streaming platforms. Viewers benefitted from this context, where new release movies were immediately in viewers' lounge rooms without waiting the weeks or months it usually took for films to arrive on platforms.

Effects of mixed distribution

The simultaneous release strategy had several effects on audiences and the film industry:

- **Accessibility:** Audiences had more options to watch new releases in theatres or at home, which increased accessibility during the COVID-19 pandemic and stemmed issues like boredom in lockdown.
- **Changing viewing habits:** The pandemic accelerated the shift towards streaming and home entertainment, as audiences grew accustomed to watching new releases on their preferred devices. This represented a step change in how viewers consumed entertainment.
- **Economic impact:** While the simultaneous release strategy allowed studios to generate revenue during the pandemic, it also raised concerns about the long-term viability of the theatrical experience and the potential loss of income for cinemas. Cinemas entered into a state of panic about the current trends in viewing habits.



Wedding and lifestyle/Shutterstock.com

Figure 8.5 With cinema closures during COVID-19 came redirected financial strategies from production companies as well as panic on behalf of cinema companies. Nowadays, the changed viewing landscape continues to exist as a tension between public and private distribution.

- **Piracy concerns:** The immediate availability of high-quality versions of new releases on streaming platforms increased the risk of piracy, which could further impact the industry's revenues.
- **Audience engagement:** The shared experience of watching a film in a cinema was diminished as more people opted for home viewing during lockdown conditions. This could affect word-of-mouth marketing and the social qualities of audience engagement.

The development of new digital platforms for the delivery of media, the rise of mobile devices and the rise of multi-platform distribution has put traditional media under pressure. As media companies respond to the digital challenge, takeovers and mergers are creating bigger and bigger companies, and fewer large-scale players in the field.

Disney

Disney started off as a small American animation studio in 1923. Today, it is a vast global media giant. The company's annual revenue exceeds the total GDP of more than 100 countries. The Walt Disney Company owns a global network of theme parks, television channels and toy stores. Walt Disney Studios is also one of the world's largest production companies. It owns Pixar, Marvel Entertainment, Lucasfilm (*Star Wars* franchise) and Disney Digital Network, and part-owns American online content distributor Hulu. In 2017, it also acquired most of 21st Century Fox from Rupert Murdoch. This deal gave it a dominant position in movies and also in sportscasting.

Context

Disney is one of the largest Hollywood studios. Hollywood studios employ a factory-like approach to movie production. They use specialised labour, operate assembly lines of production and have their own studio lots (areas of land) where films are produced. These studios have been one of the main forms of film production since the era of silent movies, but they are increasingly under threat from the digital revolution.

At the same time, Hollywood has become the centre of a global entertainment industry. Movies are not the only activity – all kinds of entertainment are distributed, and movies are just one of many forms.

Disney has assured its survival by becoming a diversified entertainment company. Television is a part of it, accounting for almost 40 per cent of Disney's business. The Disney Channel has 107 channels in 163 countries. When Disney opened its first theme park back in 1955, it was already beginning to be an entertainment company, not just a movie studio. In later times, Disney has moved beyond the narrow limits of its early 20th-century image. It is now involved in a whole range of entertainment productions that do not have an animation focus.

Audience and social impact

Disney has long-lasting appeal to generations of audience members. Almost everyone in the developed world has had some experience of Disney, and this contributes to its survival. Disney narratives and images have become part of western culture. Disney audiences are drawn from cinema, television and theme park audiences, as well as the readers of children's books. They also include the buyers of Disney merchandise.

8.2 ACTIVITIES

1. Read YouTube's guidelines for users wanting to upload videos. **Describe** what the site says is considered to be an appropriate and inappropriate video, **clarifying** what is likely to be excluded and included in these categories.
2. **Make** a list of new video genres that have developed over time on YouTube. **Describe** some of the features of each of the genres, giving **examples** of video titles that **demonstrate** each feature.
3. **Make** a list of competing on-demand streaming platforms that offer high-quality content in the domestic home. **Describe** how each example is considered to be high quality. **Illustrate** each platform by providing **examples** of their high-quality content.
4. **Analyse** the impact of mixed distribution on the film industry. **Recall** the traditional distribution model for films before the COVID-19 pandemic. **Identify** the changes in film distribution during the pandemic, focusing on the simultaneous release of films in cinemas and on online platforms. **Analyse** the potential advantages and disadvantages of this mixed distribution strategy for the following stakeholders: film studios, cinemas, streaming platforms and audiences. **Evaluate** the long-term impact of mixed distribution on the film industry, considering factors such as revenue, audience engagement and the future of theatrical releases.
5. **Design** a marketing campaign for a film with mixed distribution. **Identify** the target audience for the film, considering factors such as age, interests and viewing preferences. **Consider** the following elements: trailers and promotional videos, social media campaigns, advertising (online, television, billboards, etc.), partnerships and cross-promotions. **Create** a visual representation of your marketing campaign, such as a mind map or presentation, that showcases your key strategies and tactics. Present your marketing campaign to the class and **justify** your creative decisions based on your understanding of the target audience and the mixed distribution model.

AUSTRALIAN MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

Public versus commercial media

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ACMI

In a public system, producers get the money to make programs. In a commercial system, it is the reverse: they make programs to get the money. Whether to apply a market solution or a government-funded public service solution to today's broadcasting problems has been a subject of recent debate in all western societies.

The nature of the media reflects the nature of society. Therefore, the focus of the debate is what

kind of society people want. Both sides seem to agree they want a television environment that promotes freedom. But, as media researcher Richard Collins points out, the meaning of freedom is different; public service media argue for 'freedom *from*' whereas commercial media argue for 'freedom *to*'.

Public service media

In public service media, 'freedom from' typically means freedom from forces such as domination by the almighty dollar, powerful vested interests, advertising and mediocrity.

In Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand, public service media have been organised along broadly similar lines. Michael Tracey, of the University of Colorado, has studied a range of public service broadcasters around the world and developed principles that form the basis of the public broadcaster's definition of freedom. These principles are:

1 **Universal availability.** Public broadcasters tend to make sure their signal is available to as many people as possible. This is not to maximise the audience; rather, access is viewed as a right of citizenship. For instance, in many parts of remote Australia only the ABC was available until recently.
2 **Universal appeal.** Programs are produced to appeal to a wide range of tastes, not just to 'high culture' tastes (e.g. opera lovers).
3 **Diversity and provision for minorities.** Public service media provide access to the media for disadvantaged or minority groups. In a multicultural society, public service media should be pluralist and diverse.
4 **Education of the public.** Educational programming ranging from school to university material demonstrates the public service broadcaster's view of audience members as citizens with certain needs and rights.
5 **Independence.** Public service media can best serve the public when they are independent of both the government and commercial interests.
6 **Service to the public sphere.** The needs of the citizenry within a civilised society should be served by the public broadcaster. These needs may be related to politics, law, consumer issues, national culture or a whole host of other activities that make up the life of modern society.
7 **Criticism.** The market opponents of public service media argue that they have been captured by cultural elitists and have imposed a diet of unpopular programs on the public.



ChameleonsEye/Shutterstock.com

Figure 8.6 The Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) is located in Federation Square, Melbourne. ACMI has set itself the goal of becoming the world's leading moving image collection and exhibition centre. Australia has a unique range of media organisations. They extend from public sector organisations through private enterprise organisations to local community organisations built around volunteers.

Commercial media

In commercial media, 'freedom to' typically means freedom to maximise profits. The principles of commercial broadcasters might be summarised as follows:

- **Diversity.** Commercial broadcasters argue that the market creates the best chance of diversity of choice.
- **Consumer sovereignty.** Commercial operators see the audience as consumers rather than as citizens. The consumer is king, or sovereign, and rules by casting a vote for a particular program. This could be with cash (in the case of pay television) or through the ratings system (in the case of free-to-air television or radio). Of course, consumers with big wallets are worth more than the less well-heeled.
- **Mature audiences.** Supporters of the market argue that the contemporary consumer wishes to be exposed to as wide a choice as possible. The consumer does not need educating or regulating.
- **Criticism.** The opponents of the market approach say it simply gives freedom to large multinational corporations. They dominate production and reduce the range and quality of programs, catering only for big-spending majorities. They argue that diversity is therefore reduced and national culture is impoverished.

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Funding Australian productions

Where would you go for funding if you wanted to make an Australian production? One of the government film funding and support agencies is the best place to start. The proportion of government funding for films in Australia is significantly higher than that coming from private investors. Professor Deb Verhoeven of Deakin University has assembled the data on the sources of funding for Australian films. This is presented in Table 8.1.

Government development organisations

Each state in Australia has a government film support agency. There is also a federal government funding agency. Many of the film development organisations have broadened their focus beyond film to take in a wider range of screen-based activity. They see themselves now as 'screen agencies'.

- **Culture versus industry.** In earlier times, film development organisations tended to focus on supporting and promoting Australian culture. With the internationalisation of Australian film production since the 2010s, this has changed. Many agencies now focus on an industry approach. A key aim is to support and develop the Australian industry. Australian culture is still an important concern. However, in their strategic plans, the agencies often speak of a 'balance' between cultural and industry growth.

  Government policy supports the internationalisation of Australian production, states Deb Verhoeven. Foreign productions and co-productions with some Australian control are providing employment for Australian crews. Many Australian post-production houses have also benefited from international productions.

Table 8.1 Proportion of funding from different sources – overall Australian film industry. Funding for individual films vary on a case-by-case basis.

SOURCE OF FUNDING	%
Federal and state governments directly	13%
Tax incentives	28%
Private investors	8%
Film and TV industry sources (e.g. distributors)	9%
Foreign investors	42%

- **Chasing big productions.** State based film development agencies often aggressively chase international productions. The benefits to the host state include employment opportunities and even improved tourism. For instance the international launch of *Finding Nemo* (2003) was accompanied by heavy overseas advertising by the Australian Tourism Commission. This included private premiere screenings for European travel agents. Australian states are often in competition with each other to attract films. They also have other countries to compete with for international productions. During the filming of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, New Zealand even appointed a member of parliament to be 'Minister of the Rings'. The Minister's role was to maximise the benefits flowing from the film for the whole country.

Screen Australia

Screen Australia is funded by the federal government to provide direct investment money to film, television, video game and digital media production. The head office of Screen Australia is in Sydney, with a branch office in Melbourne. However, it accepts projects from all over Australia. Screen Australia has the following three broad areas of operation:

1. **Encouraging co-production.** A production where investment costs and creative control are shared between Australian companies and overseas countries is called a co-production. Australia has co-production treaties with a number of countries. These allow production companies in signatory countries to combine with Australian companies to create large-scale productions. Co-production treaties allow easy flows of investment money and crew between the countries. Screen Australia administers the official government sponsored co-production program. Australian has co-production treaties with China, Canada, Germany, France, Ireland, Israel, Italy, New Zealand, South Africa, Singapore and the UK.
2. **Producer offset management.** To encourage film and television production, the federal government has allowed companies to claim a tax incentive. Screen Australia manages the applications. Producers of feature films can claim a rebate of 40 per cent of their Australian production costs. Television producers can claim 20 per cent of their Australian production costs. Digital media productions are not eligible for the producer offset.

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3 **Developing Australian screen content.** Screen Australia is responsible for encouraging the development of Australian screen content as follows:
   - developing scripts and proposals that tell compelling Australian stories
   - investing in production of screen content, including films, television programs and digital media productions
   - supporting Australian screen businesses and industry practitioners
   - encouraging Indigenous stories and talent
   - providing research into screen industry trends.

Screen Queensland

As with other state agencies, Screen Queensland (Figure 8.7) works to increase the levels of production in the state by promoting the benefits of Queensland as a production location.

- **Boosting Queensland production.** Screen Queensland aims to foster local producers and attract high budget productions from overseas and interstate. A recent focus is on the support for new media content, including multiplatform production and games production. The state government provides a production incentive and also a state payroll tax rebate.
- **Scouting locations.** Screen Queensland promotes Queensland's highly marketable tourist destinations as film locations. These include the Gold Coast and the Great Barrier Reef coastline. However, Queensland also offers a range of other metropolitan and regional locations that are less widely known. Ipswich, for instance, was the location for the film *The Railway Man* (2013), and Bowen was one of the locations chosen for Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* (2008).



Netflix, Inc.

Figure 8.7 Filming the 'car in space scene' in *Boy Swallows Universe* (2024) at the Screen Queensland Studios at Hemmant in Brisbane. The studios can be hired and have been designed to suit the production needs of low- to mid-range budget feature films. Screen Queensland is a government-owned agency that aims to support Queensland-based production and post-production.

- **Promoting a screen culture.** Screen Queensland aims to develop and expand a screen culture in the state by engaging and developing screen audiences. One example of this has been to develop the Brisbane International Film Festival (BIFF).

8.3 ACTIVITIES

1 The beliefs that led to a heavily regulated television broadcasting environment after World War II still have value for some analysts. **Evaluate** their relevance in terms of today's television.
2 **Evaluate** the Australian Broadcasting Corporation using Michael Tracey's principles of public service broadcasting.
3 **Evaluate** the extent to which Australia's commercial media have lived up to claims of promoting freedom of choice, diversity and consumer sovereignty.

> Our mission – and my commitment – is to continue to strengthen and expand the local industry ecosystem, which makes Queensland an ideal destination for valuable inbound productions and post-production projects.
>
> **Jacquie Feeney,** CEO, Screen Queensland

REGULATION OF THE MEDIA

Regulation is a process of control by government authorities aimed at ensuring that media organisations operate within set boundaries.

In western democracies, media regulation is usually aimed at protecting the rights of citizens or the community. Media regulations deal with a range of issues, including ownership, types of content and local production.

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In oppressive regimes or dictatorships, media regulation can be used to squash any opposition to the government or controlling parties. Media regulation in authoritarian countries usually deals with issues of free speech and political restrictions.

The World Press Freedom Index, which evaluates the environment for journalism in 180 countries and territories compiled by Reporters Without Borders, lists countries such as Cuba, Myanmar, Syria, Iran, Vietnam, China and North Korea as the most restrictive. Foreign companies operating in these countries are expected to comply with the respective strict censorship regimes. Multinational companies such as Microsoft and Google have cooperated with the Chinese government in filtering the internet, and have even helped track down cyber-dissidents.

Classification versus censorship



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Australian Classification Board

Different countries use different systems to provide varying degrees of control over what the population is able to view. Some use systems of classification, while some use censorship.

- **Classification** is a system of allocating media content to particular categories.
- **Censorship** is a system of removing scenes or shots that could offend some interest groups or political parties. Censorship can also mean banning the media altogether.

Australia does not have a system of censorship for games, films, television programs or literature. Instead, there is a classification system. This system **classifies** content based on descriptions and depictions, which determine the appropriate classification category. The category contains the limitations as to who is able to access the content.

Motion Picture Production Code (Hays Code)

The Motion Picture Production Code was a set of censorship rules that regulated the film industry in the US from 1934 until its repeal in 1967. From 1930 to 1934 the code was voluntary, and after that it became mandatory. It is often referred to as the Hays Code after Hollywood's chief censor William Hays. In 1968, the Motion Picture Association of America adopted a classification system of rating films. The film *Hitchcock* (2012) shows Alfred Hitchcock visiting the Hays Office with the film *Psycho* (1960).

Some of the guidelines used in the Motion Picture Production Code are as follows:

- No details of crime techniques should be shown.
- Crime must not pay.
- No sympathy for criminals should be shown.
- No man and woman should be shown in bed together – the man must have his feet on the floor if lying down.
- No sex should be shown.
- No excessive or lustful kissing should be shown – a three-second limit was imposed.

Australian Classification Board

The Australian Classification Board is the organisation that classifies films (streaming, digital downloads, theatrical release, DVD and Blu-ray), certain so-called 'submittable' publications (such as adult magazines) and computer games. Depending on the medium, the following regulations apply:

- **Films and games** – Every film or game that is legally available must be classified by the Australian Classification Board. Some films and games are exempt, including, for example, current affairs, educational, musical presentation, religious and hobby films. Since 2015, the Classification Board has classified digital games using the International Age Rating Coalition (IARC) system. This internationally agreed-upon system allows game makers to have their

Table 8.2 The matrix used by the Australian Classification Board when a film or computer game is classified. Board members make individual notes and then use the matrix to arrive at the final rating. A tick is placed for each of the classifiable elements on the vertical axis, depending on its impact on the horizontal axis.

	VERY MILD IMPACT	MILD IMPACT	MODERATE IMPACT	STRONG IMPACT	HIGH IMPACT
Themes					
Violence			✓		
Sex					
Language		✓			
Drug use					
Nudity		✓			

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games quickly matched in with the classification systems of many different countries.

- **Publications** – Only those magazines or other publications that are likely to require restriction to adults need to be first submitted to the Classification Board.
- **Music videos** – Any video clip that accompanies a music release is said to be a film and must first be classified by the Classification Board (unless an exemption applies).
- **Music** – Songs with lyrics that might be considered offensive must be classified according to the *Code of Practice for Labelling Product with Explicit and Potentially Offensive Lyrics*. Under the Code of Practice, classification of recorded music is the responsibility of members of the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA). Generally, acceptable song lyrics do not require classification.

The Australian Classification Board operates under the *Commonwealth Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995*. According to the Act (section 11), the matters to be taken into account in making a decision on the classification of a publication, film or computer game include:

- the standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults
- the literary, artistic or educational merit (if any) of the publication, film or computer game
- the general character of the publication, film or computer game, including whether it is of a medical, legal or scientific character
- the person or class of persons to or among whom the publication, film or game is published or intended or likely to be published.

Film and game categories

The classification categories for films and computer games (Figure 8.8) are based on an increasing scale of impact and increasing potential for either offence or harm. The first three categories are advisory only. The final three are legally enforceable restrictions. Cinemas and home entertainment retail and hire stores can be fined if they do not comply with the restrictions.

The classification challenge posed by the internet

The internet is now a major distribution platform. It crosses national borders, and the only way to control its content is to stop it coming into the country altogether by cutting off international cables. The internet is international and does not recognise the laws and regulations of different countries.

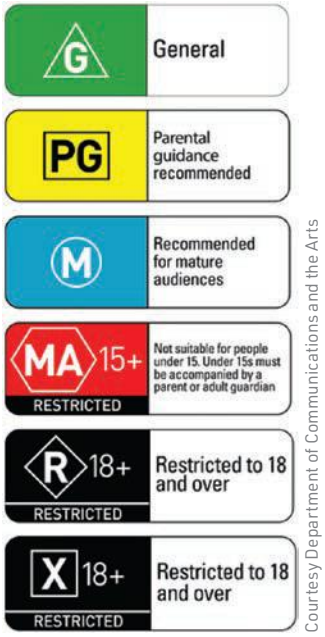


Figure 8.8 Australian regulation categories for films and computer games.

The internet also offers real-time access to worldwide content. Many Australians are keen downloaders of US programming and use the internet to access shows long before Australian media organisations release the shows.

One way that the Australian Government has responded to the challenge posed by the internet as a distribution platform has been to introduce automated tools such as online questionnaires to classify content under certain conditions. Two such tools are currently in use. It has also established a number of trials and initiatives to make the classification process less time-consuming. These include the following:

- **IARC classification tool for mobile and online games**. The IARC includes authorities from the US, Canada, Germany, Brazil and Australia. Game developers are able to fast-track their classification for the Australian market and other world markets by completing an online questionnaire about their game. An algorithm then generates an assigned rating for the six participating rating authorities that collectively represent regions serving approximately 1.5 billion people. The algorithm applies Australian classification rules to the answers on the

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Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act (1995)

questionnaire. If a game receives a classification under this system, it is subject to an audit by the Australian Classification Board at any time.

- **Netflix classification tool**. Netflix, in consultation with the Australian Government, has developed a tool to produce Australian classifications for the content available via Netflix in Australia. The tool relies on the identification and tagging of classifiable content and an algorithm that converts this information into an Australian classification.

Australian content rules

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Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)

Australian content regulations are set by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). The regulations separately cover commercial free-to-air television and subscription (pay) television. The ABC and SBS networks are exempt from these rules because they operate under separate charters. The Australian content rules aim to develop and encourage an Australian cultural identity and diversity. The ACMA states that the Australian community should have access to television programs produced under Australian creative control.

Free trade agreements can affect local content regulations. New Zealand programs are counted as Australian under the Australia–New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement. However, the Australia–United States Free Trade Agreement allows Australian local content regulations to remain in place. Under this agreement, Australia is also able to introduce new local content laws for digital multichannel television and subscription television if necessary.



Goal Post Pictures Australia

Figure 8.9 *Cleverman* (2016) re-imagines several Aboriginal Dreamtime stories and sets them in a sci-fi future. A cleverman in Aboriginal societies was like a shaman who had direct links to the Dreamtime and was a master of magic. One of the aims of ACMA is to promote a sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity through Australian productions. The ABC and SBS have a similar set of aims embedded in their charters.

Free-to-air television

The Australian content levels to be broadcast by free-to-air commercial television licensees are set by the ACMA in a document called the *Broadcasting Services (Australian Content and Childrens Television) Standard 2020*.

Overall quotas

The transmission quota for Australian content is a minimum of 55 per cent between 6.00 a.m. and midnight. Commercial television networks must also broadcast 250 points of first-release Australian programs each year. The points system awards points per hour of programming based on the genre and overall budget. For example, a first-release Australian drama with a budget of more than $1.4 million per hour is awarded seven points per hour of broadcast.

Drama

Minimum levels for local prime-time drama are set by a points system. The scores for first-release Australian drama must total at least 250 points in any one year, and at least 860 points over three years. Points are calculated using the following formula:

Drama score = format factor × duration (in hours)

The format factors vary according to the estimated quality of the programs and their costs of production.

For an Australian serial or series programmed more often than one hour per week, the format factor is 1. Most soap operas fall within this category.

For an Australian serial or series programmed for one hour or less per week, the format factor is 3 if it has been made by an independent producer and 2.5 if it has been made by the network. The aim of the factor difference is to encourage the networks to contract out to independent producers. However, some independents say this is not enough. In the European Union as a whole, at least 10 per cent of all television transmission time must be contracted from

independent producers. In the UK, the minimum is 25 per cent.

For feature movies, mini series or self-contained dramas, the format factor is 4. These programs have the highest costs of all.

Documentaries

At least 20 hours a year of first-release Australian documentaries of at least 30 minutes' duration must be shown between 6.00 a.m. and midnight. The ACMA defines a documentary as 'the creative treatment of actuality'. Reality television programs do not qualify as documentaries.

Advertising

At least 80 per cent of all television advertising on free-to-air stations between 6.00 a.m. and midnight must be Australian.

Subscription television

Subscription television, also known as pay television, is treated separately from free-to-air television in relation to Australian content rules. Since consumers pay a fee for the service, there is a greater sense that they are responsible for what they wish to view. Multiple channels also provide a wide variety of content that cannot be easily regulated.

Accordingly, just one simple rule applies: subscription television drama channels must spend 10 per cent of their total program expenditure on first-release Australian (or New Zealand) drama.

Defining Australian productions

The ACMA defines an Australian program as one that meets all the following conditions:

- **Creative control.** The program is seen to be Australian if the producer is Australian, and also if the director or the writer is Australian.
- **Cast.** At least 50 per cent of the leading actors or presenters in the program must be Australian.
- **Supporting cast.** At least 75 per cent of the supporting cast in a drama must be Australian.
- **Production.** The program must be produced and post-produced in Australia, although it may be filmed overseas.

Animations are required to have Australians in three of the following roles: production designer, character designer, supervising layout artist, supervising storyboarding artist or key background artist (Figure 8.10).



Collection Christophel/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 8.10 The children's show *Bluey* (2018–) would be defined as an Australian animation because Australians have creative control. This is despite it having some co-funding provided by the BBC. Pixar's *Finding Nemo* (2003) was set on the Great Barrier Reef and used some Australian voices, but it is not defined as an Australian animation.

Self-regulating authorities

Self-regulation is a process of control that does not involve the government. This means that the regulation is carried out by the industry or profession itself. A code of practice is usually developed that defines the expected behaviour. An example is the Journalists' Code of Ethics. Self-regulated media usually set up a panel of representatives of each of the major companies involved, together with some representatives of the general public. This panel then sits in judgement on particular cases or complaints. It uses the code of practice to help it decide if there has been any wrongdoing.

Media organisations like self-regulation because it frees them from heavy-handed government control or censorship. Self-regulation is also seen as more flexible and more likely to be complied with.

Critics of self-regulation argue that it often becomes self-serving. Media companies can create regulations to maximise their profits.

Self-regulating codes of practice

Various sectors of the media industry have set up self-regulating authorities. The codes of practice in each industry are based on guidelines developed by ACMA. The *Broadcasting Services Act (1992)* sets out rules for self-regulation, stating that broadcasters must themselves respond to complaints and matters of community concern. These include:

- protecting children from harmful material
- accuracy and fairness in news

- a ban on alarming simulations of news
- a ban on hypnosis and subliminal perception
- preventing programs that incite or perpetrate hatred and vilification on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, sexual preference, religion or disability.

Ad Standards

Ad Standards, funded by the advertising industry, was set up to self-regulate advertising and adjudicate on public complaints. The bureau uses a document called the Advertiser Code of Ethics as the basis for its judgements. There are also separate advertising codes for different types of products, such as health remedies, alcohol and beauty products.

Consumers can complain to Ad Standards if they believe an advertisement has caused offence on the basis of:

- discrimination (based on race, gender, sexual preference, religion, etc.)
- violence
- offensive language
- portrayal of sex, sexuality or nudity
- distress to children.

The bureau responds to complaints about the content of advertisements across all media.

The Advertising Claims Board is a section within the bureau that investigates complaints about truth and accuracy in advertising. A team of lawyers investigates each complaint. If they find confirmation of a problem and nothing is done to fix it, the bureau can only contact media owners or alert government departments. It has no power to take any action itself.

Regulating authorities

Protection for new media users and consumers falls under a number of bodies in Australia.

Ad Standards promotes responsible ads online and in other advertising but is not government funded. It is a 'self-regulated' model, meaning the industry pays a small levy and follows a set of codes that they themselves have written. Action may be taken if consumers lodge a complaint about an online or traditional media ad. The organisation does not judge truth or accuracy, unless it involves marketing to children, food and beverages, or an environmental claim.

The Australian Electoral Commission has some responsibility over political ads. These should be thought of as opinion pieces as there is no requirement for them to be 'factually true'. They must be properly identified, and complaints should be made to the advertiser or a member of parliament. A black-out period applies to broadcasters two days before and on the day of an election, to allow voters to consider their choice without further influence. However, the black-out rules do not apply to online media platforms and streaming services.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) enforces the law on faulty products or services, but it can also act on misleading or false claims in advertising. The ACCC recommends that new laws require digital platforms to provide easier processes for reporting scams, harmful apps and fake reviews, and that the platforms must respond to such reports.

The ACMA manages the 'do not call register,' and fines companies who break telemarketing rules. Mobile phone marketers must display the contact number – displaying 'private number' is a breach of the rules – and they can only call at certain times. ACMA also posts warning alerts about common scams spread through digital media as they come to light. New laws allow ACMA to enforce codes and penalties over harmful content on digital platforms who do not comply with an industry code. The Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation amendments to Communications legislation do not apply to professional news content.

The eSafety Commissioner supports the online safety rights of children and others exposed to serious harm on digital platforms. The office can investigate complaints about serious cyber-bullying, image-based abuse and threats to share intimate images without consent. The Commissioner provides information on the pressure of curated social media, **trolling**, **catfishing** and online dating safety.

The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) protects the fundamental human right to privacy, the protection of private information and freedom of information to government data. Latest laws for the OAIC allow citizens to know more about how information on them is collected and used. The OAIC oversees reducing harm from 'notifiable data breaches' – when your data is hacked from a big business – and legal paths for serious invasion of privacy.

Shared online information and comments can be permanent on archived websites, even after an account is deleted. Most social networks allow direct requests for personal details to be removed,

and often bullying between students is addressed within their school.

Misinformation and disinformation

Disinformation is deliberately false and implies a covert 'planting' of a lie to achieve a particular effect. **Misinformation** is also incorrect but may be spread intentionally or in ignorance. On occasions, trained journalists will repeat misinformation, which should be followed by a retraction or apology.

Fake news

Deliberate falsehoods presented to look like reported facts have come to be known in the modern era as '**fake news**'. Fake news may be presented to deceive the audience like other disinformation, or simply to temporarily direct online audience traffic.

The use and monetising of '**clickbait**' complicates mis- and disinformation. Claire Wardle, cofounder of First Draft News, has defined seven categories:

1. **Parody:** not harmful if recognised as a joke
2. **False connection:** content does not match the headline
3. **Misleading content:** facts misrepresent the issue or person
4. **False context:** real story, but from another time or place, for example
5. **Imposter content:** an authoritative source is impersonated
6. **Manipulated content:** pictures or facts are altered
7. **Fabricated content:** completely false, possibly malicious stories.



Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 8.11 *Don't Look Up* (2021) is one of many films to explore the idea of a collision between Earth and an object from space. Scientists confirm a comet is set to destroy civilisation. The news is exploited by politicians and down-played by traditional media. Far from being a democratic channel for information, social media is shown as an utterly trivial magnet for a pack mentality.

According to researchers Maria Rusu and Elena Herman, 'Fake news relies on novelty and excitement to attract attention.' When it comes to social media (Figure 8.11), they say information distributed by friends or trusted identities is more believable because of who shares it. Stories become more credible with images. A determining factor in the vulnerability of audiences to mistruths is the amount of time or permanency of their online presence. The longer the time spent on social media, the less opportunity there is for other social interaction that may counter mis- and disinformation.

Increasing critical literacy allows audiences to question the media agenda. However, directing suspicion against traditional media has enabled a 'weaponising' of media spaces for political purposes. The pre-existing 'fake news' term was popularised in 2016 during Donald Trump's presidential campaign in the US. He repeatedly labelled mainstream media he disagreed with as 'fake'. This coincided with the increasing role of algorithms to preselect social media content feeds that align with previously viewed material. This so-called '**echo chamber**' reinforces viewpoints by presenting material the user already agrees with. Alternative opinions may only be presented in feeds for ridicule. It is widely believed that the way social media functioned in this period increased political polarisation and confused populations about the reliability of traditional news sources.

Corporations and governments often have their press releases published as news stories with less scrutiny than is desirable. Public trust has declined in these institutions and more of the audience is sourcing a version of 'news' from social media, which is often unverified or compiled by artificial intelligence (AI).

Evaluating fake news

The International Federation of Library Associations suggest eight strategies for evaluating potential fake news:

1. **Consider the source:** Are they contactable? What else is on the site?
2. **Read beyond the headline:** Is it supported by the whole story?
3. **Check the author:** Is it a real person? Do they have credibility?
4. **Supporting sources:** Can it be verified elsewhere?
5. **Check the date:** Is it current and relevant?

6 **Is it a joke?** Could it be mocking through exaggeration?
7 **Ask the experts:** What do qualified people say not connected to the story?
8 **Check your biases:** Do you agree with and like hearing the story? You may be the target.

Critical literacy practices should have viewers also asking who is left out of these facts? Who will benefit if the audience believes or disbelieves this story?

Weblinks
Anti-misinformation laws around the world
Legislation more harm than good
Digital Rights Watch campaigns
Germany's social media laws
Is a new hate speech law killing German comedy?

Outcomes from fake news

Even though the US is far from the only country affected by misinformation (Figure 8.12), it has some spectacular examples that reached out beyond the screens. In 2012, an American school was the scene of a shooting massacre that killed 26 people. Alex Jones claimed on his Infowars website that nobody died and the event was staged as part of a conspiracy to take guns away from ordinary citizens. Grieving parents he said were 'acting' sued for defamation, and after 10 years, court cases against him add up to $AU2.2 billion in defamation.

In 2021, the peaceful transition of presidential power from President Trump to President Biden was challenged by US rioters who believed that vote rigging had occurred. As politicians were inside preparing for a change of government, the American Capitol building was stormed by the crowd, forcing politicians and other staff to hide in fear of their lives. Five people died in the event, which was later claimed by some media to be a 'false flag' operation, secretly designed to make the 'other side' look bad.

Highly targeted false information is thought to have a significant role in elections and referendums, including in Australia.

Laws in other jurisdictions

The World Economic Forum ranks disinformation on top of a list of global threats, ahead of environmental concerns. Malaysia was one of the first countries to specifically target fake news in 2018, and at least 78 countries have passed legislation about online disinformation. German laws have addressed holocaust denial and hate speech, but academics such as Saiesh Kamath, in the *Journal of Law and Technology*, are concerned that the model privatises enforcement of the law. When the platforms themselves are charged with the take-down actions as intermediaries, it leads to an effect called '**over-removal**'. This tendency may stifle free speech, catching out comedians and satirists, even with good intentions.

Certain countries are known to produce misinformation that targets rival nations with the aim of creating political instability. China and Russia have been accused by the west of sponsoring fake social media accounts pretending to be local citizens. Other countries focus their digital control on their own populations. Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan have been prone to switching off the entire internet service in response to signs of civil unrest or to prevent protestors from organising against them.



THP Creative/Shutterstock.com

Figure 8.12 Under Singapore's 'fake news' laws, Facebook complied with the government's instructions. The 'correction notice' requires the social media platform to stamp the offending post as false, as decided by the government. The first use of the law in Singapore was against an opposition politician who alleged corruption.



MOHD RASFAN/AFP/Getty Images

Figure 8.13 Malaysia's advertising campaign around misinformation borrowed iconography from the Pinocchio story. In the children's tale, the nose of the puppet boy grows with each lie he tells. The Malaysian advertising poster puts the guilt for spreading government deemed 'fake news' on the re-sharing audience as well as the creators.

Outcomes from laws

In the wake of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001 in the US, many countries expanded anti-terrorism laws. Professor George Williams at the University of New South Wales warned about the Australian spy agency, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), getting 'special powers'. While intended to keep Australians safer, the powers allowed detaining of any person even if they were not suspected in any crime.

Concerns have been raised that an era of government overreach is unfolding against the explosion of misinformation before and during the COVID era. According to the Committee to Protect Journalism, 363 reporters were locked up by governments in 2022 and 39 of those were specifically for 'fake news' offenses.

The rapid growth in computing power and software capabilities provides a constant challenge for regulation. Cheap access to simplified deep fake tools that specifically target face replacements are known as '**deep swaps**'. The technology poses many new questions, from reputational damage to court evidence.

A digital era interpretation of Orwell's vision (Figure 8.14) is explored in the TV series *The Capture* (2019). In the scenario, the general public has no idea that governments manufacture and redact events through compositing video tools on surveillance cameras and deep fakes of politicians.

Weblinks
The Capture Series 2 Trailer

The Australian Classification Board



TCD/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 8.14 Many real-world behaviours are aligning with George Orwell's novel 1984. In the movie *1984* (1984) [R] his political commentary imagines a 'Ministry of Truth' where teams of people remove historical facts that do not suit the governing party. The total surveillance culture in the story coined the term 'Big Brother' for an always-watching totalitarian leader. Automation is now adding an exponentially expanding branch to this idea.

8.4 ACTIVITIES

1 Go to the Australian Classification Board's website and read about the rating decision for a well-known film or video game. **Describe** the board's decision, **providing information** about the reasons behind it and **clarifying** the main deciding factors determining the final outcome. **Justify** in a formal argument why that decision should be upheld or changed.

2 **Design** a **script** proposal for a production featuring a phone conversation. Assign each of the six **regulatory authorities** mentioned in the 'Regulating authorities' section (see page 120) to a student or a group. Explore the related website. Invent an appropriate complaint scenario about online content or information within their control. Use **scripting conventions** to **plan** a plausible conversation. **Apply appropriate** formal phone inquiry **language** for the **purpose** of revealing the **expertise** of the **institution** in the **context** of a privacy or rights issue.

3 **Create** a video recording of the **script** that runs under two minutes as a technical **constraint** of a **client brief**. **Edit** the conversation to flow as **continuity**, occasionally **manipulating** two speakers into a split-screen.

4 **Analyse** a suspect post or website for misinformation aspects. **Categorise** the information according to the seven types offered by Clair Wardell.

5 **Evaluate** significant conspiracy theories of the social media era. **Research** Pizzagate, Sandy Hook conspiracy, Capitol riots and QAnon, and **make a judgement** about commonalities. **Reflect** on the nature of audiences on particular platforms. **Draw conclusions** about journalistic roles in the digital era.

6 **Create** a mock-up travel post of your own fake journey. Use **production processes** to film yourself in a posed still in front of a green screen or plain-coloured wall. Select a plausible background image to superimpose your image over. The location chosen should be one you have never actually been to. Use location *mise en scène* and tourist **codes** in your costuming. Use **conventions** of a particular **social media** website, including **logos** and **layout**, to produce a still **image**.

Template
Activity 8.4

9780170484176

9 Technologies of the moving-image media

ABOUT TECHNOLOGY

The technologies of media representation are mostly taken for granted. Consumers tend to focus on the product. Very few teenagers streaming video on their mobile phones could explain the technology that puts it there. Yet the technologies of representation have a profound effect on the message, and even on the users.

Media technologies tend to become routine. Even our bodies develop habits around them – our fingers get used to texting and swiping, and our sitting positions comfortably suit themselves to tablet computers, laptops and desktops, or wall-mounted television screens. We are habituated and feel at home using media technologies.

One of the defining characteristics of the media is the use of technology. One definition of the media is 'the technological means of communicating messages'. But how do we define what is meant by 'media technology'?

Media technologies of representation can be defined as the tools and processes necessary to mediate the form and content of media communications. The technologies help to create the meanings but can also block some other meanings. For example, radio can transmit sound but not images; a camera angle in a film can tell some parts of the story but hide others. Therefore, media technologies can both enable and constrain the creation of meaning. This broad definition allows for media technologies to be considered as a combination of three key components:

1 **Hardware and software.** Media technologies include the actual machines of transmission – the hardware. However, the term also includes software, such as the editing software used in production. The capabilities of the software change the nature of the message just as much as the hardware does. Consider the potential of computer-generated imagery (CGI), now common in today's media, compared to the special effects before the 1990s.

2 **Institutions.** Technologies affect the media organisations that use them, but sometimes the organisations developing the ideas affect the technology. For example, the internet has changed almost every organisation in the modern world. However, the internet in its earliest stage of development is often seen as a product of American universities and the US military. The web-like structure of communication was used so that nuclear attack would not wipe out the entire system.

3 **Practices and processes.** Technology involves more than just machines. Media technologies of representation are also part of the traditions and practices of media operators. The term includes the social practices or habits and customs that develop around the technology. For example, there is a whole tradition of camera technique based around the usage of camera technologies (Figure 9.1). These techniques are often passed down from person to person within the industry. These people affect the ways in which the technology is used.



Everett Collection/Shutterstock.com

Figure 9.1 Vintage filmmaking. The practices and processes of a particular technology are also a part of that technology. For example, a camera is more than just an electronic device. As a technology of media representation, it includes all of the processes, customs and habits of camera use that have developed since the early days of photography and film.

Theories of technology

Theories of communication technology are often divided into three main approaches: technological determinism, determined technology and socially constructed technology.

Technological determinism

Technological determinism argues that the nature of technology determines the nature of society. Some theorists call this the 'billiard ball model'. A new technology comes along like a billiard cue ball and shatters the established order, with its effects ricocheting in unforeseen directions. Using this theory, it can be argued that the internet (or the car or aeroplane) has totally changed society. First came the invention, then came the effects.

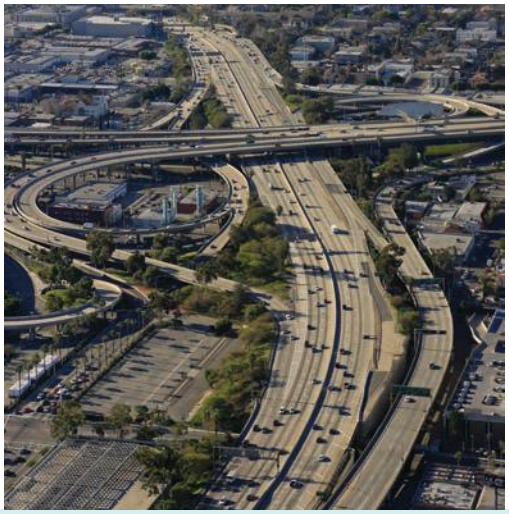
Supporters of this theory might point to the car as a good example. From its popular uptake in the 1920s, the car has radically changed our sense of distance, shopping habits, dating habits, city design, house design and a whole host of other aspects of society.

However, this theory of technology allows no possibility of human responsibility once the technological invention has been promoted. The theory seems to suggest that the technology has a mind of its own and just takes over society – whether the community wants it or not.

Determined technology

The theory of determined technology regards technology as being shaped and determined by the particular society that creates it. In this view, it is other social factors, such as economic or political forces, that influence the nature of the technology that a society produces. Technology historian Brian Winston makes the point that, like all of us, technologists are social beings who operate within social constraints – they are people like everyone else. This limits what advances are possible and under what circumstances they will be made available for use.

Winston sees technological change as something that is created by a wide variety of forces that may be operating in society at the time. These affect inventors and their ideas, just as they affect everyone else. What eventually determines whether a new technology will be accepted, or even arise in the first place, is what Winston terms 'supervening social necessity' (Figure 9.3). Supervening necessities are events, desires or urgent requirements that create the need within a society for a particular technological development. For example, the supervening social necessity of World War II created the circumstances for the development of the atomic bomb.



Sai Chan/Shutterstock.com

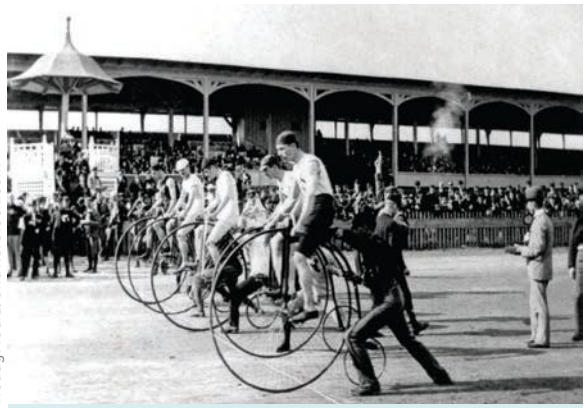
Figure 9.2 Freeways in Los Angeles. Supporters of technological determinism would argue that the invention of the car totally transformed society, irrespective of what people actually wanted. The technology determined what would happen.



FPG/Retrofile RF/Getty Images

Figure 9.3 The technological possibility of video phone calls existed as far back as the 1950s. A number of issues held back its marketing, including society's willingness to accept it. Society had no need for such a thing while it remained clumsy. The determined theory of technology suggests that a technology will not thrive unless it meets an overwhelming necessity in society.

9780170484176



HodagMedia/Shutterstock.com

Figure 9.4 The penny-farthing is sometimes used as an example of socially constructed technology. This bicycle was not necessarily an inferior design, but instead was used by riders for speed and demonstrations of daring. When large numbers of people wanted to ride bicycles for commuting purposes, the design was changed to the modern 'safety cycle'. Society got the bicycle design that it wanted – hence socially constructed technology.

Socially constructed technology

The socially constructed technology approach sees the relationship between society and technology as a complex and interactive two-way exchange of causes and effects. Technology develops according to the ends to which society puts it. In other words, we get the technology that we deserve – like it or not, it was society that developed it (Figure 9.4). A different society would create different technologies.

Critics often argue that this approach does not take into account the powerful demands of big business corporations and their ability to impose their will on the wider community. This view is seen by some critics as giving too much power to society.

9.1 ACTIVITIES

1 Using the theory of technological determinism, select a technology and **evaluate** the impact it has had on society. List as many impacts as you can and detail how they ricocheted through many aspects of society. Respond to the areas of investigation in the following table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe the technology you have selected. Give information about its general purposes and uses. **Describe** the degree and success of its penetration into the market. **Describe** as many of the impacts as you can, making a list.	**Analyse** component features, **examining** each and **considering** the impacts on society, evaluating effects in as many areas as you can think of. **Examine** the ways in which society has been affected and decide how society may have looked if the technology hadn't been introduced. **Analyse** the strengths and limitations of the introduction of the technology, **making judgements** using positives and negatives for society as criteria.	**Evaluate** the significance and status of the technology, **drawing conclusions** about its overall worth to society when compared with other alternatives or the prior environment.

2 Look at the penny-farthing in Figure 9.4. Research the history of some of the technology 'battles' of the past century or so. **Analyse** the factors behind why one technology failed to gain a popular following, while another technology succeeded. **Analyse** the key factors for why one technology succeeded over another. Examples could include the famous VHS versus Beta video battle, or the more recent Blu-ray versus HD DVD battle.

EVOLUTION OF TECHNOLOGY AND AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Media technology has been changing at a rate faster than that experienced in many other industries – so fast, that many analysts talk of a communications revolution. The past 20 years have been a time of great optimism, but also great fear. Change has disrupted many of the older, accepted ways of doing things. It has forced many media businesses to either change or go under.

Evolving technology and the 'experience economy'

Today, 50 per cent of customers believe that shopping is an entertaining experience. Purchasing

goods and services has evolved beyond a simple function of everyday life to embody aesthetic qualities. This is referred to as the 'experience economy'. This context of use leverages media technologies to enable or stage personalised and memorable experiences that aesthetically and emotionally engage consumers as active participants. Purchasing shoes has become more than purchasing shoes; it is about how consumers perceive the context rather than the shoe itself. Therefore, sophistication in utilising design thinking becomes essential for commercial success. Thinking about how to offer experiences to customers is more important than the products being sold.

Definition of the experience economy

The experience economy is a new stage of economic offering focused on providing memorable experiences to engage customers emotionally, physically, intellectually or spiritually. One of the biggest characteristics of this economy is aesthetics. Lev Manovich argues that at its core, the experiences underpinning consumerism indicate the role aesthetics plays in everyday life, so what is happening in consumer culture is being informed by an aesthetic society.

In many ways, the production and consumption of experiences is aligned with the production and consumption of sophisticated aesthetics, interfaces, objects and experiences that become central to economic and social functioning.

Key dimensions of the experience economy include:

- **Staging experiences as economic offerings** – Media companies are moving beyond just providing information/content services to intentionally designing engaging experiences. It is this value that commands a fee. The experience itself becomes the product.
- **Sophisticated aesthetics take centre stage** – Beautiful images, interfaces, objects and designed experiences are the key properties of commercial offerings in the aesthetic society of the experience economy. Space designers, user experience (UX) designers, photographers, stylists and more become critical in this context.
- **Personalised and memorable events** – Media experiences need to engage each individual and create lasting memories at a personal level. They are inherently meaningful, despite being mass-produced.
- **Active customer participation** – Customers become active rather than passive consumers. Media experiences aim to enable them to affect the experience rather than absorb it. It is important to note that consumers actively seek these spaces rather than engaging in a candid capacity. There is a social ritual involved when preparing to visit a shopping centre.
- **Ubiquity of media 'using'** – Content creation, promotion, communicating with followers and achieving goals all revolve around sophisticated 'using' of media technologies and analytics by companies and individuals alike. Using becomes a key skill in designing successful consumer experience spaces.

Design interaction

The aesthetic society values sophisticated design and media professionals who can create refined experiences. Design interaction professionals, such as UX designers, play a key role. Their goal is to design interactive dimensions that are beautiful, intuitive and capable of curating social engagement.

Effective design interaction considers four dimensions of an experience:

1. **Entertainment:** Interaction should be enjoyable and captivating.
2. **Educational:** It should enable learning and exploration.
3. **Escapist:** It should allow people to participate in a different reality.
4. **Aesthetic:** The design should be visually and sensorily appealing.



MrPhotoMania/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 9.5 The home theatre room is fast becoming a highly aesthetic space that rivals cinemas in both technological quality and atmosphere.

> 'The action movie changed radically when it became possible to Velcro your muscles on. It was the beginning of a new era. The visual took over. The special effects became more important than the person.'
>
> **Sylvester Stallone**, actor

Home theatre rooms

One way the experience economy has significantly impacted culture is in home design, particularly in home theatre design. Consumers increasingly value memorable and engaging experiences with moving-image media, so the demand for immersive and sophisticated home entertainment spaces has grown.

The following principles underpin home theatre building and construction:

- **Staging experiences:** In the context of home theatre rooms, this means creating a space that not only functions as a place to watch movies but also immerses the user in a cinematic experience.
- **Personalisation:** Experiences are inherently personal. In-home theatre design translates to creating a space tailored to the homeowner's individual preferences and tastes.
- **Technology as an enabler:** In-home theatre rooms feature advanced technologies such as 4K/8K screens, Dolby Atmos sound systems and smart lighting controls, which are used to create high-quality experiences.
- **Escapism and active participation:** Home theatres in the experience economy aim to provide a form of escapism, allowing users to immerse themselves in a different reality.
- **Aesthetic sophistication:** Home theatre rooms are a form of luxury for everyday homes. These spaces often showcase this through sleek, modern and carefully curated aesthetic sophistication.

Evolution of CGI

Weblink
How CGI changed movies forever

CGI is defined as the use of computer graphics to create or enhance images. CGI animation refers to the use of moving CGI to make up sequences in games and movies.

The photographic image bears a strict resemblance to the object it represents in the historical world. That is the nature of the mechanical reproduction of the camera – it is capable of an extreme precision. A photo of a tree looks exactly like the tree that was captured. Because of this relationship, the image itself carries persuasive power. Viewers engage with the image, and believe it is real because they think the camera does not lie. This engagement with the persuasive power of the image also informs a viewer's involvement, particularly emotional investment. In cinema, a viewer's connection with story is in part due to the degree of realism in the text itself.

The introduction of CGI complicated this relationship. Because viewers are so well attuned to the realism on offer in cameras, CGI first presented itself as more of an obstacle. The computer-generated construction of human form in screen space lacked the precision of the mechanical reproduction of the camera. Early films that featured poor or sub-standard CGI were (and still are) difficult to engage with because of that displacement of reality (Figure 9.6). The sudden introduction of a CGI object in screen space did nothing more than reposition the viewer's attention upon the artifice of production practice.

The evolution of CGI reached a crucial point in the 1990s. Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993) probably represents the biggest turning point in the history of CGI. Using newly developed technologies in rendering, dinosaurs were provided with a physical texture unlike anything that had appeared before. The result was a hyper-realistic image that stunned audiences.

The CGI image has now begun to closely resemble the photographic properties of a mechanically reproduced photo, taken by a camera. This means that the image not only carries



Courtesy of Universal Studios Licensing LLC

Figure 9.6 The obviously flawed digital design of the scorpion monster in *The Mummy Returns* (2001) creates a difficult viewing position for audiences. Viewers attempt to align the figure with reality, but struggle to do so because of the differences in lighting, saturation and movement.

persuasive power, but it also provides a positive experience for the viewer. Thus, CGI is a highly active ingredient in the viewer's engagement with and experience of the screen. This engagement and experience are dependent on the ways in which convergence with realism is managed.

Pixelated aesthetics

Pixelated animation involves the use of pixels (small squares) to create an image that lacks overall clarity. From a distance, the combination of pixels (and their colours) allows the viewer to see an image, although it still remains quite obscure.

Pixelated animation is an aesthetic that has gained considerable currency in recent years. Pixels were used primarily in the design of video game aesthetics in the 1970s and 1980s, with much of the gaming industry relying on pixels for well over a decade. Thus, early video games became closely associated with pixelated animation, as did the decade of the 1980s.

By the 1990s, the use of pixels to create aesthetics decreased in popularity, and technologies advanced in specific ways to reduce the presence of pixels altogether. As resolutions grew larger, pixels became smaller. By the early 2000s, pixels were subtle and gave way to newer, smoother aesthetics that seemed to resemble reality much better.

However, after the release of *Minecraft* in 2009, pixel art experienced a sharp resurgence in popularity (Figure 9.7). Pixels began to appear again in games, various artworks, advertising and even as commodities. The impact that pixelated animation has had on culture is probably most notable in Google's decision to name their smartphone 'Pixel'. Their use of this term indicates the degree to which the word itself has become a functioning part of everyday life.

For the generations who were young in the 1980s and early 1990s, the impact of pixelated animation has resulted in forms of engagement underpinned by nostalgia. Nostalgia is a yearning for the past in the immediate present and is always present in popular culture.



Fir Mamat/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 9.7 *Star Trek Trexels* is a nostalgic pixelated game for Apple iOS devices. Its design aesthetic is deliberately pixelated. Pixelated animation has become popular partly through the game *Minecraft*, but also as a remembrance of the 1980s and 1990s. For younger generations, it represents a return to simplicity that modern high-resolution images cannot offer.

Virtual or digital actors

With virtual acting, Arnold Schwarzenegger could indeed 'be back' well after he has finished with being in the movies. Initial steps have already been taken with the resurrection of his younger self in *Terminator Salvation* (2009) and *Terminator Genisys* (2015; Figure 9.8). Popular sequels could continue well after the actor himself has aged too far.



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 9.8 A digital re-creation of Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Terminator Genisys* (2015). The obvious artificiality creates problems for viewers, who spend time registering it instead of experiencing tension or fear in story.

A virtual or digital actor is a computer-generated actor. Virtual or digital actors can be either based on a real human being or completely digitally created (that is, without an equivalent in the real world).

Digital actors are often used as extras, or in stunt scenes that feature hyperkinetic action. They are the unpaid actors who play the parts that were once performed by real people. Various actors in the industry have expressed anxiety over the continued development of the digital actor, such as Tom Hanks – his concerns are to do with the loss of paid work. However, other actors are more positive about the use of digital actors, such

Weblinks

Brave new world for virtual actors

Learn about pixilation

Animation basics: what is pixilation?

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as Andy Serkis – he argues for a new category of Academy Award reserved for digital actors and motion capturing.

In their earliest inception, digital actors functioned only in terms of a passive component of the *mise en scène*. In *Titanic* (1997), digital actors were used to create large background crowds populating the decks of the ship. However, advances in technology has seen the rapid rise of digital actors to the limelight. The role of Clu in *TRON: Legacy* (2010) was key, and he shared a significant amount of screen time with real-life actors. Advances in software are narrowing the gap between the digital world and the physical world.

Impact on industry

The human film star, now known as the 'carbon actor', has been an important part of film production for a century. But advancements in technology, and the rise of the digital actor, have set up an interesting situation where carbon actors must now compete with their digital counterparts for roles in upcoming productions.

This has some interesting implications on performance, and more industrial practices such as auditions. Perhaps the day will come when carbon actors must justify their presence in a production, especially if a digital actor commands no wages at all.

Audience impact

Digital actors release television and film production from its dependence on the physical world. This has significant implications, perhaps the largest of which is how a viewer might approach emotionally investing in the performance of a digital actor. For instance, can a digital actor induce an emotional response in the viewer such as crying or laughter? This may also bring new meaning to the way in which the suspension of disbelief functions.

The Uncanny Valley

In 1970, Japanese roboticist Masahiro Mori noted that an object becomes more appealing as it is **anthropomorphised** (takes on more human characteristics). As an object gets closer to looking human but not exactly right, it suddenly becomes weird and unsettling to audiences. This phenomenon is referred to as the **Uncanny Valley**. The 'valley' refers to the dip in a graph of how appealing an object is as it gets closer to human likeness (see Figure 9.9).

One theory as to why this occurs is that we have evolved to tell if something is slightly 'off' in another human and be wary of it. This issue is an important consideration for animators, game designers and roboticists.

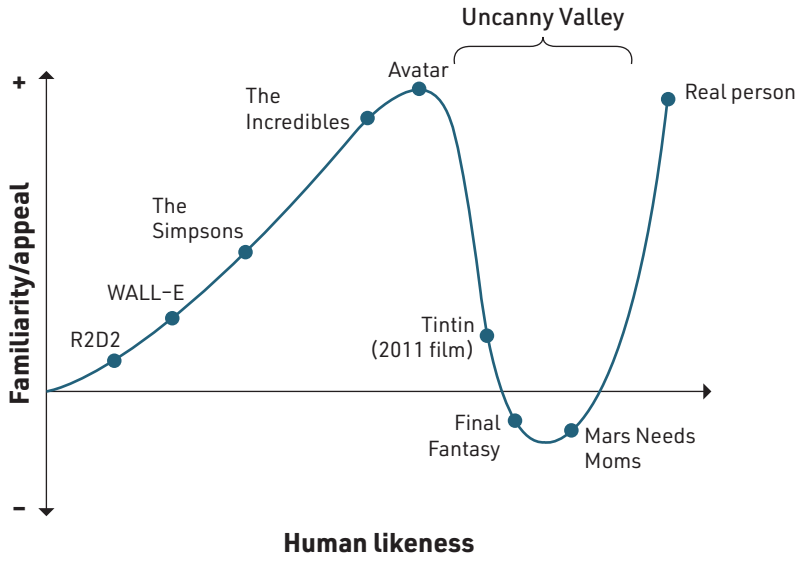
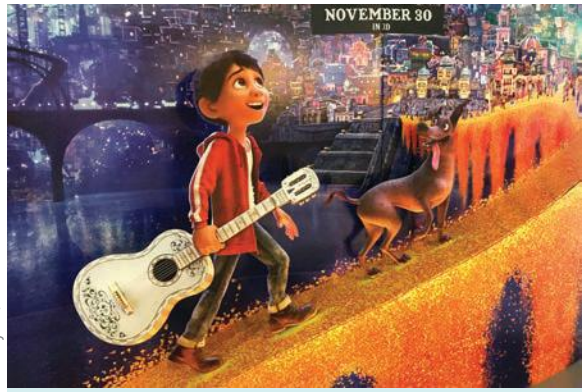


Figure 9.9 A graph of the Uncanny Valley phenomenon with animated characters and films. As a character becomes more human-like, we find it more appealing and can empathise with that character. When a character is almost human but something is not quite right, we find the effect uncanny and the character loses its appeal. Creating convincingly realistic CGI human characters is still the end goal for many media producers.

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'It's a paradox of animation that you can put arms and a face on a spoon, say, or make a deer talk, and it looks cute. But make a character too lifelike, and the brain no longer reads it as good animation, but as reality with something wrong about it. That's the uncanny valley.'

Steve Rose, writer, *The Guardian*



Sarunyu L/Shutterstock.com

Figure 9.10 Pixar's 2017 film *Coco*. Pixar's first foray into creating 'realistic' characters was the baby in their 1988 short film, *Tin Toy*. Although the baby represented significant advancements in CGI technology at the time, its appearance and movements landed it squarely in the Uncanny Valley. With the negative reactions to *Tin Toy*, Pixar learned a valuable lesson about character design. Since then, Pixar has tended to create more stylised human characters.

Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within (2001) was one of the first films to use motion-capture technologies in order to create 'realistic' human characters with CGI. Unfortunately, the film fell into the Uncanny Valley and made a significant loss overall. Ten years later, the CGI animation *The Adventures of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn* (2011) was commercially successful and won a Golden Globe Award for Best Motion Picture – Animation. However, Tintin's representation, particularly the face, was still considered strange and unnatural by audiences and critics.

One way around the issue is to stop right on the valley's edge – to stylise characters just enough so that they're not trying to look like photorealistic humans. Animation companies such as Pixar and DreamWorks, and the creators of films such as *Avatar* (2009), have successfully designed characters in this way.

Digital actors, deep fakes and The Uncanny in the age of AI

The unease raised by digital deep fakes, and generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies reflects the timeless nature of The Uncanny. It also reveals its evolving manifestations in response to emerging technologies. This ongoing dialogue between innovation and how people receive changes continues to shape our understanding of the ways identity and reality come together in the age of AI.

Psychologist Sigmund Freud identified the concept of the 'double' (or doppelgänger) as a significant source of uncanny feelings. Doppelgängers can include mirror images, shadows, ghosts or anything that blurs the line between the self and the other. When the viewer encounters the double, the experience creates a personal crisis about one's identity and the nature of the self. In a digital context, this idea links with deep fakes and digital actors capable of embodying photorealistic copies of real-life people.

The Karl Stefanovic deep fake scandal surfaced in 2023. Stefanovic addressed the viral video on the *Today* show only days after, citing it as 'disturbing'. However, for him, the feeling of being disturbed results not just from its use in a scam but because he is watching someone (or something) impersonating him. The digital fake looks and acts like him while presenting a deceitful and harmful message to the public. This 'Karl imposter' is the kind of digital doppelgänger that threatens the stability of the self and the entire media landscape.

Deep fake technology served an amusing and entertaining purpose in the Marvel films,


National

AI-powered propaganda could influence elections, say experts

Dan Milmo
Alex Hern

Next year's elections in Britain and the US could be marked by a wave of AI-powered disinformation, experts have warned, as generated images, text and deepfake videos go viral at the behest of swarms of AI-powered propaganda bots.

Sam Altman, the CEO of ChatGPT creator OpenAI, told a congressional hearing in Washington this week that the models behind the latest generation of AI technology could

humans, I think is going to require a combination of companies doing the right thing, regulation and public education."

The prime minister, Rishi Sunak, said on Thursday the UK would lead on limiting the dangers of AI. Concerns over the technology have soared after breakthroughs in generative AI, where tools such as ChatGPT and Midjourney produce convincing text, images and even voice on command.

Where earlier waves of propaganda "bots" relied on simple pre-written messages sent en masse, or buildings of "maid trolls" to engage with other

AI-generated images of the pope in a Balenciaga jacket went viral

Prof Michael Wooldridge, the director of foundation AI research at the UK's Alan Turing Institute, said AI-powered disinformation was his

Kathy deWitt/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 9.11 The danger that disinformation poses is real, and can have a lasting impact on how society thinks. The proliferation of this type of generative AI has intensified calls for citizens to be educated by the media's coverage of the issue.

where viewers witnessed younger versions of their favourite actors magically brought to life on the screen. For example, in the 2019 Marvel film *Captain Marvel*, Nick Fury (played by Samuel L. Jackson) played the role of sidekick to Captain Marvel. Jackson was subjected to the de-aging CGI process to construct a younger Nick Fury – since the film was set in 1995 – making Jackson about 47 years old. For fans of Jackson, this might have been a fascinating glimpse into what it would have been like to watch a younger Jackson's acting. Many Marvel films function similarly, since flashbacks are a common element in the Marvel storytelling playbook.

The impact of deep fakes

Audiences must develop new viewing strategies as a result of the rise of deep fakes and AI-generated content. Some of the impacts on audience involvement with the films and media they consume are as follows.

- **Attribution of performance.** When does the performance of an actor cease, and the digital technology take over? Do deep fake technologies in cinema belong to the award for special effects or best acting?
- **Fandom**. These technologies also function to displace fandom. Are audiences watching Michael Douglas in *Ant-Man* or his motion capture stand in?
- **Authenticity.** With each layer of technology applied in screen space, another layer of authenticity is removed. The aura of an authentic performance is removed.

Technology panics

Technology panics are fears that grip society when a new technology is introduced. They may occur for a number of reasons:

- **Fear of change.** New technologies can be transformative, some dramatically so. In all changes, there are winners and losers. For society as a whole, change is not always an overall improvement.
- **Loss of control.** Industries based on existing technologies have a financial stake in the old way of doing things. They may promote technology panics as a means of protecting their own businesses. Newspapers often criticise competitor media forms such as social media, television or the internet.
- **Protecting the vulnerable.** Fears frequently develop around the uptake of new technologies by young people (Figure 9.12). Those in positions of control (such as politicians, teachers and parents) tend to be older and concerned for the welfare of younger generations.
- **Generation gaps.** New technologies may appeal to younger people, and older generations may develop concerns out of a lack of understanding.



NARONGRIT LOKOOLPRAKIT/ Shutterstock.com

Figure 9.12 Technology panics may be based around themes such as pornography, violence or the loss of childhood. A technology panic can recur as basically the same fear but applied to different technologies.

Can panics be justified?

Calling something a 'panic' suggests that the fears or concerns are not real, or that they are blown out of proportion. While this can be the case, it is not always. Sometimes there are valid reasons for concern that need to be addressed, or gradual changes that need to be made if society is to accommodate the new technology. Sometimes change needs to be made to the technology. This is all part of the process of socially determined technology.

Who creates panics?

British communications professor, Chas Critcher, says there are five main groups within society who have the potential power to create technology panics (and other sorts of panics):

1 the media
2 politicians and the government
3 police and law enforcement groups
4 lobby groups, pressure groups and demonstrators
5 the public.

Together, these groups form an immensely powerful force and other points of view are easily drowned out. However, the five groups do not always line up in agreement and a panic is not guaranteed.

You can view a technology panic timeline on Nelson MindTap.

Resource
Technology panics timeline

9.2 ACTIVITIES

1 Research in more detail one of the media panics that have occurred over the past 100 years. Respond to the areas of investigation in the following table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe the technology that gave rise to the panic. **Give information** about the reactions in the community, **illustrating** with some examples. **Identify** some of the main concerns.	**Analyse** the contributing factors or component parts behind the panic. **Interpret** the reactions in terms of the reasons for the panic. **Analyse** the chief cause of the panic, **examining** the relative strengths of different concerns.	**Evaluate** the significance and status of the panic with the benefit of hindsight (from the perspective of the present day). **Evaluate** the degree to which people were justified in their concerns, **drawing conclusions** about the significance of the long-term impact of the technology.

2 **Create** a timeline of 'reverse panics' that shows the benefits of each of the technical breakthroughs listed in the timeline of technology panics (available via weblink).

3 Select five to 10 video game, film or television characters that have been created using CGI technologies. **Create** a graph of the Uncanny Valley using the **conventions** of graph design. Place 'Familiarity/Appeal' on the vertical axis and 'Human likeness' on the horizontal axis. **Analyse** the **representation** of the characters in terms of familiarity/appeal and human likeness. **Consider** how technical codes and conventions are used to create the characters. **Evaluate** visually the degree of character realism by placing an image of each character on the curve of the graph, **making judgements** about their depiction in relation to realism. Present your graph to the class. **Justify** why you have placed each character at that position on the 'appeal curve' of the graph. As part of your presentation, provide additional visual examples that illustrate the elements of the character design that have influenced your decisions.

4 **Analyse** the performance of a digital actor and use research and your own observations to work out where this performance comes from. Inquire into the understandings or qualifications a computer operator must have in order to create a convincing performance in a digital actor. **Evaluate** the performance of a digital actor in a movie, **making judgements** about the degree of realism. **Make a judgement** about the worth of a virtual actor to audience emotional investment.

TECHNOLOGIES AND THE MEDIUM (+ MAP)

> 'The content of a medium is like the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind.'
>
> **Marshall McLuhan**, literary scholar and futurist

The medium is the message

Canadian literary scholar and futurist Marshall McLuhan coined the famous phrase 'the medium is the message'. McLuhan argued that each new medium is unique in the way that it communicates. Each new medium disrupts society and changes how people think in its own particular way; McLuhan argued that the actual content of a medium was not as important as this. Television disrupts society just by being television – whatever it broadcasts is less important than the actual medium itself. Therefore, the medium is the message.

It was McLuhan who came up with the term 'surfing' to describe how people would switch from one television station to another, or listen to radio while watching images on television. The term has since become widely accepted to describe the behaviour of internet users.

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Hot and cool media

McLuhan proposed that a medium can be either 'hot' or 'cool', depending on the way that it communicates. If a medium required a lot of effort from the audience to participate and create the meanings, McLuhan claimed that it was 'cool' or low definition. If the audience did not have to put in much effort, because all the details were provided, then McLuhan regarded the medium as 'hot' or high definition.

Today, 'cool' can mean 'chic' or 'interesting' and 'hot' can mean 'sexy'. However, McLuhan took the terms from their usage in jazz music. Hot jazz is full of big, rich sound with lots of brass. Cool jazz is often produced with just a single instrument – much simpler and smaller.

- **Hot media.** Media that dramatically extend a single sense so that little extra effort is required are termed hot. McLuhan classified film as a hot medium because it extends sight and includes so much detail in a single frame. In jazz terms, film is 'big sound'. McLuhan also classified photography, radio and newspapers as hot media.
- **Cool media.** Simpler, smaller media that require more effort are classified as cool. McLuhan claimed that television is a cool medium because its ability to show detail is much less. This would certainly have been the case with television in the 1960s, although it is debatable as to whether it applies to today's HD television. Cartoons and telephones were listed by McLuhan as cool media (although, again, this refers to phones in the 1960s).

Analogue and digital technologies

Analogue media

Analogue media use materials from the real world to transmit their messages. These materials include paper, film, magnetic tape and sound waves. Analogue media can usually be seen and understood in their raw form. Media technologies in place before the 1980s were analogue, but many continued using analogue into the 1990s and beyond. For example, digital film projection did not take off until after 2005. The final switch-off for analogue television broadcast signals did not occur until 2013.



dpa picture alliance/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 9.13 Binary code is a symbol system expressed in ones and zeroes. Digital media production and transmission relies on binary codes. The code shown here could represent the *Mona Lisa* or an ad for washing powder. Until a computer decodes it, the codes all look very similar.

Digital media

Digital media use a numerical code system based on zeroes and ones to represent information such as letters, images and sounds. There is little apparent difference between the code for a great work of art and that for an advertisement for soap powder.

Time-based and static media

Some media products can be consumed in just a single glance. Others must be consumed over a period of time. This difference determines if the media form is time-based or static.

Time-based media/dynamic media

Media forms such as film, television and sound productions are time-based media. Time-based media can be defined as communication data that forms a meaningful sequence over time. The audience experiences the media product unfold over time according to the logic of the particular media form or medium. Time-based media is most often story-based and the audience experiences a chain of events with an opening sequence, a middle and a resolution or closing sequence. To take in the whole thing, you have to be there for a specified time. Not all time-based media is story-based. Music, sound sequences and some types of video productions do not rely on story.

Static media

Media forms or mediums such as photography and print are static media. These media forms allow

the audience to choose how long they will view the complete work for. Some will glance for a few seconds, others will linger much longer – but it is an individual decision. Static media do not change over time; they are always the same. Of course, the audience may see more and more in them the longer they look.



Steven May/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 9.14 Professional sound recordists capture 'atmos' tracks, which are free from dialogue. The heavy-duty wind sock allows location noises to be recorded without buffeting as a seamless background under jumps in editing. The consistent sound reinforces the audience perception of experiencing shots filmed individually as a continuous, real-time experience.

Film as a medium

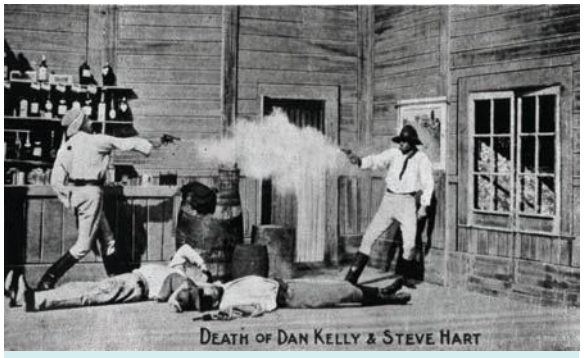
Legend has it the audience stampeded in terror at one of the first cinema showings in Paris in 1896. The first movies were made in France by the Lumière brothers. One of the films, *L'arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat* (1896), shows a section of railway station platform in the town of La Ciotat bathed in sunlight. Suddenly a train appears, heading straight for the camera – and the audience. As the train approached them in 1896, panic broke out in the theatre: people jumped out of their seats and ran for their lives.

Audiences are more film-literate now. They have grown up with film and know the language, and are no longer so easily frightened. But film still possesses the power to transform an ordinary object, such as a train, and make it extraordinary. David Lynch's *Wild at Heart* (1990) begins with a fierce explosion. As it turns out, it is nothing more than a match being lit – the ordinary is instantly transformed by the power of the cinema.

A film is a sequence of still shots that are projected onto screen, creating the impression of moving images. This impression of movement is due to a characteristic of the human eye known as the phi phenomenon, which is commonly called persistence of vision. Film aims to communicate meaning through recorded images and sound.

The cinema is larger than life. It can amplify both the best and the worst in humanity. It has had a powerful role in 20th-century tyranny as well as in democracy. The tyranny of Stalin's Soviet Russia was powerfully reinforced by Sergei Eisenstein's films. Eisenstein is credited with developing the editing technique 'collision of images' or montage (see page 82). *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), Eisenstein's heroic film about working-class struggle, was used to support a cruel regime. The Nazi regime in Germany was boosted by the majestic films of Leni Riefenstahl. Her tribute to Hitler and the Nazi movement, *Triumph of the Will* (1935), although morally abhorrent, is still regarded as one of the masterpieces of film.

Hollywood films were as influential as US military and industrial might in making the 20th century the American century. The power of film has sold the American dream to millions around the world, while at the same time exposing its dark underside. Some argue that American films are as powerful as American military strength. American culture is sometimes called its 'soft power', while military might is referred to as 'hard power'.



World History Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 9.15 The world's first feature-length film was made in Melbourne. *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (1906) premiered on Boxing Day 1906 at Melbourne Town Hall. By 1908, the film had toured Australia, Britain and New Zealand, billed as 'the longest film ever made'. Reports of increases in crime followed the film everywhere it toured. Despite its role in history, all reels of the film were believed to have been lost by the 1940s. However, some fragments were recovered in the 1970s and have now been restored. Almost a quarter of the film has been restored and digitised.

Resource
Film medium timeline

A primary medium

There are three levels of attention people typically pay to different forms of media. People can pay primary or close attention, for instance when reading

a newspaper. They can pay secondary attention to radio or television (for example) while they are doing something else. Or they can pay tertiary attention to a medium when it is in the background and below conscious attention, as with department store Muzak (uninteresting piped music).

A narrative medium

The Lumière brothers knew when they showed their early films that people were fascinated by pictures that moved. However, it was not clear what the new invention would be useful for. At the time, people thought of film as a kind of fairground attraction. It was predicted that the novelty would soon wear off.

Cinema could have gone in several directions. It might have become a solely documentary medium, or it might have developed into a kind of television with a variety of programs, such as game shows, news bulletins and music clips. Instead, film became a medium for telling stories. Originally, films were short, one-reel stories; later they became full-length features. Documentaries and non-narratives are produced, of course, but they are a minor component. The novel-length story with well-developed characters and a strong plot has remained the dominant form in the cinema.

Narrative versus spectacle

Film often uses a combination of narrative and spectacle. At different times in the history of the medium, one is favoured over another. Early film and film in the days of the big Hollywood studios (1920s–1950s) tended to slightly favour narrative over spectacle. In the modern era of the blockbuster film, spectacle tends to be slightly favoured over narrative.



AAP Image/Gemma Phillips

Figure 9.16 The premiere of the Baz Luhrmann movie *Australia* (2008) was held at the Summergarden theatre in Bowen, North Queensland. The movie was filmed in Bowen. The cinema experience is both collective and individual. A large public gathering creates a shared experience, and the opportunity for shared behaviour.

- **Narrative.** In simple terms, a narrative is a story. It can be defined as a chain of events occurring over time. Film uses time in two ways:
  - **Story time** is the time in which the events take place within the story. For example, it could be the story of someone's life and take place over 70 years.
  - **Narrative time** is the time taken by the movie to tell the story – usually around 90 minutes.
- **Spectacle.** This is an image in a film that is so striking and remarkable that the audience just wants to stare at it. In *King Kong* (1933), spectacle was provided when a lifelike Kong held Ann (Fay Wray) in his giant hands and ripped off pieces of her dress. Audiences of the time marvelled at the special effects. Modern CGI now creates spectacles that audiences take for granted.

Television as a medium

'Television is the first mass-produced symbolic environment. The significance of that can be reflected in the word that sums up the most distinctive element of human life, the most crucial distinction between humans and other creatures – storytelling. We experience the world through stories. Whoever tells the stories of a culture defines the terms, the agenda and the common issues we face.
Television has replaced most stories told by parents and has either replaced or organised what we learn in schools or in church.
We need a new environment movement, addressing the environment that is most crucial to our humanity – the environment of the stories we tell; the environment that shapes so much of what we think and do in common.'

George Gerbner, Professor of Communication, University of Pennsylvania

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'Television' – from the Greek *tele* meaning 'far' and the Latin *visio* meaning 'sight' – is defined as a telecommunication system for sending audio and video signals either via cable or through the air (terrestrial or satellite signals) between distant points. The word also refers both to the electronic device used to receive and reproduce the audio and video signals in your living room, and to the content or programming that is broadcast.



Bettmann/Getty Images

Figure 9.17 Television as the 'town crier' in the early 1950s outside a department store in New York city. When television first appeared, people gathered around the windows of electrical goods stores to watch the news and to admire the new-fangled invention in operation.

Why is television so powerful?

The eyes are superior to the other senses as information receivers. Hearing is the second-best sense. The combined impact of these senses is formidable. There is no doubt that television has changed society. It now performs a number of important functions that it would be hard for us all to do without. A modern world without television is inconceivable.

Television has many roles in society:

- **Television as bard or town crier.** British media academics John Fiske and John Hartley have developed the idea of 'bardic' television. Whenever there was a battle, a noble wedding or a murder, the balladeers (bards) of medieval times wrote songs and verse about it. The ballads were sung in every town and village, and the ideas of the time were passed from person to person. The verses of the balladeer reflected the central concerns of the society.

  Today, television fulfils this function, giving society at least one version of the concerns of the present day. When television was first introduced, this 'town crier' function was very evident. Most people did not own television sets, so they gathered outside electrical retail stores to watch 'the bard'. Television told them, and is still telling them now, of the world outside.
- **Television as modern folklore.** Folklore refers to the traditional beliefs and tales of oral cultures. It allows individuals to be part of a group, culture and heritage, and promotes social solidarity. Television works the same way. It presents a view of the current morality of society. It shows a selection of the achievements, problems and views on the meaning of life within the group of 'folk' in the 'global village'.
- **Television as an educative medium.** Television can fulfil the need for information. All people have a desire for knowledge and understanding. Television can be a great educator on a huge range of topics. Reporting current events is also one of television's duties; it therefore has a responsibility to be truthful.
- **Television as an entertainment medium.** Television can provide entertainment. In this area, it has taken over the roles of the circus, theatre, concert and cinema as mass entertainment. It has borrowed heavily from all of these and created a great deal that is unique to itself.
- **Television as a caregiver medium.** When a preschooler is seated in front of the television set, a parent watches a midday movie to relieve boredom or a tired office worker switches on the television after the evening meal, the television is being used to fulfil emotional needs. It may be the need for love, company, tension release or escape. Its ability to meet these needs is one reason television is so powerful.

Resource
Television timeline

Radio and podcasts as an audio medium

Radio is a system of sending audio signals through the air using electromagnetic radiation. The word 'radio' comes from 'radiate' and is a reference to the means of transmission. An American advertising executive is believed to have come up with the term in about 1907.

While Americans spoke of 'radio', in Britain and Australia the preferred term was originally 'wireless telegraphy', or wireless for short. By the late 1960s, however, either because of American cultural dominance or because it seemed a more serious and scientific word, radio had become the standard term worldwide.

Podcasts can be thought of as radio for the age of digital streaming (Figure 9.18). A podcast is an audio program delivered as a digital audio file over the internet and downloadable to a personal device to be listened to at a time that suits the individual.

Podcast is a term that was first heard in the early 2000s when the Apple iPod was popular with younger consumers of popular music. The idea of downloading news documentary or talk-radio programs to the iPod soon caught on. Traditional media were broadcasting their programs. Downloading them to an iPod became 'podcasting' – a combination of iPod and broadcasting.

Audio – the 'blind' medium

Sometimes radio and podcasting is said to be a 'blind medium' because it involves only one of the five senses: hearing. The messages of the sound-based medium consist only of noise and occasional silences. Things that might be self-evident or clearly visible on television have to be carefully described in audio. Interviewers can often be heard to say, 'Tell the listeners what you are doing.' At other times they may say, 'Describe the scene to the listeners. What does it look like?'

But the audio medium is also called the art of the imagination. In television, the action takes place on the screen. The scenes will look the same, no matter who is watching. In radio and podcasting, the images are all in the listener's mind, so each person becomes creative. This use of the imagination is not limited to audio plays and comedies. When we listen to audio news or weather reports, we are also forced to imagine the real world.

The Canadian media philosopher Marshall McLuhan said that radio is a hot medium, while television is a cool medium (see page 134). Radio heats up the imagination. It stimulates, while television relaxes.



GBJSTOCK/Shutterstock.com

Figure 9.18 All you need to be a podcaster is a microphone and a digital device such as a laptop or iPad. Podcasting is a combination word made up of 'iPod' (early digital media player) and 'broadcasting'.

Features of the audio medium

The features of radio and podcasting as a medium include companionship, intimacy, flexibility and ease of use.

Companionship

Podcasting and radio is sometimes called a 'companion medium'. The announcer's voice gives a warm sense of personal communication, providing company for each individual listener.

Some of the pleasure the listener gains from the company of audio comes from a sense of being anonymous. The podcasting companion does not demand to know anything about the listener. The listener has no obligation to talk back to their electronic friend.



chaossart/Shutterstock.com

Figure 9.19 The audio medium is sometimes called a 'companion' medium. It manages to provide company and intimacy.

MAP SYLLABUS

Intimacy

While millions may be listening to the audio medium, the appeal to the imagination of each person makes it also a very personal medium. The process of listening to the radio is 'inward' and intimate, like reading a book.

Radio and podcasts encourage intimacy by directly addressing the individual. Podcasters are told never to imagine their audience as a group. Instead, they must talk to an imaginary acquaintance. Even microphone etiquette promotes intimacy. Broadcasters sit just 10 to 15 centimetres from the microphone and speak confidentially into it.

The intimacy of the audio medium has increased over the years. Families once used to sit together around the kitchen table or the fireside listening to radio from a Bakelite receiver. Now, most people listen to radio and podcasts when alone – often in the car or while exercising. Radio seems to talk to the listener one-on-one, as a friend would.

Flexibility

The biggest advantage radio and podcasting have over the visual medium or print is the speed at which it can be produced. There is no need for the printing and distribution that holds newspapers to strict deadlines. There is no need for the typing and proofreading that internet-based media require. Unlike television, there is no need for camera equipment and no delay in post-production as footage is edited. Audio is a flexible medium. Radio's flexibility becomes most apparent in times of war or disaster. Audiences turn to radio for the most up-to-the-minute news.

Ease of use

Most of the action on radio or a podcast takes place in your imagination. Even the music is a personal and emotive experience. Listening to the radio in the car is now one of the primary uses listed in audience surveys. One advantage of this is that it leaves your hands free for driving.

Listeners can carry a podcast with them wherever they go, since they will nearly always have their phones. Radio does not demand exclusive attention in the way that a newspaper or movie does. As a result, radio has become an aural backdrop in locations as varied as hairdressing salons, factory floors and shopping malls.



pio3/Shutterstock.com

Figure 9.20 Map of the world made from uploaded travel photos. With billions of photographs now being uploaded to social media, photography is again a powerful media form.

Photography as a medium

On Facebook alone, an estimated 100 billion photographs have been uploaded – at the rate of 300 million a day. Flickr and Instagram add another 11 billion. This is a tsunami of photography. The smartphone and cheap digital cameras mean that everyone is now a photographer.

The word 'photography' comes from two Greek words: 'photo' meaning light and 'graph' meaning drawing. Put together it roughly means drawing with light. Photography is the process of making still images using the effect of light on light sensitive material – either film or an electronic light sensor.

Photography as a medium has four key areas of activity:

1 **Amateur photography.** The most popular use of photography is what was known as 'snapshots'. These are the informal life records that people take every day to document their lives and crystallise their memories. However, there is also a more artistically minded group of amateurs who take photographs as an art form. The improvement in mobile phone cameras and availability of DSLR cameras has increased the artistry of this group.
2 **Journalism.** Photography plays such an important role in journalism that a specialised form of the medium has developed called 'photojournalism'. In online newspapers, a good photograph has been shown to attract attention from 80 per cent of the readership.

MAP SYLLABUS

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AAP Image/AP Photo/Christie's, Andreas Gursky

Figure 9.21 Selling for nearly $AUD 5 million, this is currently the most expensive modern photograph in the world (two vintage photos are more expensive). *Rhein II* by Andreas Gursky shows the Rhine River in Germany between two banks of green grass. Prices like these show that photography is now an important art form in its own right.

3 **Advertising.** Photography is integral to advertising. Digital photography has allowed manipulation of the image, increasing its appeal to advertisers.
4 **Art.** Once, photography and art were rivals. Now many artists use photography as an artistic medium of first choice. Art collectors now pay millions for a photograph (Figure 9.21).

The frozen medium

According to Marshall McLuhan (see page 134), photography is a hot medium because it activates the viewer and is a high-definition extension of the human sense of sight. However, photography is also the medium of the 'frozen moment'. Meaning is created in a fraction of a second. News photos, for example, freeze history and allow those taking part to step back and understand the significance of events. For the photographer, the decisive moment is a matter of being in the right place at the right time.

There are several widely accepted reasons for the strong impact of photographs:

1 **Being an eyewitness.** In the human brain, sight tends to dominate over sound. The next best thing to being an eyewitness is to see a photograph.
2 **A single statement.** Video and film rarely stop moving. A five-second shot is considered long. Viewers have difficulty recalling any action after the sequence is over. Long trains of events are not remembered very easily. When something is remembered, it is usually recalled as a single image. In a photograph, all the meaning can be extracted in a long close look.
3 **Keen observation.** Facial expressions, gestures and reactions can often be more keenly observed with a camera than they can with the eye.

These reasons reinforce the old Chinese saying that 'a picture is worth a thousand words'.

Features of the photographic medium

A number of thinkers have turned their attention to the nature of photography since it first gained popularity. Some of their conclusions are presented in the following sections.

The photograph as traces

The American writer Susan Sontag described photographs as 'traces' directly traced or stencilled off reality. Writing in the 1970s, she said photographs are similar to footprints. Photographs require the original subject to be present at the time they are made, and the image is like a mask of the original. Therefore, she argued, the photograph bears a close connection to reality. Sontag saw photographs as similar to documents, reports or evidence. This could be evidence in a police case or evidence of a family holiday.

The photograph as index sign

The photograph is indexical, according to James Elkins, writing in 2007. This idea places



Everett Collection/Shutterstock.com

Figure 9.22 The German airship *Hindenburg* explodes into flames in 1937 as it docks in New Jersey, USA, after flying from Europe. This iconic photograph freezes time and represents a 'trace' of reality at that moment. It also acts as an eyewitness. (A dramatic and moving radio broadcast of the Hindenburg crash is also one of the iconic live news reports of the early 20th century.) This image turned the world off airships for the rest of the century. The *Hindenburg* crash also reminded humanity of the fragility of its inventions.

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the photograph in the context of semiotic analysis. An index sign is a sign that resembles or points to the original thing. For example, smoke is an indexical sign of fire. Elkins argued that the photograph is an index sign because it refers to something else, but closely resembles it.

The photograph as a witness

Like a witness, the photograph can sometimes be unreliable, says Max Kozloff. It leaves open the possibility of manipulation, partial information, misunderstandings and false evidence. This is a very modern view because the idea of a photograph as a trace of reality has come under pressure in the digital age. Modern concerns about deep fake photography mean that the photograph can no longer be relied on as a witness unless the source is verifiable, trusted and reliable.

What makes a good news photograph?

Former London news photographer and newspaper picture editor, Harold Evans, suggests there are three essential values in good news photography. He argued a photograph will be publishable with one of the values, while those without any of the three should be discarded:

1 **Animation.** This is the most essential ingredient. The picture should be lively and suggestive of movement or action. Usually, action is thought to be spectacular, such as aircraft crashing or flames leaping into the night sky. However, action can be emotive. It can be the expression on a human face.
2 **Relevant context.** A meaningful setting or surroundings that adds information is an important aspect of a good news photo. Shots of people in the news should not be taken against a blank wall, Evans advises. The setting should say something about the person.
3 **Depth of meaning.** The news photo should have story value that will make the picture interesting and important. The significance of the event is what will determine newsworthiness.

What makes a good art photograph?

Former curator of the New York Museum of Modern Art, John Szarkowski, stated that there were five elements that helped to create photographic art:

1 **The thing itself.** Photography represents some connection with reality. Therefore, the thing itself being photographed should have meaning and relevant surroundings.
2 **The detail.** The photograph needs to capture the 'essential truth' within the object. This may be an emotional element or some aspect of the action.
3 **The frame.** The frame is a means of concentrating the audience's attention and helps to determine the composition of the photograph.
4 **Time.** A photograph describes a particular, unique moment.
5 **Vantage point.** Different positions of the camera create different impressions of the subject and may even have different lighting.



Charlie J Ercilla/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 9.23 Cindy Sherman's Untitled #96 is part of a long series of untitled photographs she took between 1977 and 1980. This photograph is believed to be the sixth most expensive art photograph in the world, selling for $AUD4.3 million in 2011.

What makes a good sports photograph?

Sports photographs pose some special challenges for the photographer. Like news photographs, the good shots depend on timing. Eight hours of cricket may grind along at a snail's pace and then, in an instant, make headlines. Sports photos give both information and entertainment. For the armchair critic, they can provide clues about the game and result. For

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everyone, they can capture the excitement of an impressive effort.

There are said to be two great 'decisive moments' that feature strongly in sports photography:

1 **The moment of suspense.** These shots freeze the players just before the spectacular peak is reached. They are most effective when there is opposition to the anticipated action and the audience is in suspense as to who will win.
2 **The moment of climax.** This photograph depicts the moment that is probably most satisfying to players and fans alike. The climax is the conclusion of the action into a score.


dotshock/Shutterstock.com

Figure 9.24 The moment of suspense in a game of basketball. These shots are most effective when there is anticipated action and opposition from other players.

MAP SYLLABUS

New media as a medium

In the digital age, new media refers to the various digital technologies, platforms, forms and practices that have emerged and become dominant in the era of widespread computing and software architecture. Examples of new media include websites, streaming sites, mobile apps, social media platforms, digital video and audio productions, video games, virtual and augmented reality experiences, and generative art and design.

The term 'new media' may be thought of in a couple of different ways:

- **Emerging new forms of media that are introduced as technologies evolve.** These new media may come out of existing technologies, but will have different properties and potentials. They will have the potential to change the 'media landscape'. Under this definition, new media can be seen as a continual process of invention and evolution. There will always be new media.
- **Media produced and distributed using binary code.** New media are the computer-based media of the 21st century. This second definition is more commonly used in discussions about media, but it is less easily described. New media are digital and not analogue.

Key features of new media

New media have all or some of the following characteristics (the list has been added to and adapted from one by Professor Martin Lister and associates at the University of West England):

- **Digitality.** The new media convert information from real-world lived experience into numbers stored on a computer hard drive. This is different from the old analogue systems where lived experience was converted into another real and visible product, such as a videotape. This change means it is now easier to manipulate and alter the data.
- **Interactivity.** New media allow the consumer to interact with the product to make certain choices. This produces a change in the way the audience behaves – for instance, viewers may become users.
- **Hypertext.** The Greek word *hyper* means 'above' or 'outside'. Hypertext is therefore a system of links to other texts outside the first text. Hypertext in new media differs from the linear style of storytelling by allowing people to jump around from text to text and within a text.
- **Dispersal.** Traditional media are very expensive to set up. For instance, a television station costs many millions to establish. Computers have created new media forms that are much cheaper to participate in. New media allow widely dispersed many-to-many communication.
- **Shared.** New media involve user participation and encourage user-generated content. This allows wider involvement in the production processes.

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- **Social.** New media allow groups of people with shared interests to collaborate.
- **Virtuality.** New media have created electronic 'places' and 'spaces'. In these virtual worlds, people can immerse themselves in two opposing experiences. Using digital new media, they can either simulate reality or generate fantasy.
- **Global and local.** New media provide instant communication across vast distances, but also make it easier to socialise and communicate with friends locally.
- **Everywhere at once.** New media are embedded in everyday objects and in our daily lives in such a way that media forms are merging into one another.

Software itself is actually the medium

The term 'software' encompasses the various digital means through which new media is created, distributed and consumed, including the ways in which users interact and participate with new media. Software has become the primary means for consuming virtually all media types today. Without software, there is no new media.

Digital culture theorist Lev Manovich suggests we have entered an era in which 'there is *only* software'. All forms of media have become part of this context of production. Software is not a transparent medium, but visibly shapes 21st-century media aesthetics, creative techniques, distribution and modes. Software tools exert a comprehensive influence in mediating between producers, content and consumers. This represents a significant shift in how a medium is defined – not just as the physical or digital infrastructure, but as a mutating form subject to change.

As technology evolves, so do the ways we consume. For example, in Adobe Photoshop, the creative possibilities are defined by the software's tools, which can change at the company's wish. Media becomes underpinned by the evolution of technologies, highlighting significant implications across multiple areas of media and culture.

Users now rely on software code to engage or interact with media. Traditionally, different mediums, such as photography, film, print and painting, defined their creative possibilities by their specific physicality. Now, media is created, edited and accessed through the codes and aesthetics of software so the specific physical materials (film stock, ink, photographic paper, etc.) have been replaced by a common digital base underlay: digital files.



marleyPug/Shutterstock.com

Figure 9.25 An original 2007 Apple iPhone. Digitisation is what set the Apple iPhone apart from its competitors. The iPhone dispensed with the physical keyboard, and transitioned this functionality into digital software.

What are the characteristics of software?

Key characteristics of software in this context include:

- **Softwarisation.** New media are created, edited and accessed primarily through software interfaces rather than through dedicated physical devices or machines.
- **Digitisation.** New media are composed of digital software code, which makes the content programmable, modular and mutable in ways not possible with analogue media (see Figure 9.25).
- **Convergence.** Software tools and techniques allow for the blending and remixing of previously distinct media types (text, images, video, audio, 3D graphics, etc.) into new hybrid forms. The concept of new media can be extended in new directions.
- **Interactivity.** Software enables users to interact with, customise and contribute to media content, blurring the lines between producers and consumers.
- **Networkability.** Software can be easily shared, linked and distributed across digital networks, enabling new forms of social interaction and collaboration across the media ecosystem.

Platform aesthetics

Platform aesthetics describes the stylistic systems and elements that have developed in relation to the rise of new media and the broader phenomenon of platformisation. The dominance of platformisation has transformed the economy and infrastructure of media industries, leading to new forms such as multidimensional products that are optimised to move fluidly through markets created by platforms.

Resource
Platform aesthetics in a social media context

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9.3 ACTIVITIES

FILM

1 Determine some of the characteristics of a film audience by conducting a simple survey. Ask classmates, teachers and family members how often they have been to the cinema within the past month. Collate the responses according to age groups using the following categories: 0–14 years; 15–24 years; 25–34 years; 35–44 years; and 45 years and over. **Analyse** the results, examining the findings in each category. **Interpret** the results to produce a profile of the typical film-goer in the category. **Consider** any trends you can see developing.

2 Some see film as a transitional technology, halfway between live theatre and virtual-reality entertainment. Discuss this idea. **Describe** how this idea could work, **identifying** the elements of each and **recognising** the particular qualities that are evident in both film and either theatre or virtual reality. **Evaluate** the worth of the suggestion that the film medium will ultimately be replaced by high-tech screen entertainment.

TELEVISION

3 The television set no longer gets the undivided attention of its viewers. Research has shown a remarkable range of viewer activities while the television set is on. Observe your family for an evening. What other activities do they engage in while viewing? Alternatively, what is the range of things you do while watching television. Do your habits differ according to whether you are with family or friends? **Describe** your findings, **providing additional information** about the activities engaged in and giving some examples to illustrate the activities.

4 Television is like folklore – it allows people to belong to a group. **Evaluate** what you watch on television against the criterion that it confirms your membership of a particular group.

AUDIO MEDIUM (RADIO AND PODCASTS)

5 In class as a group, listen to a podcast for a few minutes on any topic. Write down the images that occur to you as you listen. **Describe** your impressions to other class members. **Describe** the similarities and differences between other classmates and what they imagined.

PHOTOGRAPHY

6 **Create** a list of the top 10 photographs of the 21st century. Copy them and underneath describe why you believe the image is important to the history of this century.

7 The photos that accompany political stories are difficult to make interesting and photographers often resort to mug shots. **Create** a collection of five photographs of politicians that have interesting contexts or backgrounds. **Evaluate** the degree to which the context or background adds meaning to the image.

8 **Evaluate** a news photograph using the three criteria suggested by Harold Evans.

ANIMATION

9 Symbols and metaphor are used widely in animations and cartoons. **Describe** two of the common ones that seem to appear regularly.

10 Collect some sequences showing metamorphosis in animation. **Evaluate** them according to their ability to convince the audience and the smoothness of the transition. **Evaluate** whether the 'morph' seems to obey basic laws of physics and nature, even if it is unrealistic.

11 Compare an animation background to a similar one in a movie. Examples could include landscape or cityscape backgrounds. **Describe** the level of detail you can see in the movie versus the animation.

NEW MEDIA

12 **Create** a list of changes in the past five years to a piece of famous software, such as Adobe Premiere. **Describe** how these have changed the creative process.

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Film, Television & New Media – Unit 2

Areas of study in Chapters 10–12 and unit question addressed:

STORIES

LANGUAGES
How do signs and symbols, codes and conventions create meaning?

AUDIENCES
How does the relationship between stories and meaning change in different audience contexts?

LANGUAGES
How are media languages used to construct stories?

Media Arts in Practice

Topics in Chapters 10–12:

MEDIA ARTS PRACTICES

Media language:
- Elements and principles of design
- Style
- Symbols

Modes:
- Design products (Pre-production)
- Media artworks (Production)

Media technologies:
- Hardware
- Software

Media techniques:
- Scripting style and interview
- Soundtrack creation, voice tone
- Light manipulation
- Narrative sequencing and components
- Visual polish or realism
- Format purpose

PLAN MEDIA ARTWORKS

Analyse purpose and context

Solutions and strategy to achieve goals

COMMUNICATE IDEAS

Suit **purpose and context** in **pre-production** and **production**

Media language to communicate ideas (Representations, thoughts, feelings, experiences, observations)

EVALUATE MEDIA ARTWORKS

Written, spoken or signed responding using media arts terminology

Judgements on plannning, reflecting on strengths, limitations, implications of media artworks and ideas

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10 Audiences and moving-image media stories

ABOUT AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

There are many touching stories from the early days of cinema when **audiences** saw their first film narratives. Legend has it that patrons ran from the theatre or dived under their seats the first time they saw a train come towards them in the Lumière brothers' film *L'arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat* (1895). When a bandit fired a gun directly at the audience in *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), the audience literally tried to dodge the bullet. And in the memoirs of the silent film actress Lillian Gish, she tells of what happened when old soldiers from the American Civil War first saw the battle scenes in DW Griffith's film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915): 'Their sobs shook the seats.'

It's probably true that audiences are more hardened and skilled at viewing films these days. But the howls of protest on those rare occasions when the projector breaks down, or when Netflix starts buffering mid-episode, prove that the power of narrative has not diminished in the past 100 years.



Everett Collection/Shutterstock.com

Figure 10.1 Early audience for a silent film. There are many stories in cinema history of the innocent reactions of these first-time viewers. Modern audiences are more hardened and skilled than the audiences for the first cinema narratives. However, the power of story remains just as strong. Some academics argue that story is an essential aspect of human thinking.

Taking pleasure in the text

Would you list 'watching movies or television shows' as one of your hobbies? Why do so many people in modern society spend so much time with the media and its stories? Most would just simply say they enjoy it so much. Enjoyment or pleasure is possibly the main motivator for media use. Movies, television shows and other narratives are fun and make people happy, with even sad stories allowing people to feel uplifted in some way.

Weblink
Screen Australia: fact finder

Benefits of engaging with narratives

No one has had to be taught to enjoy narratives, so even very young children are immediately fascinated by stories. Some academics argue that stories are actually the natural way that humans think. According to this theory, stories were always essential to human existence and survival, so we should not be surprised that modern audiences need them as much as cave dwellers did. The following are some possible benefits of engaging with narratives.

- **Escape from the self.** Entering a fictional world allows you to take on the lives and experiences of other people. To do this, you must detach from your own reality and enter the world of the story. The intensity with which you focus on the story allows you to forget about yourself. You lose self-consciousness.
- **Safe peril.** Modern audiences enjoy horror movies in the same way that audiences thousands of years ago enjoyed stories of great peril and suffering. All good stories have an ending, and this allows the audience members to safely return to their real-life existences (Figure 10.2).

- **Extraordinary events.** Life for most people is safe and ordinary but, in a story, an individual can experience intense emotions and life-and-death situations. Film stories are condensed or exaggerated versions of reality with an unusually high concentration of emotional stimuli.
- **Guiding behaviours.** Audiences learn from stories. The fate of a character can show what can happen in real life, or the solutions that a character finds in a story can provide suggestions about how to solve your own problems.
- **Emotional or physical resilience.** A romance movie may help audiences deal with their own sense of loss, or an action movie may prompt an individual to start their own training program. Watching other people overcome difficulties and survive can supply us with the resources to do the same ourselves.
- **Identity play.** Entering a story world allows us to try on different identities. We can temporarily take on the lives of others.
- **Social values and beliefs.** Stories contain values and beliefs, but engaging in pleasurable narratives is thought to decrease the awareness of the presence of these values. Deep involvement with stories reduces counter-arguing – arguing against some of the values and beliefs in the story. If a reader continually consumes the same type of stories, this may increase the likelihood that they will take on the values of those stories.



Dmitrijs Bindemanis/Shutterstock.com

Figure 10.2 One of the pleasures of engaging in stories is to place yourself in 'safe peril'. Within the story world, we can experience great danger. If all turns out well for the character, then we can enjoy their triumph. If it doesn't, we are still safe, even if they aren't.

The process of engaging with narrative texts

Audiences are thought to respond to media narratives on two levels:

1 **Emotional responses.** Audience members can feel the emotional plight that the characters are in. They may have sympathy or empathy towards them. At the end of the story, they may be in a better mood themselves because they have enjoyed the experience.
2 **Intellectual judgements**. Audiences also make judgements about the narrative and assess the actions of the characters.

Engagement happens via belief or confidence in the story world. After that, engagement happens through the processes of transportation, identification, immersion in realism and a sense of presence.

Belief in the story world

Belief is a voluntary contract the audience enters into with the maker of the story. A modern film, for example, provides all the assistance anyone could want, with believable actors, surround sound and realistic special effects. In return, the audience agrees to go along with the story and enter into the world of the film.

When the suspense becomes too much, or the fear becomes overwhelming, people remind themselves of the contract they entered into. 'It's only a film,' they say, or, 'Everything will be all right. The main character never dies – even in horror movies.'

Traditionally, the process of believing in the world of the story was thought to be through the active suspension of disbelief. Some modern

> 'A media viewer doesn't have to take the risk of changing jobs, spouses or locales to experience another kind of life, but rather can vicariously experience such alternative life choices through the lives of the characters who inhabit the [story] worlds.'
>
> Melanie Green, Timothy Brock, Geoff Kaufman

analysts are now arguing that, instead, we actively create belief.

- **Suspension of disbelief.** Believing in the world of the story, no matter how fanciful, requires what is traditionally called suspension of disbelief. From our earliest years, we will happily settle down to listen when we hear: 'Once upon a time …' Few children will ever question that a frog could turn into a prince with just a kiss, but they also know not to try it in the real world.

  Everyone suspends disbelief when they view a film or television story. Adults know that the police rarely arrive 30 seconds after a fight breaks out. And even primary school children know that few life forms, let alone large amphibious monsters, could have survived in the black lagoon. But for the sake of the story, everyone puts aside these concerns from the real world.
- **Creation of belief.** Other analysts argue that we begin with default belief, not disbelief. Audiences enter a story wanting to believe. According to this view, audiences tend to believe whatever they are told. Information from within the story is accepted as true and can only be 'unaccepted' with a great deal of difficulty.

Transportation

Transportation is the process by which a viewer becomes 'lost' in a story. The audience member loses focus on the actual world and turns their full attention to the world of the story. They become unaware of the passage of real time. By the time they return from the story, they are somehow changed by the experience. You might have experienced it most deeply when you go to the movies in the daytime. You get immersed in the story and then are disoriented when you come out of the cinema and it is night-time. You probably went through transportation into the narrative in three stages:

1 devoting almost full attention to the narrative stimulus
2 perceiving experience from a point within the story world
3 losing consciousness of the outside world.

A scale to measure the degree of transportation into a narrative has been developed by Green and Brock (see page 149).

Identification with characters

Once audience members enter the story world, they need to locate themselves within a character. This is usually the person from whose point of view the story is told (the protagonist – see Chapter 6). Adopting the point of view of a character is called **identification**.

Identification happens when audience members lose awareness of the world around them, and instead enter into a close connection with a particular character. Identification is similar to being in someone else's shoes and seeing the world through their eyes (Figure 10.3).

The way the text is constructed encourages us to identify with characters. For instance, the camera can encourage us to see the world through a character's eyes. This can be done even if they are not the protagonist nor even a very likeable character. In *Psycho* (1960), the audience identifies with Norman Bates when he pushes the car containing the body into a swamp. We feel his panic when the car starts to sink but momentarily stops; like Norman, we want the car to sink.



Regency Enterprises/Kobal/Shutterstock.com

Figure 10.3 Solomon Northup, aka Platt (Chiwetel Ejiofor), is released after being sold into slavery in *12 Years a Slave* (2013). When the audience enters the story world, they locate themselves by identifying with a character. Identification happens when audience members start to see the world from the point of view of the character.

Realism

If the audience thinks that a story is realistic, they are more likely to be transported into it. The judgements that the audience makes about **realism** are related to their enjoyment of the story. These judgements fall into two basic categories:

1 **Real-world or external reality.** Audiences make judgements about external reality based on comparisons they make between the story world and the laws and rules of the real world.
2 **Narrative or internal reality.** Audiences also make judgements about the elements within a story and whether or not they are consistent and

believable. The story has to have its own logic. It must take place within a coherent world. The motivations of the characters must be believable.

Audiences can accept stories that do not have complete real world or external reality, as long as the internal reality is very strong. For example, science-fiction movies involving time travel do not have external reality; however, this genre allows for a break from external reality (Figure 10.4).



ScreenProd/Photononstop/ Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 10.4 Yoda in *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith* (2005). In a *Star Wars* movie, no one would expect a character to use handguns instead of light sabers. Even though handguns have real-world or external reality, they do not have narrative or internal reality; handguns would not be consistent with the story world.

Presence

Presence is the sense of 'being there' in the story. The term is commonly used in virtual reality (VR) and in video games, where the user actively participates in events. Some human–computer interactions can create experiences that are almost like those in real life. Users tend to forget the medium itself and just focus on the experience – they are no longer aware they are in VR or a video game.

In a story, the sense of presence is created by transportation and identification with the perspectives of the characters.

10.1 ACTIVITIES

1 **Create** a list of the benefits that audiences receive by engaging with narratives, and then **create** a parallel list of television shows, movies or games that provide this benefit. **Describe** the reasons why you have **identified** particular narratives to match the benefits, **giving additional information** that demonstrates you understand the connections.

2 In pairs, discuss occasions when you have found yourself actively refusing to suspend disbelief. These could be occasions when you told yourself, 'It's okay, it's only a movie', or they could be occasions when you were unable to get into the story right from the start. **Describe** the situations to your partner, providing them with some **examples** as well as **clarifying** some of the reasons why you think your disbelief could not be suspended.

3 How transported were you in the last film or television program you viewed? Answer the questions from Green and Brock's transportation scale, which can be accessed via the weblink. Place your response to each question on the scale from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much). **Describe** the details of your survey findings, beginning with the survey concept and then giving some **additional information** about the text and yourself as a viewer. **Analyse** the results, **examining** each **constituent part** of the questionnaire and collating the results into a quantitative (numerical/percentage) finding. **Evaluate** the role of transportation in a narrative, **drawing conclusions** about its significance as a factor for audiences in the enjoyment of a story. **Discuss** your responses with other class members who may have viewed the same text. **Report** your findings back to the class as a whole.

4 **Evaluate** the degree to which you have found realism in the story or a character in a film, television show or game, **systematically examining** your reactions to the following text characteristics (which have been developed by Green and Brock):
- plausibility or believability
- realism or 'factuality'
- connection to real-life experience of yourself or others.

Make a judgement about the worth to you of each. **Describe** your findings, giving reasons that **clarify** your decisions.

Weblink
Green and Brock's transportation scale

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5 Select a film, television show or game in which you have really liked the main character.
Analyse your identification with that character by examining your responses to the following questions (which have been developed by Green and Brock).
- Did you understand why the character did what they did?
- Did you feel any of their emotions?
- Did you feel you were inside their head?
- Did you want them to succeed?

Make a judgement about the **strengths and limitations** of that character in evoking identification in the audience.

AUDIENCE EXPECTATION

How do you choose the movies you will see? You don't just pick titles randomly – you must have some idea of what you are wanting to see, even though you aren't really familiar with the stories. There must be signals and clues that come with the film to allow you to develop expectations about what you will see.

Audience expectations are the beliefs audiences have about a future media experience. Expectations of a story are based on feelings of looking forward to the narrative in advance. These expectations are based on a number of factors: codes and conventions of genre, narrative image, stars and word of mouth.

Factors influencing audience expectations

Codes and conventions of genre

Can you tell the genre of a movie just by looking at its poster? Certainly you can from the trailer. Filmmakers have to make their movies accessible to the audience. One of the ways to do this is to build on audience expectations of genre. Audience knowledge about genre has been built up through hundreds of previous experiences. Tapping into these experiences allows filmmakers to build their audience.

If audience members have prior knowledge of a genre, they will enjoy a new text more deeply because they are familiar with its genre. Innovations and differences in the new text will then be gratifying for the audience because of the novelty. The overall enjoyment of the story comes from the relationship between the audience's expectations and the new text's treatment of them.

Expectations about genres are related to the frequency with which they are seen. For instance, if you see a lot of horror movies, you will have quite well-defined expectations of that genre – however, you may have very poorly defined expectations of romantic comedy. A lack of expectations about a genre can also lead to a prejudiced view of it. When producers speak of a film 'finding its audience', they often mean that the film is appealing to a group of people who are familiar with its conventions. This audience will recognise its appeal and come to it with strong expectations.

Narrative image

According to television and film theorist John Ellis, the creation in their minds of a narrative image is a key aspect of audience expectations. 'Payment for a ticket is not an endorsement of a film. It is an endorsement of the narrative image of the film, together with the general sense of the cinematic experience,' he states.

- **Narrative image.** This is an expression of what people think the film or media narrative is like prior to seeing it. Narrative image is rather like brand image. It is a publicly circulating



Barry King/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 10.5 A 2024 poster for the television series *The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live* (2010–). Audiences approach the show with genre expectations based on past experience with the zombie genre. Many critics have commented that *The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live* brings a fresh approach to the conventions of the genre.

'Stars have a similar function in the film industry to the creation of a narrative image: they provide a foreknowledge of the fiction, an invitation to cinema.'

John Ellis, former TV producer and now Professor of Media Arts, University of London

idea about the story. Audiences gain an idea of the narrative image of a story, and this helps them make a decision about whether to see it or not. The narrative image of the film is not a summary of the film or its storyline – it is a tantalising promise of what the film may deliver. The narrative image of a media text is a kind of bait for audiences. It creates in the minds of the audience a desire to know more. It builds audience expectations.

- **Narrative enigma.** This is the mystery of the story. It is the question of what happens. The narrative enigma is a key part of enticing the audience to see a film or television program. Solving the riddle of the narrative enigma is one aspect of audience expectations. Film trailers are carefully constructed to maintain the narrative enigma so that audiences feel they must see the film. The enigma is the reason you never see the ending of the film in the trailer.



neftali/Shutterstock.com

Figure 10.6 A stamp featuring John Wayne and the name of the Western movie that made him a star – *Stagecoach* (1939). John Wayne, the actor, stood for an idealised version of American manhood from the 1940s until the 1960s. In this sense, he also operated as a semiotic sign. Whenever he played a role, he filled that character with his own meanings as a star.

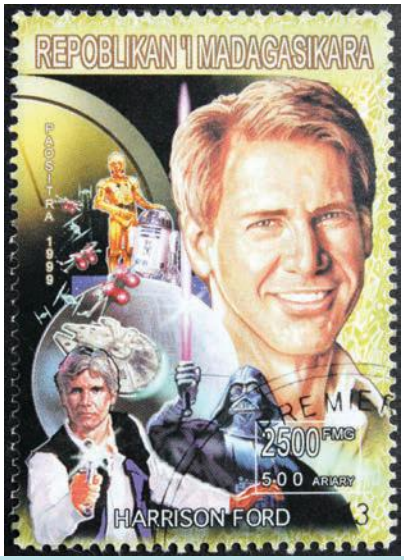
Stars

If one of your favourite stars is in a movie that is just opening, are you more likely to go and see it? **Stars** are important in most people's choice of movie. Therefore, stars are an important part of audience expectations.

John Ellis defines a star as 'a performer in a particular medium whose figure enters into subsidiary forms of circulation, and then feeds back into future performances'. The creation of a star relies on their appearance in other forms of media. If nothing is discussed about them in other media, they are not a star. The image they develop in other media, as their fame spreads, then feeds back into future movie roles.

Stars as signs

Well-known stars operate like signs in a semiotic sense – they stand for something much larger than themselves. Often, stars have a desired characteristic or a manner of behaviour that society admires.



123rf/gors4730

Figure 10.7 Actor and film producer Harrison Ford portrayed on a postage stamp from Madagascar. The stamp depicts aspects of Ford's star image: previous screen roles, the person himself and his awards.

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Usually the star has this characteristic to some degree, but audiences also bestow it upon them. This characteristic is as much a representation of the audience's yearnings as it is an aspect of the stars themselves.

John Wayne, an actor in many classic Westerns, is an example of a star that stands for something much larger than himself. As well as being himself, with all his own very human failings, he came to represent an ideal of American manhood in the 1940s through to the 1960s. He appeared to be a tough, pioneering man with a keen eye for justice. He could shoot, ride horses and do all of those essentially 'manly things'. This was performed for an audience whose own reality was very different – they were often office-bound and suburban. When John Wayne appeared in a film, he brought his special meanings as a sign to his roles, thus adding more to these characters than was written in the script.

A star's image is made up of a combination of factors:

- previous screen roles
- publicity in mainstream media, fan magazines and social media
- personal appearances, speeches, gossip and so on
- the real person.

A star does much more than simply step into the place of a character in the script. The star fills out the character and brings along their own image to add meaning to the role. Casting actors thus becomes an important part of characterisation.

10.2 ACTIVITIES

1. Select some movies that are currently playing and, in pairs, discuss which ones you would like to see. **Justify** to each other why you made these choices and what expectations you have, recognising the **qualities** and **characteristics** of the films that have created interest in you as an audience member. **Create** a list of what you already know about these movies, and where you found out about them. Present the findings from your discussion to the class.
2. Select some films you have not seen. **Describe** how you see their narrative images and their narrative enigmas as you understand them to be. **Identify** what it is the movie seems to promise. **Identify** what information is withheld from the potential audience. Now form a pair with someone who has seen the movie. Discuss whether your description of the narrative image matches the film.
3. Look at the depiction of 'star image' in Figure 10.7. Select some of your favourite stars. **Design** their star image in a similar way in a poster, identifying and depicting the important aspects of their image. Your design should represent some or all of the following:
   - the star as a character in one of their key movies
   - the star as a sign
   - the star as a person
   - aspects of their public image or celebrity status
   - awards
   - contribution to the industry.

Weblink
Subliminal messages in film

AUDIENCES AND DIFFERENT PLATFORMS AND CONTEXTS OF RECEPTION

When *Psycho* (1960) was first released, a cardboard cut-out of Alfred Hitchcock pointing at his watch was placed in the lobby of all the cinemas (Figure 10.8). No one would be allowed to enter the cinema once the film had started. Hitchcock was, of course, trying to control the conditions of reception. He wanted to build a strong sense of anticipation and fear in the audience, even before they saw the movie.

The **contexts** of reception and consumption are the surrounding circumstances in which a media text is consumed (Figure 10.9). The context includes the following:

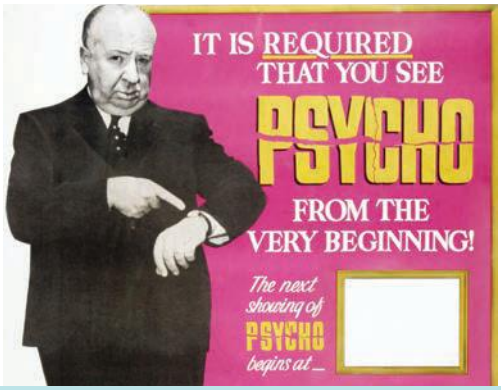
- **Surrounding environment.** The space chosen to consume the text can influence its reception. For instance, the formal space of a darkened cinema offers a different experience from that offered by the informal environment

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of a family lounge room or a teenager's bedroom.

- **The technology used.** The kind of experience a media text can offer depends on the technology used to present it. For example, the experience of watching a movie in an IMAX cinema is quite different from that of watching a movie on a small screen on the back of a seat on an aircraft.
- **The time of day.** Media texts are often designed to be consumed at certain times of the day. For instance, free-to-air prime-time television takes place within the context of the period during and just after the evening meal.
- **Background knowledge of the audience.** Part of the context of reception is also carried within the minds of the audience. What they perceive of the narrative image and narrative enigma can determine their state of mind when they consume the text.
- **Audience experience and empathy.** The life histories and recent experiences of the audience can affect the way they interpret a film.

For example, an audience member who has recently gone through a relationship break-up will view a romantic comedy differently from the way someone in a happy relationship will view it. An audience member who has empathy (can put themselves in someone else's shoes) is likely to have a different response from one who cannot empathise.



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 10.8 A theatre lobby standee (self-supporting cardboard display) placed in all cinemas showing *Psycho*. Hitchcock went to great lengths to control the conditions of reception for *Psycho*. Around the US, he purchased as many copies of the original book as he could so that no one would be able to read the ending. He closed the doors of the cinemas just before the film started so that no one could enter. This prevented disruption, and also led to a greater sense of anticipation.

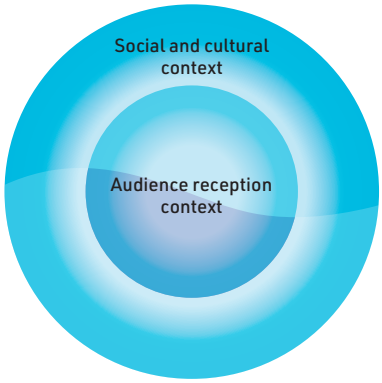


Figure 10.9 A media text does not exist in a vacuum. It is consumed in a reception context, which exists within a wider social and cultural context. Meaning arises out of a combination of the text and its surrounding contexts.

Platform and context

Formal cinema contexts

Movie theatres were once so highly decorated they were called picture palaces (Figure 10.10). They were built in lavish style to resemble the grand



Courtesy Empire Theatre



Courtesy Empire Theatre

Figure 10.10 The Empire Theatre, Toowoomba, was built as a movie theatre and showed films until 1971. The movie theatre was originally part-owned by EJ Carroll, who later founded the cinema chain Birch, Carroll & Coyle. Before the arrival of television in Australia in the 1950s, and the arrival of the multiplex in the 1970s, movie theatres commonly presented themselves as 'picture palaces'. This sense of luxury promoted movie-going as a special event. Viewing a film in this context was a heightened audience experience.

luxury theatres of London or Vienna. Many even had first- and second-class sections, and special viewing balconies with ornate decorative features. Heavy brocade curtains reinforced the feeling that watching a movie was a great event. Of course, like a Hollywood film set, much of this ornate decoration was one-dimensional and fake, made from plywood, plaster and chicken wire.

Even today, the multiplex cinema is well appointed. Seeing a movie is still a bit of an occasion. Ceremonial food (popcorn, soft drinks and choc-tops) accompanies the event. There are lots of little touches inside the cinema that also add to the sense of special occasion. The traditional curtains are just one of those.

The effects of a cinema context can be assumed to include the following, allowing for individual exceptions:

- increased transportation into the narrative (see page 148)
- increased identification (see page 148)
- increased presence (see page 149).

Some theorists have argued that the intensity of the cinema experience can reduce the distance between imaginary representations and actual perception. The reasons for the enhanced experience of the narrative include the following:

- **Total attention.** Being surrounded by almost complete darkness heightens the attention an audience can give to a film. The level of involvement that the cinema offers can be intense.
- **Voyeurism.** Some film analysts have described the cinema experience as being like a Peeping Tom or voyeur. The voyeuristic aspect of the cinema is the sensation of sitting in a darkened theatre looking at a lighted screen that 'secretly' allows entry into the world of other people. These people never acknowledge the audience and appear unaware that the audience is even there. The use of this term in cinema studies is not meant to suggest that audiences are 'perverts'. Instead, it is used to show that we are viewing aspects of people's lives that we would not ordinarily have permission to see.
- **Larger-than-life effect.** Cinema screens are huge: at least 9 metres by 21 metres. IMAX screens can be as large as 20 metres by 26 metres. A face in close-up is many times its normal size. Cinema sound quality can be equally overwhelming.
- **Social experience.** The cinema is unique among modern media experiences in that it is always social (except for those extremely rare occasions when you might be the only person in the cinema).

The drive-in cinema

Drive-in cinemas were popular in Australia from the 1950s until the late 1970s, especially in country areas. Today in Queensland, there are very few drive-in cinemas. Reasons for the decline include:

- decline in whole-family attendance at the movies
- rise in real-estate prices, making large land areas unaffordable
- increased availability of VCR and DVD rentals, and then video-streaming services
- daylight saving causing later start times (in southern states).

The drive-in cinema offers an experience that is between the private context of television and the formal, social experience of the cinema. The privacy of the car allows for companionable family viewing. It also allows dating couples to be alone together. Yet, merely the fact of being out and the size of the screen create a sense of occasion.



Courtesy Five Star Cinemas

Figure 10.11 Special viewings, where people come in classic cars and rockabilly costumes, are regularly held at the Yatala Drive-In, (between Brisbane and the Gold Coast).

Television

Television is most associated with domestic and family life. Television is a constant presence in living rooms and bedrooms. Television is viewed within the context of domestic routines, such as meal preparation and household chores (Figure 10.12).

It can also be a site for negotiating family relations, as arguments develop over which programs are watched, or even who holds the remote control.

The effects of a television context can be assumed to include the following, allowing for individual exceptions:

- incomplete transportation into the narrative
- moment-by-moment identification, depending on other activities
- distracted presence.

Features of the reception context of television include the following:

- **Distracted attention.** The domestic surroundings of television mean that the viewer often experiences distraction. This can simply be the visual distraction of the (usually partially lit) room, or it can be the distraction of conversation and other activity.
- **Smaller than life.** The activity around the television set can often appear larger than the screen itself. People themselves may take up more physical space as they walk past the screen going about their ordinary activities.
- **Channel context.** The same program can feel different if it is viewed on different channels. One obvious difference is the intrusion of ads on commercial stations. There are also subtle brand differences and target audience differences between the stations. These can alter the viewing context.



Maskot/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 10.12 Television (and other small-screen devices) is characterised by a distracted reception context. People are often engaged in routine tasks while they watch and their attention is divided.

The mobile phone

The smallest screen of all is the mobile phone. The mobile phone is often called the fourth screen, after cinema, television and computer screens.

The effects of a mobile phone context (Figure 10.13) can be assumed to include the following, allowing for individual exceptions:

- 'snacking' style transportation into the narrative
- limited identification
- limited presence.



Rawf8/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 10.13 The viewing context of the tablet or mobile phone creates 'snacking' style viewing that lasts only a few minutes. Transportation is distracted, and identification and presence are limited. However, the so-called 'fourth screen' offers constant personal availability.

Digital games

Originally, video games suffered from limitations in technology. The gaming aesthetic, in its original design, was of a pixelated appearance. The gaming environments of *The Legend of Zelda, Mario Bros.*, *Pac-Man, Prince of Persia* and *Gauntlet* all carried a simplicity akin to Saturday morning cartoons. Even the narratives were simple. Thus, early video games were perceived as a culturally immature medium. Cinematic literacy is the new currency of contemporary gaming, transforming the medium into art. Games can now offer viewers the same visual clarity as the cinema screen while delivering an equally engaging experience.

Actors perform character roles in motion-capture suits to provide more realism in gaming environments. Composers write symphony musical scores, complete with character motifs. However, the shift in dynamics from medium to art form can also be linked to other new emphases.

Viewer engagement is much more complex and active since the game controller places gamers in the heart of action. However, experiencing the environment of a video game can be so powerful that games can be said to have a psychological effect on viewers. Video games are cleverly designed now

to manipulate experience in the viewer. Narratives produce situations that offer increasing but manageable levels of difficulty, and players derive satisfaction from solving the problems offered in the narrative.

The video game experience for the audience includes the following:

- immersion
- identification in some narrative-based games and first-person shooters
- kinaesthetic involvement
- strong presence.

Audience background as context

Certain aspects of the audience can influence the reception that a media text gets. These can include the background knowledge of the audience members, and the personal experiences and empathy of the audience members.

Audience background knowledge

Now that you're older, have you watched *The Simpsons* (1989–) and understood its layers of meaning much better than you did as a child? This is a reception context change based on audience background knowledge. Audience background knowledge consists of several factors, including the following:

- **Knowledge of culture.** If you have a good knowledge of other movies, television programs and books, you will be able to take in more of the meaning in a text. This is especially true in a text with a lot of intertextuality, such as *The Simpsons*.
- **Intertextuality.** (see page 250) This is one way that *The Simpsons* uses audience background knowledge to enhance meaning. Intertextuality can be thought of as the textual equivalent of cross-referencing. It refers to the ways in which any one text is woven into the whole culture and operates as a link to many other texts. It is also a reading practice carried out by audiences. The ability of the audience to use their familiarity with other texts is a skill built up as cultural knowledge develops. By drawing on references to other texts, audiences are able to derive more complex and enjoyable meanings.
- **Knowledge of the codes and conventions of media texts within your own culture.** This is another important aspect of background knowledge and explains why it is sometimes difficult to understand many of the meanings in films from foreign cultures (Figure 10.15).



Featureflash Photo Agency/Shutterstock.com

Figure 10.14 Can-can dancers from the Paris Folies Bergère at the premiere of the Baz Luhrmann film *Moulin Rouge!* (2001). Popular songs from a number of different eras have been included in the soundtrack of this musical. When the audience hears them, their background knowledge, memories and associations are triggered.

- **Knowledge of history, politics, etc.** The more general knowledge you have, the more you are able to make sense of a range of media texts.
- **Knowledge of an event or setting.** A film set somewhere you know well will 'click' or resonate with you in a special way. The same thing applies if you are familiar with or were involved in a particular event. For example, *Animal Kingdom* (2010) is based on real events in Melbourne in the late 1980s: the so-called Walsh Street murders. Audience members who were in Melbourne at the time will remember those events. This will affect their expectations of the storyline, their identification with the characters and their overall reception of the movie.



ZUMA Press, Inc./Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 10.15 Different national cinemas have different codes and conventions. Unless you have the background knowledge, your reception of foreign films may be minimal. For instance, a musical segment appears in almost all Bollywood films irrespective of the genre. Even action or crime genres can have musical breaks.

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Audience experience and empathy

Have you ever wondered why some people cry during sad movies, while others remain totally unmoved? There are a host of reasons why this could happen, including:

- cultural freedom to express emotion
- varying degrees of transportation
- different degrees of identification
- different experiences, capacities and types of empathy.

Audience experience

Everyone comes to a film or television program with their own set of life experiences and a unique life history. The reception of the narrative depends on recent as well as long-term experience.

Audience empathy

If you feel you can 'walk a mile in another's shoes', then you have empathy. Empathy is different from sympathy, which just means being able to feel sorry for someone. Sympathy does not mean putting yourself in another's shoes. Narrative transportation and identification require a degree of empathy. Empathy has four dimensions, according to Professor Mark Davis of Eckerd College, Florida:

1. **Perspective taking.** This is the ability to take on the point of view of another in a film or television program. Perspective taking is an intellectual ability that allows you to see how things would look from another person's perspective.
2. **Fantasy empathy.** Putting yourself into the shoes of a fantasy character is a form of identification. It differs slightly from perspective taking because it requires you to think you *are* that character in the narrative. Fantasy is also an intellectual ability. Some studies have found that people who are high in fantasy empathy ability can have trouble sleeping after seeing disturbing movies.
3. **Empathic concern.** Feeling concern for another's distress is an emotional response. Some studies have shown that viewers high in this kind of empathy are more likely to experience negative emotions when the protagonist in a film undergoes some kind of suffering.
4. **Personal distress.** This is a feeling of distress or discomfort in the presence of another's suffering.

What is not yet clear in narrative research is why people high in empathy can watch sad or terrifying movies and yet rate the experience as enjoyable.

10.3 ACTIVITIES

1. The modern multiplex still tries to make the cinema experience a special one. **Design** a plan of your local multiplex and **represent** on the plan all the features that create a sense of occasion. **Describe** each of them, **clarifying** their likely effect on the audience and **demonstrating** why you think the cinema went to the expense of including them.
2. In pairs, discuss the difference in the experience of viewing the same movie at the cinema and again on your television or computer screen. **Describe** your experiences to each other and **provide examples** to **illustrate** them. Share the outcome of your discussion with the class.
3. Search for the closest drive-in cinema to you. Find out what they offer to enhance the viewing context and make the experience more attractive. Survey the class to find out what they would need to encourage them to go to the drive-in cinema. **Analyse** the results of the class survey or discussion. Consider the information in responses to each individual discussion point. Combine the outcome of these responses and **make a judgement** about the viability of each based on cost effectiveness and audience appeal. **Create** a list of enhancements to the viewing context that the existing owners may not have thought of, and which you believe would attract a larger audience.

WAYS AUDIENCES 'READ' TEXTS

Except for cinema audiences, media audiences are largely invisible and unidentifiable. This makes them different to the audience that might turn up to the theatre or a music concert. People who consume media also rarely identify themselves as part of an audience. They tend to consume alone and in the private spaces of their home or car, not thinking that they are connected to (often) millions of others.

Audiences create meaning

Over many years, we have come to change the way we think about how audiences (or readers) make meaning from texts. The location where meaning is created has

gradually moved down from the producer to the text and now to the consumer.

- **Ancient and medieval times.** Meaning was considered divine and 'set in stone'. Texts such as the Bible were the word of God. As an all-powerful producer, God's writings were unquestioned – the audience just had to work out what the producer meant. The Church claimed it could help them get it right.
- **Modern times.** Meaning was thought of as being in the text itself. A close reading of the text would allow audiences to get the full meaning. It didn't matter too much what the author thought or what other critics might think – the meaning was available in the text if you looked hard enough.
- **Post-modern times.** Today, we consider that the meaning is created by the audience or the reader. In post-modern times, it is accepted that the meaning a person draws from a text is a combination of their own interpretations and shared cultural meanings within the text.

How do audiences 'read' texts?

If meanings are produced by audiences (or readers) and all of them are different, how can anyone know what a text might mean? Theories about audiences or readers suggest that there is much common ground in communication as well. This is because we make our 'readings' from within our culture in which some meanings are shared – for example, in western culture, red means danger. The theories suggest it is possible to take a number of different and even contradictory viewpoints or readings of a text at the same time.



Andrey_Popov/Shutterstock.com

Figure 10.16 A woman watching a movie with a male hero may have to identify with him or put herself in his place. She therefore has to undertake a degree of mental negotiation.

Encoding–3.5 theory

British Cultural Studies theorist Stuart Hall proposed that at least three main audience reading perspectives are possible:

- **Preferred or dominant readings.** These are the readings that are closest to those intended by the producers of the text. If your life experiences and ideas are similar to those expressed in the text, there will be nothing to clash with. For example, if you were a police officer watching a crime drama, you would probably find it easier to arrive at a preferred reading. In reality, however, a complete and exact preferred reading is impossible.
- **Negotiated readings.** These are made when mental negotiations are needed to overcome some disagreement with the text. For example, a woman watching a movie with a male hero has to put herself in his place (Figure 10.16). This takes a degree of mental negotiation. Someone with a recent speeding ticket may enjoy a crime drama, but still experience minor resentment towards police officers. Everyone has to mentally negotiate a reading to some extent.
- **Oppositional or resistant readings.** These are made when the audience member finds their own life experiences are at odds with the views in the text. For example, crime dramas may be read oppositionally in prisons (Figure 10.17). For the inmates, the 'bad guys' could be the 'good guys'. Prisoners might cheer when the criminals get away and boo when the police catch them.



Thinkstock/Getty Images

Figure 10.17 Prisoners watching television in a prison in the US. A crime drama may be read oppositionally in prison, where the police may be seen as the bad guys.

Cinematic stances

When a viewer engages with the screen, they are positioned into a particular kind of cinematic stance or viewing position, says Associate Professor Damian Cox of the University of Queensland. Cinematic stances come from the mental processes the viewer is undertaking. A viewer's engagement with the screen text is complex, and dependent on their cinematic stance at the time. Shifting across the different cinematic stances is quite normal when viewing – this is part of the uniqueness of the viewing experience.

Viewers might suspend disbelief to emotionally invest with story, but moments later will put that aside to think about the camera or an actor. As a result, each viewing event offers a rich set of experiences and understandings. There are four cinematic stances that a viewer might shift across, according to Cox:

1 **Belief–disbelief.** The viewer strikes a balance between an inattention to the fictionality of the screen text and an inattention to disbelief (the movie is not the real world). Viewers are convinced of the reality of the screen text and quarantine the fact that it is nonsense. And yet they don't scream '*Look out!*' to characters on the screen – because they still register that it is fiction.
2 **Phenomenological.** In this stance, viewers see the screen text as a representation of real life experience or phenomena. Viewers may see the film as showing what happened in real life – for example, in a biographical or historical film. Or they may see the life problems it depicts as resembling those faced by themselves or people they know. This creates emotional investment and fascination. In the film *Touching the Void* (2003), for example, music, cinematography and editing combine in particular ways to represent what it is like to feel the hypothermia and dehydration that the main character is feeling. The scenes viewed on the screen are not actual experiences, but they are perceived as being *like* those experiences.
3 **Artefactual.** This is an acknowledgement of the degree to which a film is a construction: in other words, the conscious recognition, on behalf of the viewer, of the practices of editing, cinematography and *mise en scène* that combine in various ways to produce the moving image. In some cases this could involve appraisal, where the viewer spends time attributing value to something like performance, an actor, directing, the composer of the film, etc. In addition, it could involve contemplating other filmic properties, such as colour, temperature, saturation or fidelity.
4 **Intentional.** This is where the viewer perceives the film text as serving a cultural function. Generally, this would involve a conscious acknowledgement of the connections between the film and everyday life, or the way in which ideology functions in the text. Thus, Steven Spielberg's production *The Post* (2017) becomes a commentary on the relationship between US President Donald Trump and the American press. Nicholas Meyer's *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* (1991) becomes a commentary on the Cold War in the 1980s and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

How audiences read a narrative text

As you watch a film or television narrative, you pick up clues and build a mental picture (or mental model) of the whole story as you go along (Figure 10.18). This is the micro-world of the



Marzolino/Shutterstock.com

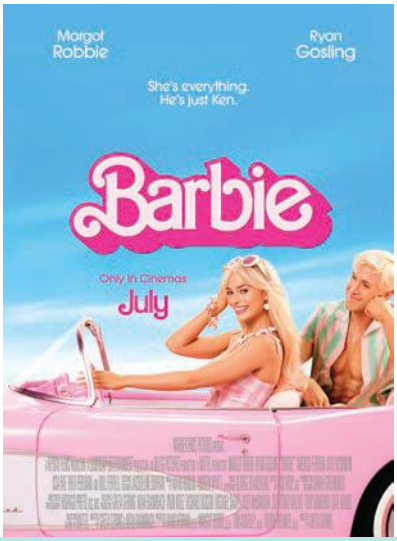
Figure 10.18 Union Pacific Railroad train crossing a wooden trestle bridge, circa 1868. The train represents your mental picture of the story. Ahead, the track is still being assembled. Events and narrative clues are represented by lengths of rail and wooden sleepers still to be put in place. Behind the train, the rail of the narrative is fully assembled and smoothly in place.

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story, which includes the spatial setting and the chronological sequence of events in the plot. Each time a new event occurs, the viewer updates their mental picture of what is going on. At the same time, the viewer is going back over what they already know about the story.

According to narrative specialists Rick Busselle and Helena Bilandzic, to view and understand a narrative text, audience members need to undertake the following steps:

1 Transport themselves into the story world.
2 Construct a mental model of the story as the events and clues are gradually built up.
3 Develop mental models of each of the characters and what they are like.
4 Position themselves at the centre of the situation.
5 Take on the perspective of the characters.
6 Follow through until the resolution.



BFA/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 10.19 Gender is one factor that contributes to a person's understanding of a media text. The meaning made of *Barbie* (2023) would be more likely to depend on gender than would be the case in many other movies.

10.4 ACTIVITIES

1 Gender can be one factor contributing to a person's negotiated understanding of a media text. Explore this with the cooperation of your classmates. As a class, view a film with a strong message about gender, such as *Barbie* (2023), *Thelma & Louise* (1991) or *The Piano* (1993). Survey questions might include:
- How did female members of the class feel about the characters? How did male members react to these characters?
- Which parts of the movie did males/females like the best and the least?
- With whom did the males/females identify? (To identify with someone is to put yourself 'in their shoes'.)

Respond to the areas of activity in the following table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe survey **information** about the text you will use, the purpose and conditions, including sample questions. **Describe** survey **information** from class members on their readings of the film based on their gender identity. **Describe** the respondents, including information about age ranges, etc.	**Analyse** quantitative (numerical) results, **considering** them in percentages for each constituent part of the survey. **Analyse** qualitative (interview) results by **interpreting** responses and emotional reactions to events, **examining** any similarities or differences based on gender as a criterion.	**Evaluate** results in order to interpret viewer responses to the text. **Evaluate** results by **drawing conclusions** around the **significance** or **status** of gender-based responses.

2 Consider a movie or television program where you have some obvious need to negotiate your reading. For example, it could be that the main character is a different gender to you, or it could be that you disagree with some aspect of the narrative. **Analyse** your reactions as you negotiated your way through this, **interpreting** them in relation to constituent scenes. **Make a judgement** about what was important to you: the story or your reservations. **Evaluate** the difficulty or ease of negotiating.

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11 Representations in moving-image media stories

ABOUT REPRESENTATION

The media do not present reality – they just represent it by offering a selection of reality. In the case of television, the scriptwriter, camera operator, editor and producer can all make selections and changes.

Media products, consisting of only a selection of manufactured ideas, are not the same as lived experience. This manufactured version is based on the values of the producers and, in turn, the values of the larger society and culture. The media version is said to be not a presentation but a 're-presentation'.

The re-presentation of real life is distorted in all sorts of ways. More than 30 per cent of advertising still portrays women as slim, blonde and less than 30 years old. The majority of characters killed in films and television entertainment shows are men. Most of these males are dispatched without any mourning as minor characters. While 20 per cent of television characters are involved in law enforcement, this applies to only 1 per cent of real-life people.

What is a representation?

A media **representation** is a depiction, likeness or constructed image. It is how the media show the world as they see it – it is their version of reality.

It is useful to think of a media image as being constructed in the same way that a building or bridge is constructed – out of lots of parts and by teams of people. A media representation is created through a series of choices and selections made by the producers. It is constructed or built out of these choices, and then re-presented to audiences. Each media form has its own way of constructing representations, and therefore there will be differences in representations across media forms because of this factor alone.

Media representations can be thought of as resembling reality, rather than being real. However, it is possible for an individual to decide that some representations may be closer to their own experiences than others. Audiences interpret media representations and create their own meanings from them based on their own experiences of the world.

Types of representations

Representations can be grouped into categories that regularly appear in the media (Figures 11.1a–c). A representation can depict:

- individual people as themselves (e.g. the actual prime minister in a news story)

Weblink
What is representation?



Figure 11.1 (a) The representation in this image of a family from the early 1950s suggests the woman's place is in the home. The man's role is to provide financially and allows a minimum of involvement in family life. (b) A 1990s image of a family includes the father within the family circle and suggests through body language and clothing that the mother is an equal partner in all things, probably including employment. However, the family is still represented as a conventional nuclear family. (c) This modern image of a family suggests that single parenthood may be a likelihood, while maintaining the possibility that the rest of the family is elsewhere in the house. The portrayal of the father as a potential single parent is an innovation on the typical portrayal of a woman as the single parent.

ClassicStock/Alamy Stock Photo; Russell Kord ARCHIVE/Alamy Stock Photo; Ground Picture/Shutterstock.com

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- individual people as characters (e.g. the US president in the 1996 film *Independence Day*)
- social groups (e.g. age groups, gender groups or racial groups)
- institutions or organisations (e.g. the government or a big company such as Woolworths)
- ideas (e.g. law and order or unemployment)
- events (e.g. European settlement of Australia or the 9/11 terrorist attacks of 2001)
- places (e.g. a tourist spot or a destination city).

A representation can be a single image, a sequence of images, a whole program, written words, spoken words or song lyrics.

How representations work

Representations invite audiences to understand them and agree with them in certain preferred ways. However, depending on the audience, different interpretations are to some extent possible.

Representations work in the following ways:

- **A representation consists of repeated elements.** The more we see these elements repeated, the more the representation will appear to be natural or normal.
- **We are invited either to identify with or to recognise the representation.** Producers of the media representation may have a view of the world that is similar to our own. If their representation fits in with our view of who we are, we may choose to identify with it. This happens, for example, when a movie invites us to imagine ourselves in the role of an appealing character. On the other hand, the producers may see a person, idea or event as somehow foreign or different from them. We will then be invited to recognise the representation from our own experience. A program might invite us to identify with the lawyer hero, for example, but will ask us only to recognise the law-breaking young thugs.
- **The media make categories of people, events or ideas.** Categories include labels such as 'the unemployed', 'the aged' or 'businessmen'. Representations are generalisations about categories and why events, ideas or people belong in them. These categories then become part of our thinking processes.
- **Representations contain a point of view.** The meaning in a representation will be selected and constructed, already containing built-in value judgements. All representations contain the point of view of the people who made them.
- **Representations have a mode of address.** Hidden behind the apparent naturalness of the representation will be some assumptions about who you are. For example, a news item about youth may address you in a manner that assumes you are a middle-aged businessperson rather than a young person.

Selection, construction and omission

Representations are presented to an audience after a process of **selection**, **construction** and omission. Selection of some elements over others means that only certain aspects of the chosen actuality are depicted. Omission of other elements means that different sides of the story are not presented. Omissions are sometimes referred to as '**silences**'. It is the choice of the people producing the representation whether or not to leave out certain elements. Often, they do this because those elements do not support the point of view they want to convey.

Construction of a representation is always a human activity. It is not possible for a representation to be assembled without human involvement. Therefore, the representation will always contain a human point of view or perspective. Producers construct representations to suit their own purposes and appeal to audiences.

Questioning representations

To be more critically aware of a representation within media products, the following six questions need to be asked:

1 Who made it?
2 When was it made?
3 What are its purposes?
4 Who benefits from the representation or whose point of view does it support?
5 Who does not benefit or whose point of view is not considered?
6 Who or what is not shown?

Analysing representations

There are at least four main ways of analysing representations, according to sociologist Eoin Devereux. These are:

- **Codes and conventions.** Representations can be understood by analysing the technical and symbolic codes that are used to communicate



Luis Sinco/Los Angeles Times/Getty Images

Figure 11.2 The representation and the reality can be two different things. This 2006 campaign poster in the US was prepared by feminist **culture jammers** Guerrilla Girls. In the 96-year history of the Academy Awards, only seven women have been nominated for Best Director.

(see pages 45–47). For instance, the representation of women in the 'girl power' phenomenon of the late 1990s and early 2000s can be analysed by looking at the symbolic codes of costume, and also the technical codes of shot angle and shot size.

- **Patterns of thinking.** Understanding the socially accepted patterns of thinking that a representation is part of can help explain how it works. For instance, it is easier to analyse representations of race or religion if you understand the societal thinking patterns around such political issues as immigration or the 'war on terror'.
- **Framing**. A representation can be framed within a certain viewpoint or it can be shown only within a certain context. For example, in Australian commercial television, poverty is usually framed as an individual problem or perhaps just 'bad luck'. It isn't often framed as a problem of capitalism and a business economy with unequal wealth distribution.
- **Narrative analysis.** Often a person or an event can be packaged as belonging to a certain kind of familiar story or narrative pattern. In this way, for instance, whole nations can be represented as 'bad guys' or 'good guys' because it fits the pattern of many Hollywood movies.

Stereotypes

The word **stereotype** comes from the printing trade. Stereotyping was the creation of a solid metal printing plate that exactly duplicated a tray of movable type, the letters of which had to be placed one by one. Until the invention of the stereotype, this movable type had to be reset if a second printing was needed. The stereotype revolutionised printing, allowing cheap editions of books to be made.

A stereotype now means an oversimplified, clichéd image, repeated so many times that it seems to have established a pattern. It is a highly judgemental type of representation. In the same way that the image on the metal printing plate is fixed and repeated from the original, so the modern stereotype is often applied whatever the circumstances.

One well-known female stereotype is the dumb blonde, and a common male stereotype is the foolish, incompetent father. The history of the media provides a long list of stereotypes, including the housewife, the nuclear family and the action hero.

Stereotypes and representations

Stereotypes are an extreme form of representation. They are constructed by a process of selection. Certain aspects are focused on and then exaggerated. At the same time, an evaluation is made and the audience is invited to make a judgement, which is often based on prejudice. Repetition establishes stereotypes and, over time, allows them to appear 'natural'.

In the extreme, stereotypes can become **caricatures** resembling cartoons. Jokes, cartoons and comedies do this. They rely on stereotypes because they are instantly recognisable and understood.

Many groups in society have stereotypes associated with them. These contain limited and distorted views. For example, in a study of the image of scientists, Dr Roslynn Haynes of the University of Tasmania came up with six stereotypes that have existed since the 1500s. These are:

- the evil scientist or alchemist (e.g. Dr Strangelove)
- the noble scientist (e.g. Einstein-like characters, common in 1950s films)
- the absent-minded scientist (e.g. Professor Brainard in *Flubber* [1997])
- the inhuman researcher (e.g. Rotwang in *Metropolis* [1927])
- the adventurer (e.g. Dr Grant in *Jurassic Park* [1993])
- the crazed scientist whose projects get out of control (e.g. Dr Victor Frankenstein and Dr Jekyll).

According to Italian sociologist Antonio Tintori, the media stereotype of the 'geeky' male scientist has real-world consequences. He says when women are exposed to these stereotypes they are discouraged from entering STEM fields.

Stereotyping is often evident when there is a power imbalance between members of society. Relations between men and women, for example, can encourage the development of stereotypes on both sides. In the same way, disadvantaged minority groups often have stereotypes associated with them.

Stereotyping is often harmful, modelling restrictive expectations and limiting aspirations and choices. Relying on stereotypes for storytelling is not best practice. In advertising, where extremely short timeframes mean that using recognisable stereotypes is common, research has revealed that younger generations are more trusting of brands that demonstrate inclusivity in their advertising.

To challenge and subvert stereotypes, more diverse and complex roles are essential.

Counter-stereotypes

Many groups of people suffer from negative portrayals in the media. Since the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, certain minority groups have been able to demand more of a voice and a more positive portrayal. In Australia, various ethnic groups and, to some extent, First Nations people have met with some success in demands for more positive portrayals.

Counter-stereotypes and representations

A **counter-stereotype** is a portrayal that deliberately sets out to change an earlier representation or seeks to portray a group in a positive light. There is debate about whether counter-stereotypes are a good or bad thing. Some argue that they can empower or help minority groups. Others argue that counter-stereotypes hinder the progress of minority groups because the positive portrayals often hide the real difficulties that these groups encounter.

Counter-stereotypes can also encounter audience resistance and work to uphold the traditional portrayal. The humour of the character Token Black in *South Park* (1997–) is partly based on this factor. He is a rich, African-American child whose parents are highly educated. This is the opposite of the early, limiting stereotypes of African-American people.

There are two main factors behind the rise of counter-stereotypes:

1 **Economic power.** When a group gains sufficient spending power to convince advertisers to target it, media representations often change in response. For instance, the African-American market in the US is strong enough to have encouraged more television and film producers to portray the lives of African Americans and depict them as three-dimensional characters.
2 **Political power.** Some groups have been able to use legislation or community pressure to achieve a more positive representation. Women's groups initially used the political process but are now recognised as an important economic force as well.



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.3 The characters Eric Cartman and Token Black from South Park (1997–). There is debate about whether counter-stereotypes help or hinder minority groups. Perhaps as a result, in 2022 Token's actual name was revealed to be Tolkein.

11.1 ACTIVITIES

1 Images, ideas and representations have a history. Search through old television programs (e.g. on YouTube) or old magazine advertisements to find representations that no longer fit today's cultural and social context. Respond to the areas of activity in the following table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe the imagery in the representation, **identifying** key aspects of the representation. **Provide additional information** about **examples** from the program or advertisement that seem outdated. **Identify** the use of particular **codes and conventions** in the representation.	**Analyse** each **constituent part** of the representation, considering its connotations and denotations, and interpreting their meanings. **Evaluate** the 'fit' with today's representations and values, **considering** the **strengths and limitations** of the representation in today's terms.	**Evaluate** the worth or status of the representation to audiences of the time, considering what you know about society at that time. **Draw conclusions** about the **significance** of the representation as an example of changed community values.

2 Modern representations may come to look as dated in the future as 1950s representations do today. Examine some modern representations using the six questions detailed in this section (see page 162). **Describe** your responses to each question, **demonstrating** your understanding and referring to **particular characteristics** of the representation. **Analyse** some representations (such as images of youth) across different media and compare the results in each media platform or medium. Representations could be chosen from Table 11.1. Examine each constituent part of the representation to interpret the meanings and consider how they change depending on the platform.

Table 11.1 Suggested media representations for analysis

REPRESENTATION CATEGORY	SPECIFIC EXAMPLES
People	Politicians, movie or rock stars, sports personalities, historical characters
Groups	Occupations, families, youth groups, political groups
Places	Tourist destinations, city versus country, local regions, overseas countries
Ideas	Law and order, the future, political points of view, the environment

3 Select a theme and explore its representation across several different media or over time. Themes could include age, gender, race or social class. **Analyse** the representations, examining each constituent part of the representation to interpret the meanings and consider how they are portrayed across different media or across time. **Describe** the results of your investigation, giving examples to illustrate your points.

4 Search online and find examples of stereotypes. **Describe** the way they express their point of view through various features. Identify the qualities and characteristics that are used to communicate the point of view. For example, a five-o'clock shadow (darkly stubbled cheeks) on a cartoon character suggests criminal associations.

5 Dress as a well-known stereotype and photograph yourself. Repeat the process for several other stereotypes until you have a folio of five or six images. **Describe** each stereotype and indicate its defining features. Point out where you have seen the stereotype before.

REALISM AND REPRESENTATIONS

The human brain is set up to believe that 'seeing' and 'existence' or 'reality' are the same thing. This gives us a unique problem when it comes to our understanding of media representations. Seeing something in the media is not the same as being there, even though we may feel we have actually experienced it.

Mediation is the process through which the difference between the media representation and the real world is created. Mediation happens at each stage of media production as representations are selected and constructed. This is the human factor in creating representations.

It is only through our knowledge of the constructed nature of media representations that we can separate out the media portrayal from

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actuality. According to Torben Grodal (author and professor emeritus of Film Studies at the University of Copenhagen), to do this we need three understandings:

1 an understanding of the media representation (gained by watching a film, for example)
2 an understanding of what the 'real' world looks like (from daily life)
3 an understanding of the differences and similarities between the representation and the real world.

Realism is the degree of perceived closeness between the media text and the reality it depicts. The degree of similarity between our knowledge of the real world and what we see in the media representation will determine whether or not we see the representation as realistic. Thus, the role of the audience is crucial to connect with the media text and reference it to their own lives. Each audience member has to decide if the media text is real enough for them.

Hyper-reality is an idea proposed by Jean Baudrillard (1927–2007), a French philosopher. He suggested that eventually we might become so unable to distinguish the media image from the real thing that the two would blend together into something he called hyper-reality. In hyper-reality, people may find themselves so closely involved in the media world (or the virtual world), that they lose connection with the physical world (Figure 11.4).



Marcio Machado/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images

Figure 11.4 More real than real, Disneyland is often suggested as an example of hyper-reality, where it seems more desirable to live in the fake world than the real one outside.

Weblink
Suspension of disbelief

How representations are seen as realistic

Representations are gradually accepted by society by being repeated often enough, and by appearing to be realistic (Figure 11.5).



bbernard/Shutterstock.com

Figure 11.5 The media do not provide a direct 'window on the world' that shows exact reality. Instead, audiences are persuaded to suspend disbelief. Then, through the processes of mediation and naturalisation, audiences come to accept that media representations are realistic, although not real.

Naturalisation

If something is repeated often enough, we will come to see it as normal and realistic. This process is called **naturalisation**. For instance, in the Middle Ages when it was thought that the sun rotated around the earth, the idea seemed completely normal and supported by observable 'facts'. The idea was repeated so often that it was completely naturalised and to suggest anything else was seen as traitorous.

Naturalisation is often assisted by power relationships. The more a media text is aligned with the views of the powerful in society, the more readily it will be accepted as realistic. Sufficient backing from other powerful sources will allow even quite unrealistic representations to be accepted as realistic. Other media texts that contain the same depictions can also lend support to the naturalisation process – there is strength in numbers, and audiences may be convinced.

Suspension of disbelief

Belief in the story world is necessary when watching a moving-image media production. This is the **suspension of disbelief**. Whatever reservations people have about the story, they tend to put them aside just to let the story progress. This can also mean accepting the representations that are depicted in the story. It is necessary to do this to keep watching.

Types of realism in media representations

Media texts can display several different types of realism that allow them to be accepted by audiences:

- **Surface realism.** If the basic details look similar to those of real life, audiences will find it easier

to match their own ideas of reality to what they see in the media text. If it looks right and sounds right, then it is easy to assume that it must *be* right.

- **Descriptive realism.** When a lot of effort is put into describing things, the sheer volume of detail can convince people. Film, for example, is easily able to do this. There is so much detail, even in a single shot, that audiences can feel like they are actually there.
- **Emotional realism.** If the reactions of the characters to the events they are going through are similar to what audience members might feel in their own lives, audiences will accept the representation. The characters have to be believable.
- **Narrative realism.** What happens in the story will determine whether audiences accept the representation. There is no use in having a believable setting and believable emotions if the chain of events is unrealistic.
- **Content realism.** News and documentary programs often present this kind of realism. They show reportable events happening in real locations.
- **Technical production realism.** The more the technical production is able to make the representation resemble the lived experience of audience members, the more realistic it is assumed to be. Examples of this include:
  - **Shot sizes and angles.** An eye-level shot may be seen as more realistic than an extreme high angle shot, simply because it is more like human experience.
  - **Transitions.** A zoom may seem less realistic because the human eye cannot perform this action. A fade to black may be accepted because it is similar to blinking or falling asleep.
  - **Sound.** Noise from what is assumed to be the real world will be accepted more readily than an orchestral score accompaniment.
  - **Lighting.** Natural-looking lighting will heighten the audience members' sense of realism.
  - **Computer-generated imagery (CGI).** Even fantastical creatures and events can be given believability using CGI.

Blurred realism

Blurred realism refers to the way in which documentary techniques and fiction filmmaking are coming together stylistically. Fiction filmmakers are using certain techniques in an attempt to bring a sense of documentary-style authenticity to the representation. The techniques include available lighting (instead of three-point lighting), handheld camera work, surveillance-style footage, loosely scripted dialogue and shots edited in a rough manner without any thought given to match-on-action or continuity.

The handheld camera, poor focus and haphazard composition normally reserved for documentary was strategically employed in *The Bourne Identity* (2002) and *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004). Many critics argued that the substitution of this crude and awkward cinematography brought the audience a step closer to 'being there' – having an actual lived experience of events. The formal style of classic cinematography was seen as distancing for the audience.

The use of surveillance-style footage in *Paranormal Activity* (2007) operated in a similar fashion, shifting the nature of the otherworldly from possible to plausible. The intensity of the climax is certainly informed by the assumption that surveillance footage features unmodified events. For viewers, the climax is not just about the revelation of a ghost for the purposes of story but a documentation of a legitimate paranormal event. Ghosts are suddenly 'real'.

When realist aesthetics appear in fiction films, viewers have a tendency to interpret the communication with a sense of seriousness usually given to news or documentaries. As a result, their emotional investment becomes more intense. More filmmakers are discovering the advantages that realist aesthetics bring to the practice of storytelling and successful audience engagement.

Representation and real life

How far away are media representations from real life? In the words of communications professor David Morley at the University of London, media representations are '… chronically overpopulated by professionally successful, physically fit, white, sexually attractive middle- and upper-class people'.

'Real life' is very difficult to define, even if it seems a relatively simple idea. The discipline of philosophy

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has grappled with the question of 'reality' for thousands of years. A modern view of this question is that reality and real life are mediated in the same way that the media are. We do not experience life as some objective experience, but instead we have our view of reality passed on to us (or mediated) by other people – parents, school, friends and so on. Every day that we interact with other people, we have our idea of reality constructed.

If defining reality is hard, then comparing media representations is a very difficult process. This difficulty is compounded because actual life exists just because it does, whereas media representations exist for very specific purposes. Representations are created to appeal to audiences, to entertain and to sell products. The two do not share a common purpose.

Making comparisons between representations and reality

Our real-life experiences are much more limited than our media experiences. Most media consumers never experience war, step inside a courtroom or undertake a car chase. Yet, we are all familiar with the media representations of these things. How close to reality they are, most of us cannot say. In the same way, unless an Australian has been to the US, they have no way of knowing whether their favourite television show is close to real life, or far from it. It is the same with representations of the past: unless you lived in that time, you would have difficulty in comparing representation with reality (Figure 11.6).



ZUMA Press, Inc./Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.6 American helicopters in 1966 during the Vietnam War landed troops in an operation against the Viet Cong. It is impossible to go back to the past, and there is no way of matching media representations to our own experience unless we have actually been there. Large amounts of what we know, which isn't firsthand experience, come from the media.

Although it might be difficult to compare representations with reality or lived experience doesn't mean it isn't worth trying. There are other ways of gathering information about the world than by consuming media texts.

Statistics

The world represented in the media can be compared with the world according to collected facts and statistics. Statistics provide useful indicators about how people are living in the real world. Those who gather the data are completely outside media organisations and therefore have other purposes for the information. Statistics use collated data expressed in numbers collected from multiple (sometimes hundreds or thousands) individual experiences.

There have been many studies of how the media world differs from the actual world. Often, these are done by content analysis. The content of the media text has been compared to statistics from the real world in thousands of different areas, including the portrayal of women, men, different occupations, people of different age groups and so on.

One long-running study has been George Gerbner's Cultural Indicators Project. It began in 1967 and ran for more than 30 years. Every year, it analysed one week of television viewing and scored the programs for hundreds of different aspects of life. The following are among its findings:

- In the 1970s, women made up only 27 per cent of the television world, increasing to about 35 per cent by the 1990s.
- In the 30-year period of the project, women were twice as likely to be portrayed as wives as men were to be portrayed as husbands.
- Older people in that 30-year period were four times less likely to appear on television than be present in real life.
- Poor and working-class people were 10 times less likely to appear on television than be present in real life.
- Doctors, lawyers and judges were vastly overrepresented.
- Violence happened on television much more often than in real life, occurring four to six times an hour.
- Just 1 per cent of television characters were shown to have a mental illness, but 70 per cent of these were violent (real rates of violence among the mentally ill are low).

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Anecdotes and oral history

Another way of comparing media representations with reality is to investigate the stories of people who have direct experience of the events. Anecdotes are personal stories, and oral history is the collection of information through interviews, memoirs, personal recollections and so on.

Academic social analysis

Media representations can also be compared with the detailed investigations of society carried out by university academics or social commentators from various institutes set up for such purposes.

Table 11.2 Comparison of prime-time television character populations in selected age ranges compared to actual US populations in similar age ranges, by Jake Harwood and Karen Anderson. Teenagers and young children are substantially underrepresented. Characters in their 20s through to their 40s are overrepresented.

AGE RANGE	PRIME-TIME TELEVISION PERCENTAGE	PERCENTAGE OF THE ACTUAL POPULATION ACCORDING TO US CENSUS DATA (AGE RANGES DO NOT MATCH EXACTLY)
0–9 years	1.9%	24%
10–18 years	9.7%	
19–34 years	40%	40%
35–44 years	27%	
45–64 years	18.7%	26%
65 years and over	2.5%	13%

11.2 ACTIVITIES

1. Make a list of films, television programs or streamed series that have been set in locations that you are familiar with. **Justify** whether your familiarity with the area makes the media text more or less realistic for you.
2. **Compare** the media portrayal of reality with statistics from a reliable source, such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (see weblink). Choose an area of actuality for which statistics are widely available, such as female participation in the workforce or percentage of the population in certain occupations. **Analyse** the representations or portrayals of reality. **Examine** each constituent part of the media depiction and compare it with the statistical reality. **Make a judgement** about the strengths and limitations of the media portrayal based on the statistical research.
3. Interview a friend or family member who can remember a particular event, or even a suitable decade (such as the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s or 1990s), and ask them to compare their memories with a film or television program that depicts the same event or is set in the same decade. **Describe** your findings, providing additional information about the event or topic, and illustrating it using your interviewee's examples and stories.

Weblink
Australian Bureau of Statistics

REPRESENTATIONS OF PEOPLE

Intersectionality

All humans live with a complex set of different roles and social identities. These can include ethnic background, sexuality, socioeconomic status and so on. These identities all intersect when we face the world and they shape our experiences.

Intersectionality is a theory that someone may face multiple forms of disadvantage at the same time (Figure 11.7). In the same way, someone may be advantaged by multiple forms of intersecting privilege.

Just one social identity, for example 'woman', cannot adequately describe the potential for unacknowledged discrimination. Adding other identities may add additional challenges. Women of colour may face overlapping forms of oppression. Women of colour with disabilities and perhaps low incomes may face at least three or four intersecting areas of potential challenges. As a result, they may face barriers in health care, education, work and the justice system. This may be due to the compounded effects of gender and racial discrimination as well as issues around the social acceptance of disability.

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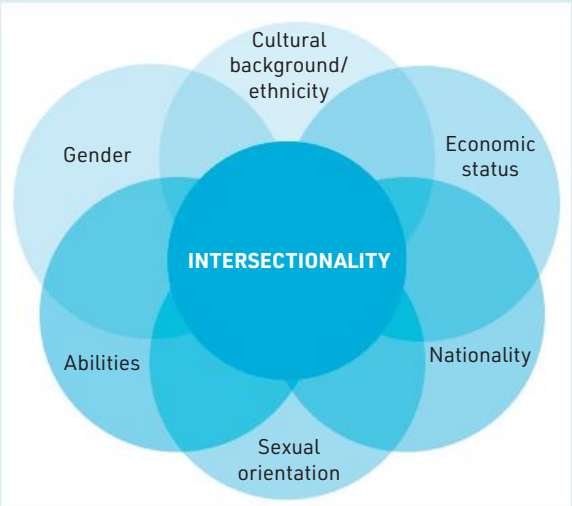


Figure 11.7 Intersectional theory proposes that people can be oppressed by multiple types of identity markers all at the same time. Different forms of diversity and disadvantage can intersect and overlap to shape people's experience of privilege or discrimination.

Intersectional theory acknowledges that people may have different forms of diversity and disadvantage. Considering intersectionality, the differences within one single identity category, such as 'woman', can be as great as the differences first identified between women and men.

All the disadvantages that individuals face need to be recognised if everyone in Australia is to get a fair go, argues Professor Carl Rhodes of University of Technology, Sydney.

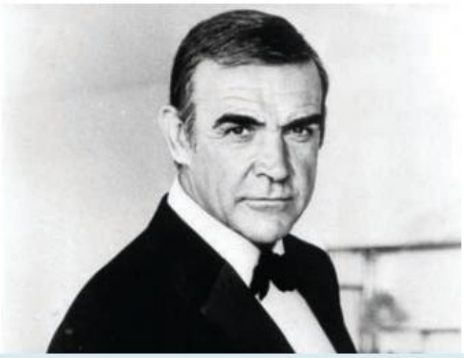
REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER

Mainstream media, and especially Hollywood, are often some distance behind changes in society. There have been many examples of this apart from how mainstream media depict gender. For instance, most of the anti-Vietnam War movies did not come out of Hollywood until the early 1980s, whereas the anti-war protests took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the war ended in 1975.

William F Ogburn's theory of cultural lag states that different parts of modern culture do not change at the same rate. Some parts are changing rapidly and other parts slowly. But since everything is interrelated, a rapid change in one part will eventually require a change in the other parts.

Changes in gender portrayal

The breadth and depth of the various media make it difficult to generalise about gender portrayal, but content analysis provides a guide. Content analysis


PA Images/Alamy Stock Photo


Piotr Zajac/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.8 James Bond (Sean Connery) in *Diamonds are Forever* (1971) and James Bond (Daniel Craig) at the launch of *Skyfall* (2006). The James Bond films, which span decades, provide an opportunity to study changes in gender representation. The representation of the male as white and upper class is consistent across 25 films, but the female portrayal differs. By the 1990s, Bond's boss is a woman and his love interests have included a martial arts expert and a nuclear scientist.

> 'Changes in television images have not always paralleled actual changes in society. Particularly with regard to the depiction of women, we can see how social values mediate between changes in the real world, the images that become available on television, and viewers' choices of television images to watch.'
>
> **Andrea Press**, Professor of Media Studies and Sociology, University of Virginia

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has been applied most widely to television but has also yielded some results for other media. The following are some of the findings, together with some of the opinions of media analysts.

Pre-feminist era

Active and courageous women were portrayed in the media of the pre-feminist era. Many had careers or were portrayed as independently wealthy. However, the difference was that their world was limited because they were women, and stories often focused on how difficult they found the injustice of that.

1930s–1940s

Before the World War II (1939–45), many film and magazine representations focused on women's role in the home. As the first celebrities of the Golden Era of Hollywood, women were also glamourised as fashion icons or sex sirens. There were also exceptions to these common representations. Screwball comedy films were popular around the time of the Great Depression (1929–33). They featured independent, somewhat madcap and often wealthy women who had encountered a working-class or street-wise man. However, the 'battle of the sexes' that followed usually ended in the woman being tamed by marriage. Examples include *Bringing Up Baby* (1938) and *His Girl Friday* (1940).

During World War II, women entered the workforce in large numbers to support the war effort. Hollywood depicted women as 'keeping the home fires burning', but they were also depicted in factories and as combat nurses overseas. An example is the US wartime propaganda poster *Rosie the Riveter* (1944; Figure 11.9), publicising women at work in heavy engineering factories.

After the war, the media became obsessed with returning women to their 'proper place' in the household and converting men from daring soldiers to reliable breadwinners. The femmes fatales and amoral men of *film noir* called this effort into question. The women in *films noir* were often powerful and alluring, whereas the men were often drifters with limited money.

1950s–1960s

While the coming of television created a different representation of women, the representation of men remained relatively constant. Advertising demanded



World History Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.9 The pin-up girl of the feminist movement, Rosie the wartime factory worker from *Rosie the Riveter* (1944). She has been rated the 28th most influential representation ever created. It is suggested that Rosie helped jump-start the women's liberation movement.

that television appeal to the dreams of the moneyed middle class. Advertisers also didn't want anyone to be offended and not buy their products.

Hollywood was forced to fight television for audiences. In the movies, the glamour of actresses such as Marilyn Monroe helped attract the crowds.

In the 1950s and 1960s, content analysis shows that only about 20 per cent of prime-time television characters were women. A 2018 study using machine learning found that only 15 per cent of women in that era were in the top 10 characters in films. Few women on television were shown to be independent. Their existence was mostly with their children and husbands and they were pictured in the private



A.F. Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.10 Marilyn Monroe in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953) helped Hollywood attract audiences back from television. But in the 1950s and 1960s, the portrayal of women was possibly more limiting than earlier representations.

> 'Television has represented the American woman as a stupid, unattractive, insecure little household drudge who spends her martyred, mindless, boring days dreaming of love – and plotting nasty revenge against her husband.'
>
> **Betty Friedan,** author of *The Feminine Mystique*

space of the family home and rarely involved in public affairs. An example is the television show *I Love Lucy* (1951–57). Try as she might to escape her housewife role, the sassy Lucy always ended up being humbled.

Popular films of the era included the Westerns *High Noon* (1952) and *Shane* (1953). Television programs included *Bonanza* (1959–73) and *77 Sunset Strip* (1958–64). All of them focused on male heroes who were confident and in control. While women had important roles, they were often portrayed as frightened or in need of protection.

Little changed on television and in film during the 1960s, despite the changes happening in society and the rise of second-wave feminism. One content analysis study of television advertising found that 75 per cent of all ads showing a woman were for products used in the kitchen or the bathroom.

The feminist era

1970s–1980s

Cultural lag meant that for much of the 1970s in television and film, little changed in the representation of women, despite feminism. For instance, in the movie *Superman* (1978), Lois Lane had a career as a reporter but the focus was still on the male hero. Women's representation as sex objects continued throughout the 1970s. The number of women appearing on prime-time television increased (Table 11.3). Content analysis studies show that women were more than twice as likely as men to be shown in the home. The launch of the magazines *Cleo* (1972) and *Cosmopolitan* (1973) took women away from the housewife images of most other magazines.

Changes began from the early 1980s. On television, *Cagney & Lacey* (1981–88) starred two women as the central characters in a crime drama. In film, the character Ellen Ripley (Figure 11.11) set a new standard for a female science-fiction hero in *Alien* (1979) and *Aliens* (1986). A 1985 content analysis of television ads showed that men and women were appearing as central figures about an equal amount of the time. Women were appearing in work roles, and men were beginning to appear in family roles.

Men's representations also began to change after nearly 60 years of very narrowly limited depictions. The film *Three Men and a Baby* (1987) showed men in nurturing roles. Some action-movie heroes seemed to show greater sensitivity as well. But hyper-masculine action heroes such as Rambo also appeared in the 1980s.

1990s–2010s

In the past 30 years, there have been big changes in the media depictions of both men and women. A postmodern kind of feminism called third-wave feminism is a strong influence.

Table 11.3 Upward trend in women's share of prime-time television characters in the 1970s and 1980s

YEAR	PERCENTAGE
1971	18.3
1974	27.8
1987	35.0



Maximum Film/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.11 The character of Ripley in *Alien* (1979) and its sequel *Aliens* (1986) marked a turning point for the representation of women in film. As the protagonist of the films, and a fearless warrior, Sigourney Weaver's character battled on an equal basis with the men. Ripley set a trend for female characters in science-fiction films that followed.

Weblink
Gender Bias without Borders 2015 report

Thelma & Louise (1991) cast two women in the leading roles as fugitives in the traditional road-trip movie genre – the villain in the story being sexism. This had not been seen before. From the 1990s, films such as *The Long Kiss Goodnight* (1996) and *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (2001) cast women in leading roles in action movies. On television, crime dramas such as *Law & Order* (1990–2010) and *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (2000–15) had both male and female leads.

A content analysis of magazines has found that women's bodies are still more often objectified than men's and more often shown as body parts. An analysis of prime-time television has found only 3 per cent of women were portrayed as housewives during prime time in the first 10 years of the 21st century. Direct comparisons are not available, but in the 1970s 30 per cent of women were portrayed as housewives in daytime television.

In a 1995 content analysis of British television ads, men were shown for the first time cooking more often than women. Following a backlash from female consumers, advertisers were reluctant to show women doing housework. Only 7 per cent of ads showed women cleaning. However, many other aspects of gender representation were unchanged. Women were nearly always young and attractive. Only 10 per cent were aged over 40. Men were still more likely to be in paid employment.

A study by Jim Macnamara of Western Sydney University found that in the 2000s, 69 per cent of representations of males were unfavourable compared with just 12 per cent being favourable. When men were represented positively, it was often because they had 'embraced their feminine side', said Dr Macnamara.

2020s

The 2020s have seen the impact of social critique movements such as #Metoo, #BlackLivesMatter and #OscarsSoWhite highlighting the need for greater inclusivity and diversity on and behind screen. Tokenistic representations of women are shifting due to calls for more authentic narratives, with female characters increasingly being portrayed as fully-realised individuals with clear hopes, desires, motivations and agency; for example, Fern in Chloe Zhao's award-winning *Nomadland* (2020). Inclusive portrayals of women are increasing, due to greater attentiveness by filmmakers to the intersection of gender with other aspects of identity such as race, ethnicity and sexuality. Changes to industry due to the anti-harassment movement #Metoo have resulted in growth in the presence of female voices behind the screen.

Finding greater exposure on screens are explicitly empowered female characters who drive the narrative forward, such as the Barbies in *Barbie* (2023). Empowered female characters are still, however, subject to stereotype, as in the example of the 'girl boss', who focuses on her own empowerment at the expense of others.

While there is still significant progress to be made away from stereotypes and towards authentic and nuanced representations of gender, the shifts occurring in the 2020s are important steps.

Gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes can be limiting and reinforce narrow expectations of the social constructs of masculinity and femininity, perpetuating harmful gender norms. Research conducted using machine learning has identified that male characters on screen are more likely to display emotions such as anger, dominance and aggressiveness and are perceived as more powerful, whereas women are perceived as loving and caring and more likely to demonstrate emotions such as joy.

Script analysis using artificial intelligence (AI) shows that the most common words appearing in dialogue spoken by female characters relate to household activities and fashion. These words are uncommon in male characters' dialogue, with

> 'It could be said that in the 1990s, to a certain extent, program makers arrived at comfortable, not-particularly-offensive models of masculinity and femininity, which a majority of the public seemed to think were acceptable.'
>
> **David Gauntlett**, Professor of Media and Communications, University of Westminster

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language relating to business, war and the notion of being a 'man' far more common.

Weblink
Boys to Men: Media Messages about Masculinity

Male and female stereotypes

Male stereotypes

The following male stereotypes were identified in a report called *Boys to Men: Media Messages about Masculinity* by the Children Now organisation:

- **The joker.** This type can be seen in movies such as *Ghostbusters* (1984) or *Back to the Future* (1985).
- **The jock.** Often seen in horror movies as among the first to die, the jock demonstrates his power and strength to impress women.
- **The strong silent type.** This character is in charge, acts decisively, doesn't show emotion or vulnerability, and always gets the girl. He is commonly seen in older action movies.
- **The big shot.** Seen in gangster movies but also in movies about business and the law, he is defined by his professional status.
- **The action hero.** Since the 1980s, the action hero has become a hyper-masculine caricature (Figure 11.12). He is aggressive and uses violence to achieve his goals. He is also strong, courageous, resilient and saves the day.
- **The buffoon.** This figure appears as a comic relief character, for instance as the bungling father figure in television advertisements and sitcoms.

Other common stereotypes in moving-image media include:

- **The mentor.** This father figure character provides guidance, wisdom about life lessons, paternal care and advice, and often guides the more inexperienced protagonists through challenges.
- **The womaniser.** These characters are portrayed as highly sexualised and shallow. They are confident and charming, but without emotional depth.

Female stereotypes

The main female stereotypes include the following:

- **The dumb blonde.** The blonde has a long history in the film and television industries, and there are various theories as to how the stereotype developed. She is seen as coming out of the myth that women can have beauty or brains but not both. The bimbo is a variation of the stereotype.
- **The femme fatale.** This deadly woman uses her sexuality to destroy men to further her own ends – it is not usually love she is after.
- **The girl next door.** This is the stereotype of the sweet and trusting young woman who is portrayed as the ideal marriage prospect.
- **Gold diggers and trophy wives.** These stereotypes perpetuate the myth that women marry for money and are reliant on men to support them.
- **The career woman.** Since the 1980s, the stereotype of the career woman has become increasingly common. She is successful but can also be ruthless.
- **The housewife.** Long the favoured stereotype on television, the housewife exists only to support her husband and children.
- **The soccer 'mom'.** This is a newer stereotype of the housewife. She has an overpowering desire


Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo


Atlaspix/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.12 Since the 1980s, the action hero has bulked up to become a hyper-masculine hero with an unrealistic liking for brute force. This is a change from earlier representations of male heroes, such as Batman from the 1960s television show.

for her children to succeed. She drives them everywhere and still has time to go to the gym.
- **The super mum.** This woman fits everything into her life: kids, career, husband, commuting and personal development.
- **The love interest.** This character is defined by her relationships to male characters and often lacks agency in the narrative outside of being an object of desire or romantic partner.
- **The damsel in distress.** This is one of the oldest stereotypes concerning women – that of the vulnerable, helpless, passive victim in need of rescuing by a (usually male) hero.
- **The sidekick.** This supporting character appears often in the form of an assistant to a male protagonist or as an, often sassy, best friend.

The Bechdel test

The Bechdel test, a test to measure the representation of women in film and other fiction, was named after the American graphic artist and comedian Alison Bechdel. In her 1985 comic strip, *Dykes to Watch Out For*, one of the characters says she will not go to see a film unless it meets three criteria:

1 The film has to have at least two women in it.
2 The two women must talk to each other.
3 They must talk about something besides a man.

An online database devoted to applying the Bechdel test to movies has so far tested over 7500 (Table 11.4). Although it might seem easy to meet the criteria, around half of those films have failed to pass all three criteria. The Bechdel test has become well known worldwide since 2010. In Sweden in 2013, a cinema chain and cable television channel began using the test to rate some of their films. By 2017, two-thirds of the top 50 highest-grossing films passed the Bechdel test.

Why many films are failing the Bechdel test

Film critics list the following reasons many films fail the Bechdel test:

- **Fewer women behind cameras.** University of Southern California research shows that for the top 100 highest-grossing movies in 2012, just one in six directors, writers or producers were women. Figures from 2021 show almost no change.
- **Male-dominated blockbusters.** Many of the highest-grossing movies are action movies with male leads. Hollywood tends to replicate the formula to be sure of earning more money. Critics say that this does not give the audience much choice, forcing them to go to standardised movies.
- **Relationship to society.** Many feminists argue that women still face obstacles in society, and that films are reflecting that disadvantage. Only 11 per cent of lead characters (protagonists) in the top 100 highest-grossing films of 2011 were women, according to a study by the Centre for the Study of Women in Television and Film. However, it had risen to 41 per cent by 2021.

Limitations of the Bechdel test

Many films with strong female leads, or films aimed at women, have failed the Bechdel test. *The Hurt Locker* (2008) was directed by Kathryn Bigelow, the first woman ever to win an Oscar for directing – but the film failed the Bechdel test. The film *Zero Dark*

Resource
Gender representation timeline



dpa picture alliance/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.13 The Bechdel test has become a world-wide test to determine if a film is gender-equality-friendly or not. About half of more than 7500 films so far tested fulfil its criteria. Cinema experts are divided about the value of the test.

Table 11.4 Bechdeltest.com database statistics showing the breakdown of results after the criteria have been applied.

FILMS PASSING THE BECHDEL TEST ON ALL THREE CRITERIA	FILMS FAILING ALL THREE CRITERIA IN THE BECHDEL TEST	FILMS FAILING CRITERION TWO (THE WOMEN DON'T TALK TO EACH OTHER)	FILMS FAILING CRITERION THREE (THE WOMEN TALK ONLY ABOUT MEN)
56%	10%	23%	11%

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Thirty (2012), directed by a woman and with a strong female lead, also fails – because all the conversations in the film centre around the hunt for one man: Osama bin Laden. *Oppenheimer* (2023) fails the Bechdel test because at no point in the film do the two main female characters speak to each other about anything other than a man. The science-fiction film *Gravity* (2013) has a strong lead female astronaut, but it fails the test because there are no other female characters. *Mulan* (1998) fails the test despite the female main character leading an army of warriors, because most of the other characters are men and the other women talk about Mulan's marriage. However, *Barbie* (2023) passed with flying colours, as did *Spiderman: Across the Spiderverse* (2023).

Following are some limitations of the test:

- **Surface testing only.** Many films, television programs and video games could pass the Bechdel test if some small modifications were made. It could be as simple as inserting one scene. This does not represent a major change in the way women are depicted.
- **Passing on a technicality.** Many critics say that films or television programs that are not feminist at all can pass the test. The test is not able to investigate deeper issues around the portrayal of women. The test is not able to check for violence against women or how women are treated more generally.
- **Too much focus on gender not character.** The test does not really look at character arcs or paths. The role of the characters in the movie is not examined.
- **Binary judgement.** The Bechdel is a pass/fail test that doesn't take complexity into account.

11.3 ACTIVITIES

1 Use the Bechdel test to assess some of the top films released this year. Respond to the areas of investigation in the table below.

ANALYSE	EVALUATE	DESCRIBE
Analyse the films, dissecting and interpreting the speaking roles to evaluate them using the Bechdel criteria. **Make a judgement** as to whether or not the films pass the test – and whether they pass the test fully or pass just some or none of the **criteria**.	**Evaluate** the films according to whether they have **worth** independent of the Bechdel test, and whether women still play **significant** roles on screen or in production.	**Describe** the reasons for your decisions, giving **additional information** that demonstrates the process you went through, and **illustrate** with examples.

2 Try conducting a 'reverse Bechdel test' in relation to the portrayal of males in films, television programs and video games. **Analyse** current movies, but also consider the following movies as possibilities: *Psycho* (1960), *The Terminator* (1984), *About Last Night* (2014) and *Juno* (2007). **Evaluate** the **worth** of the Bechdel test as a tool that can work in a variety of situations by **systematically examining** its applicability.

3 **Create** a collage charting changes in either the male action hero character in films or the representation of the housewife/mother figure in advertising. You will need samples from each of the key eras of media development: the pre-feminist, feminist and post-feminist eras. **Describe** the changes in labels attached to the collage, giving additional information about each stage.

REPRESENTATIONS OF CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

Australia is considered a multicultural country, but historically media in Australia has 'generally been whiter and less representative of the general population, compared to the UK and US,' explains Andrew Mercado, an Australian writer and producer. Recently, there has been increased commentary online and in the media about the underrepresentation of cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD) on Australian and international screens, and the issue is often highlighted by awards ceremonies such as the Logies and the Oscars.

Although there have been improvements in reflecting Australia's multiculturalism on screen, research from organisations such as

Screen Australia and *Media Diversity Australia* show that the industry still has a long way to go. Screen Australia's 2023 report 'Seeing Ourselves 2' showed that there was a disparity between representations of cultural groups in TV dramas, compared to the Australian population benchmarks, as shown in Figure 11.14. In particular, there is underrepresentation of European communities such as people with Greek, German and Italian heritage and people from non-European backgrounds such as Indian, Chinese, Filipino and Vietnamese ancestry. Similarly, a 2022 investigation of news and current affairs programs, 'Who Gets to Tell Australian Stories? 2.0', showed that 76 per cent of on-camera presenters and reporters across all networks were of Anglo-Celtic background, and that other cultural and linguistic communities were underrepresented.

Another concern raised in the 'Seeing Ourselves 2' report is that actors who are people of colour tended to move overseas where there are more job opportunities for lead characters, rather than supporting roles (Figure 11.15). After Chris Pang's breakout role as Lee Takkam in *Tomorrow, When the War Began* (2010), despite wanting to work in Australia, Pang found there weren't roles available for ethnic actors at the time. In an interview about her starring role in *Miracle Workers* (2019–) alongside Daniel Radcliffe, Australian actor Geraldine Viswanathan echoes this sentiment, commenting that there is 'more money, more diversity and more projects' happening in the US.

A positive trend in Screen Australia's report is that children's television included higher levels of diversity in cultural and linguistic backgrounds of characters, such as recent shows from the Australian Children's Television Foundation.

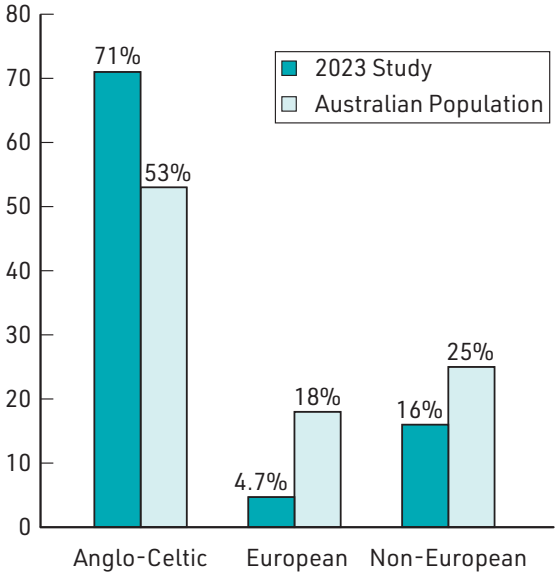


Figure 11.14 Statistical representation of the cultural background of main characters, based on 3072 characters across 361 TV dramas broadcast 2016 to 2021, compared with the Australian population, based on the ABS Census 2021.

Authentic storytelling and representations

Australian TV shows such as the reboot of *Heartbreak High* (2022–) and *Bump* (2021–) have received local and international praise for reflecting the diversity in today's high schools. Writer Debi Enker argues that *Bump* portrays a contemporary and recognisable Australia without being tokenistic or stereotypical (Figure 11.16). The original 1990s *Heartbreak High* is an icon in Australian television and was known for authentically showcasing a multicultural Australia with characters of Greek, Italian, Lebanese and Southeast Asian



Album/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.15 *The Bold Type* (2017–21) star Aisha Dee grew up on the Gold Coast. After her role in the Australian TV series *The Saddle Club* (2001–09), Dee realised she wasn't getting the same opportunities as her acting peers and moved to the US to continue her acting career.

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backgrounds, as well as depicting a grittier version of teenage life compared to other TV shows at the time.

Whitney Monaghan of Monash University says that audiences can tell when 'a series is focusing on telling inclusive, complex and authentic stories', as opposed to trying to manufacture diversity, which can sometimes lead to characters being one-dimensional or sidelined in the narrative. Reaching the Top 10 list on Netflix in over 45 countries, the reboot of *Heartbreak High* has been celebrated for its authenticity in casting actors who align with the characters' representations.

When writer Benjamin Law had meetings with production companies about creating a TV show based on his 2010 book *The Family Law* (Figure 11.17), he noticed a trend where executives saw the show as another 'ethnic comedy', which Law says somewhat missed the point of the source material.

Producer Tony Ayers from Matchbox Productions saw the story as about comedy and divorce, rather than the family's 'Chinese-ness' being the main plot. Law says, 'There were all the cultural specifics, like they weren't going to whitewash the family or anything like that, but the ethnicity was not the engine of the story.' The prerelease of the first episode on Facebook achieved over 1.1 million views, and the series has since won multiple awards and become SBS on Demand's most viewed show.

Chris Pang's role as the villain in the opening scene of the 2019 film reboot of *Charlie's Angels* is also a win for authentic character representations. Originally the role was written as a 40-year-old Russian man, and then when Pang was cast, his character was supposed to have an Asian accent and begin the scene speaking Chinese. In a refreshing change from the usual Asian villain stereotypes, the producers heard Pang's Australian accent, and



Dan Edwards, Producer, Roadshow Rough Diamond.

Figure 11.16 Carlos Sanson plays Santi Hernandez, who unexpectedly becomes a teenage parent in *Bump* (2021–). The series is one of the first to show authentic Latin American culture on Australian screens. The Hernandez family are complex characters who are played by actors of the same cultural and linguistic background.



'The Family Law'. Image provided by Matchbox Pictures

Figure 11.17 Trystan Go stars as Benjamin Law in the comedy series *The Family Law (2016–19)*. Although difficult to find actors at the time, the creators were determined to cast the Cantonese-speaking Chinese-Australian family authentically, and the cast included both experienced and first-time screen actors.

> Screen stories that authentically reflect us and our place in the world are important for helping to grow our cultural identity and because all Australians have the right to be included in the stories we tell about ourselves.
>
> **Graham Mason**, CEO, Screen Australia

then completely changed the role so the character was Australian.

Sydney-based director/producer Ana Tiwary believes that culturally authentic representations and storytelling have these qualities:

- **Cultural integrity.** This goes beyond appearance and accents, and the story and representations come from a genuine understanding of the culture and history.
- **Story sovereignty.** The creatives behind the story need to have lived experience, or as actor and comedian Ronny Chieng affirms 'the only way to get authenticity is to actually get it from the people whose story you are trying to tell.'
- **Community trust:** The community that is represented can trust the creators of the work to create authentic stories and representations.

Issues in representations of CALD

In addition to the underrepresentation of CALD, misrepresentation is also a common issue through inauthentic casting choices, tokenism or stereotypical representations.

Inauthentic casting

Inauthentic casting is when the cultural and linguistic background of the actor is not aligned with the character being represented. There are numerous examples of this in global films and television shows over the history of moving-image media, and what may have been accepted or even praised at the time is viewed differently by modern audiences (Figure 11.18).

Film critic and writer Jessica Kiang has categorised the practice of Hollywood 'whitewashing' – that is, replacing characters of colour with white actors – in terms of three levels of degree:

1 **The first degree:** when a character's ethnicity as originally written is changed before filming starts so a white actor can play the role instead. This level can go unnoticed by audiences if the changes aren't publicised or the source text is not well known.
2 **The second degree:** when a white actor is cast as a character of non-Anglo-Celtic background, but the character isn't rewritten as a 'white' character (Figure 11.19). Recent examples include Rooney Mara playing the character of Tigerlily in *Pan* (2015) and Tilda Swinton as the Ancient One in Marvel's *Doctor Strange* (2016).
3 **The third (and considered the most offensive) degree:** when a white character alters their appearance to portray a person of colour, known as 'blackface' or 'yellowface'. A recent Australian example is Chris Lilley's mockumentary style TV shows where he played a range of characters, some being people of colour. Considered successes at the time, Chris Lilley won Logies and AACTA Awards for his performances.



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.18 One of the often-cited historical examples of inauthentic casting in film, or 'yellowface', is Mickey Rooney's role as Mr Yunioshi, the Japanese-American landlord in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961). Even at the time, the representation was criticised in some reviews and likened to stereotypical WWII propaganda. When the film was released, James Power described the role as 'caricature that will be offensive to many'.



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.19 Scarlett Johansson as 'The Major' in the film adaption of the Japanese manga *Ghost in the Shell* (2017). The film did not perform as expected at the box office, and Paramount pointed to the controversy surrounding Johansson's casting as one of the factors to negatively affect the film's critical and commercial success.

In 2020, Netflix removed several productions from their platform, including four of Lilley's shows: *We Can Be Heroes* (2005), *Summer Heights High* (2007), *Angry Boys* (2011) and *Jonah From Tonga* (2014). Originally distributed on ABC, the company noted in a statement: 'Community attitudes change across time and context, and we recognise that the ways in which some characters have been depicted in the past might be considered deeply objectionable or offensive today.'

Tokenism

'Tokenism' in terms of representations of CALD is when a character/actor is included to give an appearance of diversity in a production and is sometimes the only character of colour within a group of characters.

Writer and editor Zoya Patel argues that there has been a pattern in film and TV of 'token ethnic friends', such as the character of Chastity in *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999) or Raj in *The Big Bang Theory* (2007–2019). The idea of tokenism can also extend to behind the camera roles, such as when a person of colour is hired as a writer, but they may not have significant input.

Positioning characters as 'the other'

Cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall's theory of the 'other' is when people are represented as different to the dominant group or culture, which for people of colour is usually in comparison to western Anglo-Celtic representations. These representations often rely on stereotypes and tropes of groups of people and can set up binary oppositions between them.

Anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss argued humans understand the world and culture through binary oppositions; for example, hot is the opposite of cold, order is the opposite of chaos and so on. This binary opposition theory can be applied to representations where conflict is created through the constructed opposition, which can also represent underlying themes. This can lead to simplified and negative representations, such as in some Western genre films where white townspeople are represented as 'civilised' verses the representation of Native American characters as 'uncivilised'.

Although Alvarado's *Theory of Ethnicity and Racial Stereotypes* was published almost 40 years ago, it is still a recurring topic in studies of representations of CALD in media today. Alvarado's theory of representations is that ethnic minorities are represented four main stereotypical ways: the Exotic, the Dangerous, the Pitied and the Humorous. A common example of the Dangerous is the villain in a production being a person of colour from a cultural background that is different to the main character(s).



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.20 Chris Tucker as the effervescent Ruby Rhod in Luc Besson's *The Fifth Element* (1997). Fitting into Alvarado's Humorous category, Tucker's character is the comic relief sidekick character for hero Korban Dallas (Bruce Willis).

Representations in animations

Maria Lewis, Assistant Film Curator at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), believes that animations are starting to head in the right direction towards authentically representing



Photo 12/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.21 During the production of *Moana* (2016), Disney paid more attention to cultural authenticity by having Polynesian creatives in the 'Oceanic Story Trust' approve or reject specifics relating to culture. For example, originally the character of demi-God Maui was bald, but after consultation with the advisers, this was changed to long hair to represent his power.

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non-western cultures, but this hasn't always been the case. A Google or YouTube search reveals several examples of stereotypical representations of CALD in TV and film animations.

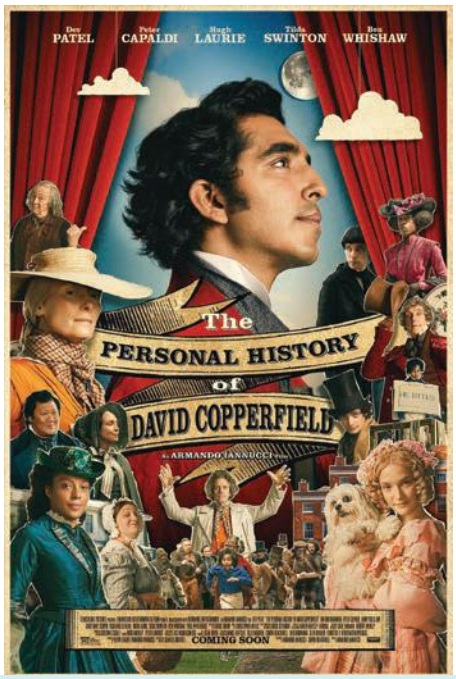
Representations of characters and their culture are created through the visuals and also through dialogue, song lyrics and voice acting. For example, in Disney's 1992 *Aladdin,* journalist Jon Ronson notes that all the 'good Arabs' in the film have American accents, but all the 'bad Arabs' have stereotypical pseudo-Middle Eastern accents. Warner Brothers has been criticised for the *Looney Tunes* character Speedy Gonzales for perpetuating Mexican stereotypes. The cartoons haven't been broadcast on television in the US since the 1980s because of concerns regarding representations.

Disney/Pixar animations such as *Coco* (2017), *Encanto* (2021) and *Turning Red* (2022) have been praised for their representations of the cultures of the characters in each film, along with authentic voice casting for the characters. *Turning Red* was directed by Domee Shi, and the project is notable for being the first feature film in Pixar's 36-year history that was solo directed by a woman.

The case for diverse representations in the media

Over the past few years of 'Hollywood Diversity Reports', research has shown that the productions with more diversity in casts, writers and creators are more popular with audiences, and feature films with authentic diversity are doing better at the box office. According to the 'Hollywood Diversity Report 2023', it doesn't matter how critically acclaimed a film is, if there isn't CALD of the cast and authentic representations, the films haven't been as profitable.

These findings are also supported by data from Screen Australia (2023), where diversity in media makes commercial sense, since 'stories and characters that resonate and connect with audiences are more likely to succeed, both here in Australia and on a world stage.'



Entertainment Pictures/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.22 Dev Patel, a Londoner with Indian heritage, plays David Copperfield in director Armando Iannucci's 2019 remake of the Charles Dickens classic. Considered a landmark example of 'colour-blind' casting, or 'colour-inclusive' casting, as producer Kevin Loader prefers, the filmmakers aimed to cast actors who were 'capable of embodying the character as perfectly as possible, regardless of their ethnicity'.

11.4 ACTIVITIES

1. **Research** the **#StarringJohnCho** social movement that showed what Hollywood blockbusters would look like if they cast an Asian-American actor – specifically, John Cho – as their leading man. Start with the website by the movement creator, and **analyse** how the movement used social media to spread awareness about casting and representation issues in Hollywood films. **Evaluate** the success of the movement, particularly considering the campaign's win in the 9th annual Shorty Awards, which honours brands', agencies' and non-profits' work across social and digital platforms.
2. As a class, **examine** recent films and TV series made in the past two years in Australia. **Analyse** the representations of CALD. Split the class into two groups to form a debating group, and **evaluate** whether Alvarado's theory of stereotypes is still relevant and applicable in analysing representations in contemporary Australian media, using examples from your research to support your points.

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REPRESENTATIONS OF FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES

First Nations peoples' character portrayals were not commonly seen in the first dramatisations of Australian life on screen. Although Australia was at the forefront of the new medium of film at the time, it would take five decades for Australian cinema to shift its focus. It would take 50 years for cinema to shift its focus from the outlaw Kelly Gang's struggle with the law to the cultural clash of First Nations peoples with colonised Australia.

Pre-screen media representations

From the earliest days of colonisation, newspaper and journal articles sent tales of 'exotic' cultures to audiences back in England. Europeans in colonised Australia had their own varied experiences with First Nations cultures and the anecdotes from pioneers carried significant weight.

The 1836 shipwreck saga of Eliza Fraser produced a publishing and speaking tour phenomenon. Adventure stories of the frontiers were popular, and Eliza's story of surviving the loss of her family on the island of K'gari would lead to it being named 'Fraser Island' until 2023. Fraser's retelling fuelled attitudes that led to kidnappings and murderous raids involving white settler volunteers sworn in as 'special constables' and the much-feared Queensland Native Police, based in Maryborough.

Questioning colonial representation

While newspapers routinely listed acts of aggression against colonists, such as animal stealing and the mass murder of shipwreck survivors, some mainstream publications occasionally considered the First Nations peoples' perspectives. The *Moreton Bay Courier* reported that the reprisal raids on the 'Great Sandy Island' (K'gari) included 'rumours of natives driven into the sea' and covered by 'extraordinary secrecy'.

The 'land grab' became an explicit part of the Western film and television genre in the US when the colonising experience was retold. Screen representations often showed frontier conflict with First Nations peoples depicted in a warlike mode over territory. While the Australian rush for resources of pastoral land, timber and gold fuelled the displacement of First Nations people, this fact was largely ignored when the representations of the era finally arrived on narrative screens.

Despite peaceful interactions, there was also conflict, organised resistance and massacres. Historian Henry Reynolds questions the lack of memorials to colonial conflicts in his book, *Forgotten War*. He concludes that 10 000 Indigenous deaths in Queensland were directly attributable to frontier wars, and 20 000–30 000 deaths occurred across the country. Reynolds argues that ignoring the violence was a deliberate choice in a context of uncomfortable contradiction. First Nations groups were considered colonised British subjects within the legal system, but also treated as foreign enemy fighters. *The Australian Wars* miniseries (2022) looks back on violent encounters with different language groups, challenging colonial representations of these battles. The documentary argues that far from being individual localised events, systemic factors, including racist government policies, produced the frontier conflicts, which constituted a war that was never officially declared.

Early screen recordings

As with the world's first documentary film, *Nanook of the North* (1922), documenting the lives of the Inuit living above the Artic Circle, the authenticity of filmmaking wasn't questioned, due to the camera operator's expertise and the implied objectivity of the act of filming. According to colonial assumptions, First Nations groups around the world were regarded as technologically primitive

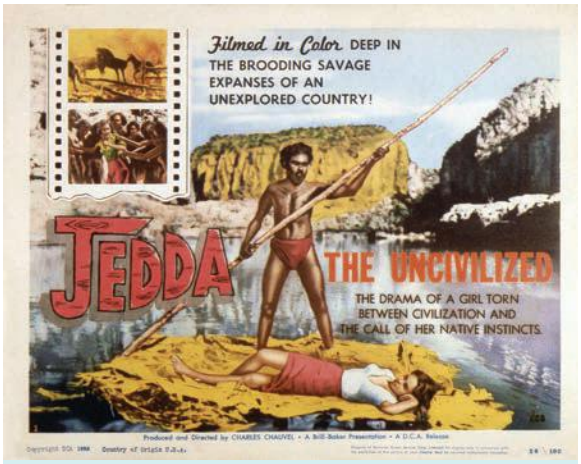
Weblinks

Maria shipwreck project

Illawarra and South Coast Aborigines

Australian frontier conflicts

Finding Eliza: Power and Colonial Storytelling



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.23 Charles Chauvel's *Jedda* (1955) was one of the first films to acknowledge First Nations people and cast them in starring roles. Some argue the plot presents racial extinction as the alternative to full assimilation with colonial Australia.

and it was unimaginable that these groups would one day operate camera equipment themselves. The first Inuit family filmed building their igloo was portrayed as a curiosity for entertainment and to document what were conveyed to be vanishing traditions.

Ethnographic recordings

The coming of film was seen as a great leap forward in the systematic study of individual cultures. In Australia, anthropologists were already recording unique practices of previously undisturbed language groups. In the 1960s, international experts recognised an urgency to record 'traditional' customs, with the predicted extinction of social practices around the globe, as a direct result of colonisation and modernisation. Early attention was paid to men's sacred ceremonies. Hours of footage is archived under restricted access, available only to initiated members of the groups that were filmed.

First screen representations

Fragments of film recorded in Queensland in 1898 survive as some of the oldest cinema recordings in the world. Torres Strait Islanders and visiting mainland Aboriginal people were filmed as part of a Cambridge University expedition by A. C. Haddon.

Charles and Elsa Chauvel made narrative films that routinely acknowledged the First Nations presence. Born in Warwick, and educated in Ipswich and the Gold Coast, Charles Chauvel's movies were pioneering in their inclusion of First Nations peoples' characters, albeit in varying representations of the era. *Jedda* (1955) was the first film with a First Nations protagonist.

Early authentic representations

Bill Onus was among the First Nations extras on *Uncivilised* (1936) while also working as an assistant on the film. The Yorta Yorta/Wiradjuri man was also a cultural advisor while working on *The Overlanders* (1946) in the Northern Territory. Rediscovered archival footage indicates that skills learnt on-set allowed the shop owner, showman and political activist to also become the first Indigenous filmmaker in 1946 (Figure 11.24).

The authenticity of the filmmaker behind the camera is a recent acknowledgement. Discussions



Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI)

Figure 11.24 A photo discovered in the belongings of Bill Onus sparked research into what the camera was filming. One of the clips is thought to be a play based on mistreatment of First Nations men Onus witnessed when filming in the Northern Territory. Now believed to be the first Indigenous production on a cinema camera, its history is pieced together by Onus's grandson in the documentary *Ablaze* (2021).

regularly occur in modern times regarding whether a producer has the 'right' to tell a story, of their own social and cultural heritage. This question was not a consideration for early cultural representations on film. Technical competence was the first consideration or barrier for early productions. Other resources and practices determined who told which stories, and First Nations peoples were one of the voices not prioritised in this process.

On-screen representations

Screen representations of First Nations peoples have been created by First Nations producers and non-Indigenous filmmakers. Earlier media texts are less likely to be the result of First Nations' creative input, but are nonetheless part of the changing representations on screen. These complex stories often have overlapping themes in their representations.

Life on Country

A version of undisturbed traditional life is often romanticised on-screen as a lost past or something to return to. The first feature film made 'in language', *Ten Canoes* (2006), presents a pre-western, ancient world. The setting is idyllic and traditional cultural practices are foregrounded, such as multiple wives and tribal justice spearing. *Kanyini* (2006) recounts the principles of the traditional society around Uluru. The documentary equates the rise of modern social problems with loss of connection to kinship, creation, place and one's own spirit. Leaving modern

Weblinks

A history of Australian ethnographic film

Uncivilised (1936)

William Buckley, the escaped convict who lived with First Nations people

Activist Bill Onus

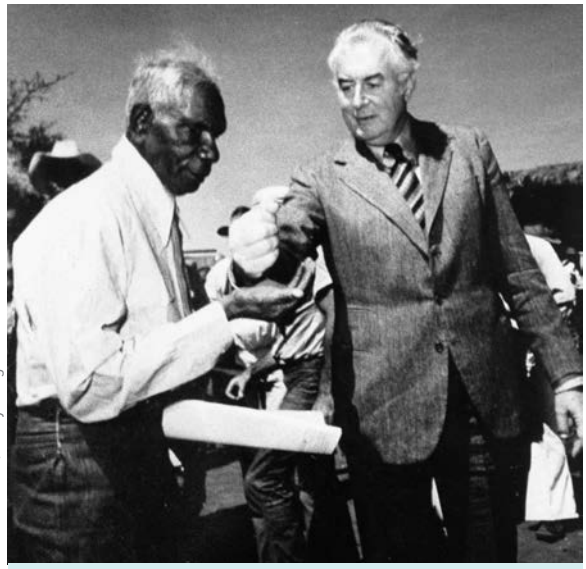
Ablaze review, Bill Onus

William Bill Onus: first peoples relations

Bill Onus: Australian Centre for the Moving Image

Deep Dive: Ablaze

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Fairfax Media/Getty Images

Figure 11.25 Prime Minister Gough Whitlam drops soil from a clenched fist into the hands of Vincent Lingiari, leader of the 'Wave Hill walk-off': '... and I put into your hands this piece of the Earth itself ...' This became an iconic moment for the land-rights movement.

life and modern medicine to reconnect with the old ways is depicted in *Charlie's Country* (2013).

Protecting Country

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Vincent Lingiari the leader

Environmental priorities are increasingly aligned with the notion of protecting Country. *Storm Boy* (1976) presents the Aboriginal character's deep sense of connection to the environment. His connectedness to the environment is the binary opposite of the caricatures of drunken white hunters. The reboot film version more specifically focused on protecting the environment from big business. Heavy with road movie genre elements, *Satellite Boy* (2012) also deals with a mining company's agenda. In Verner Herzog's film *Where the Green Ants Dream* (1984), desert people block bulldozer blades to stop mining destruction. In the story world, science emerges to support the uniqueness of the site based on the ants' sensitivity to magnetic fields, pre-empting mainstream acceptance of First Nations peoples' environmentalism.

One foot in each world

First Nations characters can exemplify the torment of communities pulled between competing cultures (Figure 11.26). Mission settlements and government gazetted 'Aboriginal reserves' housed different language groups together, forcibly removed from their



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.26 Deborah Mailman plays an accomplished 'dual citizen' character in the series *Total Control* (2019). She has one foot in each world as she represents remote communities as a politician in the national capital. Mailman's character becomes part of the prime ministerial powerplay.

own lands into westernised life. These settlements were intentional. However, town camps are make-shift communities largely populated by those who exist somewhere between conventional suburban living and life on Country. *The Fringe Dwellers* (1986) takes its name from these camps. Economic and physical exclusion resulted from the negative effects of government policy on First Nations people. 'Boundary' roads and streets in places such as Brisbane are named for the night-time exclusion zones imposed on First Nations people. *Spear* (2016) is a story from the Bangarra Dance Theatre. The tagline explains, 'A foot in each world – a heart in none'.

Dead Heart (1996) addresses an Aboriginal person's death in custody. The role of traditional law and western law are both at play. *Jindabyne* (2006) is set in the Australian Alps where a network of dams submerged traditional Country.

The TV series *Mystery Road* (2018) centres on two murders: a local black footballer and a white backpacker [series one]. The town's history of past injustice is brought to light by the First Nations detective who works with his white sergeant. *Goldstone* (2016) and the *Mystery Road* movie (2013) feature the same protagonist and explore various racial divides.

Crisis and crime

Samson and Delilah (2009) is a love story within a harrowing broader story of glue sniffing, car stealing, punishment beatings and other assaults. The implication is that those from a disadvantaged background must first overcome and survive many obstacles for any chance of successful relationships.

Toomelah (2011) portrays disconnection at school and the alternative of criminal involvement.

Tracking skills

Aboriginal tracking skills were highly valued. *The Tracker* (2002) is set in 1922, with one Aboriginal man assisting in the pursuit of another, accused of murdering four Europeans. *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002) is primarily a story to depict the personal experience of the Stolen Generations, but the three girls who break out of the systemic separation from family must also avoid the First Nations tracker employed to pursue them. Also depicted in *Jedda* (1955), *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978) and *Sweet Country* (2017), trackers are often represented as helping fellow First Nations people to evade capture. The reality was far more ruthless and is explained in the third episode of *The Australian Wars* (2022). The documentary series explores the systematic use of the Native Police Corp in Queensland to track other First Nations people (Figure 11.27).

Mystical connections

Affinity with the land is often extrapolated to a mystical connection. First Nations activist and academic Marcia Langton says some films portray Indigenous Australians as overly romanticised figures, often with special powers. In *The Last Wave* (1977), a lawyer has premonitions of his First Nations clients, and his dreams are haunted by sacred objects and apocalyptic prophecy. Tracey Moffat combined supernatural stories from Aboriginal and Irish heritage in a compilation called *BeDevil* (1993).



Brendon Thorne/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images

Figure 11.27 Director Rachel Perkins accepts the award for *The Australian Wars* (2022). The final episode recounts the use of Trackers. Their skills were so valued, some were transported to South Africa to serve with the British in the Boer War.

More recently, First Nations filmmakers have amalgamated stories with aspects of the superhero genre. The *Cleverman* series (2016) sees a journey of self-discovery and Dreamtime connections to beings from a spiritual world. Despite the modern city setting, there are ancient inherited mystical powers. *Firebite* (2021) blames white settlement for the introduction of a bloodthirsty pest species to the continent – vampires.

Mixed heritage

Many Australians with mixed heritage had their origins hidden. The social pressure of the imported class system weighed heavily on status in the new colonies. Free-settler, educated, landowner males of English background were most advantaged. The lower classes in this hierarchy were more likely to be excluded, and some found allegiances with local Indigenous people. In the historic fiction TV series *The Secret River* (2015), the Thomas Blackwood character is discovered to have an Aboriginal family. Due to the social context of the time, even formally married couples across the racial divide were likely to hide family origins.

The relative power that employers and landholders wielded over the working class and house servants was immense. Many domestic workers were First Nations women and girls, separated from family, not in control of their own 'wage' and relying on employers for food and shelter in isolated settings. This vulnerability allowed exploitation and abuse, including fathers concealing their identity from their illegitimate children. One of the sisters in *Radiance* (1998) argues with her mother over the keeping of a secret heritage. Re-uniting for their mother's funeral, the three sisters are from three different fathers, and one seems to be a local cane farmer who has used his wealth and position to hide his parenthood. *Beneath Clouds* (2002) chronicles a road movie duo, with Lena longing for her absent Irish father as she negotiates her First Nations heritage after initially denying it. *Jasper Jones* (2017) highlights the assumption of guilt felt by First Nations youth under suspicion. While the very adult themes tackle other forms of racism, the active denial of parenthood is also revealed in the plot.

Mixed heritage was historically denied for reasons of social status, but also to avoid restrictions on land ownership, enlisting for war service and even permission to marry. The strongest motivation to cover-up heritage was the government policies regarding removal of children of 'mixed descent' from families.

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The Drover's Wife (2021) started as a short story by Henry Lawson and has been transformed into a modern tale of hidden heritage and underclasses. Director Leah Purcell wrote her own heritage into the screenplay version, which also explores the voice of women as isolated pioneers.

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The Australian Wars: education resource

Violent retaliation

First Nations characters committing violence are often portrayed as having being driven to the act by oppressive forces. *Jedda* (1955) shows the 'wild' Marbuck luring and abducting Jedda for a wife. She is a black woman raised in the white household, portrayed as educated and refined. The 1950s audience is therefore guided to see her appropriate partner as Joe, the mixed-heritage station hand. Marbuck's obsession with Jedda is resolved with a violent conclusion for several characters. *Jedda* elevated First Nations performers but also reinforced racial mores through forbidden love, gender roles and violence.

The making of the film itself that created the first indigenous film stars is explored in *Tudawali* (1987). *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978) also revolves around 'mixed-marriage' plans. Jimmie's violent response to circumstances leads him to issue a declaration of war. First Nations director Warwick Thornton's *Sweet Country* (2017) shows a cornered Aboriginal man using violence in self defence.

Weblinks
Kevin Rudd's Apology to the Stolen Generations

Text of the apology to the stolen generations

Prime Minister Paul Keating Redfern Speech

Movies themselves can make aggressive statements without overt violence, as did the short film called *BabaKiueria* (1986). The film challenges racial stereotypes by presenting a mockumentary that is a role-reversal of Australian history from colonisation (Figure 11.29). This time it is Indigenous Australians who invade the 'Barbeque area' lands of the white natives – the BabaKiuerians.

Social unity

Non-Indigenous and First Nations Australians have been represented as harmoniously co-existing or actively cooperating, with characterisation often undeveloped, or the story avoided points of friction with the dominant view of European settlers. *Uncivilised* (1936) portrayed a European leader integrated into an Aboriginal clan. *Walkabout* (1971) depicts the rescue of two stranded children in the outback. Their informal Aboriginal guide keeps them alive through his knowledge of the land, but does not survive the encounter himself.



BRIAN ELLIOTT/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.28 The word 'Sorry' appeared written in the sky over Sydney landmarks on Australia Day, just weeks before the formal national apology. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered the speech in parliament to the Stolen Generations in 2008. 'As Prime Minister of Australia, I am sorry'. Ian Hamm was taken from his Aboriginal family as a three-week-old baby in 1964, and the apology changed his sense of identity: 'My country doesn't argue about me anymore; it gave me peace.'

Intersecting cultures were presented with subtitled First Nations' language for the first time in the *Women of the Sun* (1982) episodes. The First Nations experience is portrayed through the lives of four Indigenous women over a 200-year span, from the first encounter with the English to the 1980s. The stories include life on missions, the reserves and discovery of secret First Nations heritage.

We of the Never Never (1982) depicts the wife of a station owner as the only character wanting to spend time with the Aboriginal women. Chastised by cattlemen for thinking she can educate the women, she replies, 'I don't want to teach them anything; I want to learn from them.' *Crocodile Dundee* (1986) shows the white



The Print Collector/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.29 The flag planting scene in *Babakiueria* (1986) is a role reversal of colonial depictions of arrival in Australia. The mockumentary uses racism itself as an intellectual retaliation against prejudice. Stereotypes of the era of production are swapped on racial lines.

Dundee character as fully initiated into tribal life. Some humour is based on First Nations people being assumed to be traditional: 'You can't take my photo.'
'Oh, you believe it will take your spirit away?'
'Nah, you've got the lens cap on.'

The Straits (2012) is a rare representation of the Torres Strait Islands, albeit as a background for smuggling across a porous border. A mafia-style, multi-ethnic family is portrayed using their network to illegally trade with other gangs.

Top End Wedding (2019) also presents island culture, and re-connecting to it is the resolving goal of the romance/road movie. A Tiwi Island mixed-heritage wedding resolves the movie and brings unity across class, culture and personal history. Cultural unity also conquers racism in *The Sapphires* (2012).

Media institutions and authentic producers

Targeted First Nations content helped foster an era of increasing Indigenous media voices in recent decades. Across the country, a growing list of First Nations and mixed-heritage filmmakers expanded authentic stories and developed successful productions, often connected with funding or production institutions. Successful artists include Tracey Moffat, Warwick Thornton, Rachel Perkins, Leah Purcell and Ivan Sen. First Nations actors became well known, such as Deborah Mailman, Ernie Dingo, David Gulpilil, Miranda Tapsell, Aaron Pedersen and Jessica Mauboy.

Imparja Television began broadcasting in 1988, based in Alice Springs and run by First Nations media pioneers. It provided a technical training ground for First Nations producers. One of the founders, Freda Glynn, is the subject of the documentary *She Who Must be Loved* (2018).

Imparja (pronounced Impatye) means footprints or tracks. The Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association behind the TV broadcaster was a significant training base for many. Filmmaker Warwick Thornton grew up around the studios, riding his BMX as a youth.

Note: When researching activities and construction productions, students should be aware that studies authorities recognise that only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can define the protocols and processes for their own knowledge.

11.5 ACTIVITIES

1 **Apply** literacy skills to produce a timeline for Bill Onus. **Research** his involvement in film productions. **Systematically arrange** phrases or sentences to summarise the sequence of his life. Infer connection between personal events and themes from his working life by adding arrows to link the contexts. Include a number of thumbnail illustrations and cite the sources.
2 **Evaluate** the impact of Imparja Television as an institution. **Research** the limitations faced by the broadcaster. Summarise the audience participation opportunity it provides. **List** the media products that stem from people involved with Imparja.
3 **Analyse** two films from different representation sections and different production times. For each film and according to the social norms of that era, **describe** the type of character that a First Nations' audience may empathise with, according to the filmmakers' intention. For a different audience, **describe** the character that filmmakers may intend non-Indigenous audiences to identify with. Discuss the stereotypes in these assumptions. **Describe** the fate of the characters in the story world. **Examine** the message communciated by the resolution for these characters, and the positive or negative ramifications.

REPRESENTATIONS OF NEURODIVERSITY AND DISABILITY

Global estimates of the proportion of people with disabilities worldwide vary from 16 per cent to 25 per cent, yet this is not reflected in the representations on our screens. In a 2023 Screen Queensland study of Australian TV drama, 6.6 per cent of main characters were identified as disabled, which is well below the population benchmark. This underrepresentation of disability on screen, and in the media industry, is an international concern, with similar findings across reports from the US, UK and Canada.

The variation in statistics about disability partly reflects the different definitions of disability around

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Our history: Imparja Television
History of the Remote Indigenous Media Sector
Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association

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the world, and how these definitions have changed over time. Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2008) that defines persons with disabilities as including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'.

Historically, disability was often viewed in terms of a deficit model, focusing on a person's impairments with a medical 'lens' and whether they could be treated, managed or rehabilitated in some way. This is often referred to as the 'medical model' of disability, where people are classified for what they *cannot* do in comparison to what is considered 'normal' abilities or functioning.

Over the past 30 years, there has been a shift in the definition of disability towards a 'social model', where the focus is on what a person *can* do, and the relationship between their impairments and the societal and environmental barriers that impact their participation.

Common issues with disability representations

Although there have been some improvements in disability representation in the media, there are still common issues.



FlixPix/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.30 Peter Dinklage plays a composer with writer's block in the 2023 film *She Came to Me*, alongside Anne Hathaway as his wife, and Marissa Tomei as his accidental muse. Dinklage earned widespread popularity and multiple awards for his performance as one of the lead characters, Tyrion Lannister, in *Game of Thrones (2011–19)*. Born with achondroplasia, Dinklage has made a point throughout his career of avoiding roles that stereotype and often mock people with short stature, such as the 'little people are magic' trope, and 'little people = surrealism' (e.g. dream sequences featuring people with dwarfism).

Background characters and underrepresentation

Often, characters with disabilities are either minor or background characters with few or no lines of dialogue, or they are only short-term characters in a series. Directed by Greta Gerwig, the much-hyped *Barbie* (2023) movie was celebrated on the one hand for exploring gender stereotypes and for diversity in casting, including three visibly disabled Barbies: Wheelchair Vet Barbie, Bionic Barbie and Deaf Barbie.

On the other hand, the film was criticised as these characters were non-speaking roles and only had brief appearances in the film. Disabled people have been largely ignored by mainstream media, and academic Amanda Parsons argues that this 'invisibility' is one of the most influential factors in perpetuating prejudice.

Visible vs invisible disabilities

Disabilities can be 'visible' (e.g. limb difference) or 'invisible' (e.g. neurological difference), and on-screen representations are often of the visible variety. Audiences can pick up obvious or stereotyped visual cues through character movement and appearance, or through props such as a wheelchair, hearing aids or a guide dog and dark glasses. Even when a character has an 'invisible' disability, the character is often given outwardly visible signs, such as dishevelled clothes or hair and exaggerated mannerisms, which can reinforce misleading stereotypes.

One-dimensional stories

Another criticism of disability representation is that their characters are 'one-dimensional' and their stories centre on their disability, whether physical and/or neurological, rather than more complex character development. Australian actor Bridie McKim has noticed a trend where disabled actors such as herself are usually cast in roles where the story arc is about disability. However, she believes that casting is more interesting when disabled people are in roles where the disability isn't the centre of the narrative. Over recent years there have been improvements in representations of disability on screen, but it is widely acknowledged that there is still a long way to go.

Authentic representation and casting

In the 1999 film *Bowfinger*, famous Hollywood action star Kit Ramsey (Eddie Murphy) claims that he needs to play the role of a disabled person in his next film if he wants to win an Oscar. Although this is meant to be a self-reflexive, comedic moment in the film based on a tasteless Hollywood saying, it highlights a pattern in various film awards where one of the quickest ways for an actor to win awards is to 'convincingly' play a disabled character in a feature film.

When writing about the online Twitter campaign *#OscarsSoAbled* in 2021, journalist William Hiesel pointed out that over the past 93 years of the Oscars, actors playing disabled characters were nominated 61 times, and of the 27 actors who won an award, only two of those actors had disabilities themselves. Marlee Matlin is the only deaf actor to have won an Academy Award, twice, most recently for her role in *CODA* (2021). In early discussions about the film, financial backers wanted to cast high-profile, non-deaf actors to play Matlin's on-screen husband and son, but she threatened to quit if they didn't cast authentically. Director Siân Heder agreed, saying, 'Deafness is not a costume you can put on.'

Although there are increasingly more screen stories involving disabled characters, approximately 95 per cent of those roles are given to actors who do not have a disability, according to Lauren Appelbaum, Senior Vice-President at RespectAbility. The issue has also been raised that audiences with disabilities often see inaccuracies and a lack of authenticity in the representations of disabled characters.



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.31 Lauren Ridloff as Makkari in the Marvel film *The Eternals* (2021). Ridloff is the first deaf actor to play a superhero and the representation of her character is a significant departure from the original comic book series. The film has been praised for normalising sign language and captions on screen, and for challenging the usual stereotypes associated with deaf characters.



Australian Children's Television Foundation © 2018 Northern Pictures, Australian Broadcasting Commission, Create NSW and Screen Australia.

Figure 11.32 When Mikey moves from New Zealand to a Western Sydney Primary School in the ACTF show *Hardball* (2019), his new best friends, Jerry and Salwa, help train Mikey into a handball champion. Jerry's character has cerebral palsy, but this is not the focus of the story. Jerry is played by Logan Reberger, who has mixed mobility and uses a wheelchair in real life.

Amy Marks, writer for Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA), maintains that three main areas need to change:

1. **Authentic casting** – where characters with disabilities are played by actors with disabilities
2. **Behind the scenes** – employ disabled people for roles within the film industry, whether in the writers room, behind the camera, the art department or directing
3. **More roles** – include more roles in media with disabled but complex characters that go further than the usual stereotypical and one-dimensional representations that are historically seen on screens.

Stereotypical representations of disability

Representations of disability in media, whether fictional or news/documentary media, have often relied on outdated tropes and fallen into one or more of these stereotypical categories:

- **A figure of pity or tragedy.** Disabled characters are often positioned as someone for the other

characters and the audience to pity, and the story can often follow how the non-disabled characters respond to disability, rather than being from the perspective of the disabled character themselves.

- **Burden, helpless or a victim.** Film scholar Colin Barnes identifies the 'victim' representation as common in disabled characters, where they are often portrayed as helpless and burdens on families or society. In a role that arguably launched a young Leonardo DiCaprio's film career, his character Arnie in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape* (1993) has autism, and he is portrayed as a burden and source of frustration for his older brother, played by Johnny Depp.
- **Eternally innocent.** This representation of disability portrays people as being sweet, childlike and generally naïve about the real world. This stereotype also includes the 'innocent fool' idea, where the character's innocence is associated with an intellectual disability, and plot is often advanced through the character's misunderstandings or accidental by-product of their actions. *Forrest Gump* (1994) is an example of this stereotype, and in the film the main character's low IQ and subsequent gentleness was introduced as a trait that deviated from the source material.
- **A spectacle, objectified as a curiosity or something to be feared.** According to Melinda Hall, horror films often included disabled characters where they were represented as something to be feared, both by the other characters and the audience. *Freaks* (1932) was an early horror film set in a circus, and the director insisted on authentic casting and hired real circus performers with visible disabilities in the central roles. In an interesting subversion of representations, the 'freaks' are shown in the end to be kind and honest, and the 'normal' looking characters are portrayed as having the evil intentions.
- **An outcast or separated from the group.** When disability is represented as the 'other' in a film, the character is often positioned as an outcast, or separate from their community (Figure 11.33). In *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), for example, the character of Edward is found all alone in a gothic mansion by Peg, an Avon salesperson who pities him and takes him home to live with her family. He is initially welcomed by the community for his specialised cutting skills. However, a few misunderstandings later (cue innocent simplicity trope) and he is cast out from the town by an angry mob of townspeople.



Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.33 There have been a number of remakes of Victor Hugo's story *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and the character of Quasimodo (the 'hunchback') ticks a number of stereotypical boxes. His physical differences inspire both pity and fear in others, his character is a victim of violence and he is an outcast in his community. In the 1996 Disney film version, there is even a musical number sung by Esmeralda called 'God Help the Outcasts'.

- **An object of fun or ridicule.** Over the years, the Farrelly brothers have been praised and awarded for their inclusion of disabled cast and crew in their feature films, but on the other hand, they have also been criticised for storylines and characters where audiences are positioned to laugh at disability (e.g. *Stuck on You* (2003) or *Champions* (2023)).
- **An inspiration, triumphing over or despite their disability, the 'super cripple'.** Disabled people as inspiration can often be the storyline of biopics, such as *The Theory of Everything* (2014) about scientist Stephen Hawking, or fictional stories, like *The Peanut Butter Falcon* (2019). Australian comedian and journalist Stella Young gave a TED Talk in 2014, where she spoke about how she is not automatically an inspiration to non-disabled people just because she's in a wheelchair.
- **Aggressive, vengeful or evil.** Disability and being 'evil' have been linked on screen where

visible physical differences have been used to signal moral failings, or an inherent inner monstrosity. In other cases, an 'evil' antagonist is often shown to be motivated as a response to their acquired disability, such as Darth Vader in *Star Wars*, or Captain Hook in the various remakes of *Peter Pan*. The character of Dr No in the first James Bond film in 1962 started a fresh wave of stereotypes of the disabled villain in action films, and this continued even 50 years later with the character of Raoul Silva in *Skyfall* (2012).

- **Not interested in or incapable of adult relationships; asexual.** Sometimes linked with the 'childlike innocence' stereotype, disabled characters are portrayed as either not being interested in or incapable of having 'adult' relationships. Author Colin Barnes argues that examples of this stereotype and assumption can be found throughout media, such as war films where the male character returns home with a disability due to injuries (e.g. Marlon Brando's disabled veteran in *The Men* (1950)).
- **Disability con or cheats.** This representation shows a character pretending to have a disability or who is revealed later in the story as having been 'faking it' all along. For example, in the TV series *Glee*! (2009–15), during the episode 'Wheels', which centres around Artie and the barriers he faces as a wheelchair user, his crush, Tina, admits that she has been faking her stutter for years to get out of certain situations.

These representations and character archetypes have often relied on the outdated 'medical model' of thinking, and these harmful portrayals can reinforce audience and societal misconceptions about disability.

Representations of neurodiversity

Neurodiversity refers to the way our minds and brains can operate differently, and the term was popularised in the late 1990s by Australian sociologist, Judy Singer. Neurodivergent people can include (but are not limited to) those with autism, ADHD, dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

'Oooh shiny' has become a recent trope associated with ADHD, which simplifies a complex condition to characters becoming distracted, or hyperactive, and often for comedic purposes. In *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* (2010), the main character Percy has ADHD and dyslexia, as shown in a classroom scene where the letters move across the blackboard; however, in this film his character is heroic, rather than being the comic relief.

The common stereotype in film and television of the Caucasian, male, autistic savant who is good at maths is likely to have started with the film *Rain Man* (1988), and a secondary stereotype of non-verbal autistic characters was recently evident in the controversial film *Music* (2021).

The representation of the 'autistic genius' with social difficulties is still common in television shows, such as surgeon Sean Murphy in *A Good Doctor* (2017–24), or the title character in Korean law dramedy *Extraordinary Attorney Woo* (2022–). This representation may be positive in terms of celebrating the unique minds of autistic people, but given that only an estimated 10 per cent of autistic people are 'gifted', it leaves many autistic people without relatable characters.

Recent shows such as *Everything's Gonna Be Okay* (2021), created by Australian comedian Josh Thomas (who studied Film, Television & New Media at a Brisbane high school), have been praised for showing different representations of autistic characters and for their authentic casting of autistic actors (Figure 11.34).



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.34 Actor, author and disability rights advocate Chloe Hayden stars as Quinni in Netflix's reboot of the Australian teen drama series *Heartbreak High*. The series has reached the Top 10 list on Netflix in Australia and over 43 countries, and fans have praised the show's diversity, including the authentic representation of an autistic character – Quinni.

11.6 ACTIVITIES

1 **Research** the 'I am Not Your Villain' campaign, created by the UK organisation Changing Faces. This campaign calls on those in the film industry to stop using physical differences as shorthand for villainy.
   a View the YouTube video 'I Am More Than Just Your Villain' and **analyse** how film languages are used to construct the representations in the clip to show people with visible differences as the hero, love interest or main character – and not just the villain.
   b **Evaluate** the effect negative stereotypes can have on audiences with visible differences through the YouTube video 'IAmNotYourVillain'.
2 **Identify** a recent film, television episode, web series or video game that includes a minor or background character with a disability (could be either visible or invisible disabilities). Consider how this character could be rewritten to include them more prominently in the story. **Design** an updated character representation for the story through a pre-production **design** format, such as a character outline or a treatment explaining your character's role in the production. **Select** and edit footage from the film, television episode, web series or video game, and **create** a trailer to portray the background character with a disability as the main character, instead of a minor character.
3 **Evaluate** the claim that most *James Bond* villains have a disability, and that this reinforces the negative stereotype of visible differences in characters signalling evil. **Identify** a cross-section of James Bond villains from the 1960s to now, and **analyse** the representation of the villain characters to establish if this claim is justified.
4 **Identify** a film, television episode, web series or video game where one or more of the lead roles are represented as neurodivergent. **Research** the contexts of production for your chosen text, and **evaluate** whether the production satisfies Amy Marks' criteria for improving representations of disability: authentic casting, employed behind the scenes and complex characters.

REPRESENTATIONS OF AGE GROUPS

Audiences want to see themselves reflected on the screen. However, representations in moving-image stories are always influenced by biases, values and subjectivities of their creators. English-speaking screens remain dominated by American products, and many of the dominant creators belong to specific age demographics. For instance, the filmmakers commonly referred to when discussing 'auteurs' are predominantly white, English-speaking, American men, born in the 1940s (such as Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese).

Representing age groups may not always be authentic to actual lived experience, and will often be tainted with stereotype. Representations of ages that the creator does not have direct, authentic experience or relevant memory of will often appear inauthentic. Age gaps between creators and central characters can lead to inauthentic representations.

The way in which ages are represented is ultimately tied to the contexts of production and use. In terms of context of use, the age of the intended target audience will have a significant impact on how the ages of characters in the product are represented. This is most commonly seen in advertising, where the vision of the ideal consumer directly influences casting of on-screen talent. Perception of the relevance of representations also changes throughout time, as the contexts of use for the audience alters.

In the context of production, the values of the time period in which the moving-image media product is created shape the portrayal of ages in moving-image media storytelling. Representations change over time. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s young people were hyper-present in the media due to the disruptive presence of popular music, popular culture and student-led civil rights protests, such as university sit-ins and the Freedom Rides. Media creators, who were predominantly members of older generations, made a moral commentary by commonly portraying parents as wise and kind, and youth as either troublemakers, resisting the path their parents wisely chose for them to follow, or idyllically, as obedient, loyal and helpful family members.

Youth

Children have appeared on screen since the early days of cinema, often as junior members of the



Ellen McKnight/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.35 When Apple introduced its portable music device, the iPod, advertisements featured silhouettes of young people dancing while holding the device and wearing earphones. The target market of the product, or context of use, were teenagers and young adults.

protagonist's family, or as delinquents. The notion of young people as a clear concept and as a distinct age group in society first emerged in the late Victorian era. In 1904, American psychologist G Stanley Hall coined the term 'adolescence', defining it as the period of 'storm and stress' between 13 and 24 years of age. Prior to this, young people between childhood and adulthood were, if mentioned, most commonly referred to by the label 'juvenile delinquent'.

In between the 1910s and 1930s, child actors such as Jackie Coogan and Shirley Temple became major box office draw cards. However, the appeal of these child actors was seeing them try their best to imitate adult behaviour, often with comedic results. It was not until the second half of the 20th century that the concept of a teenager as a distinct identity first emerged.



Masheter Movie Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.36 The 1933 film *The Mayor of Hell* explores treatment of so-called delinquent boys in reform school. This is an example of the 'juvenile delinquent' stereotype of youth that had been constant in media since the Victorian era. Prior to the emergence of the term 'teenager' in the 1940s, society's approach to the 'storm and stress' of adolescence was to reform, regiment and militarise youth.

The word 'teenager' first appeared in America in 1944 to describe the predominantly-female market who purchased newly-launched *Seventeen* magazine and screamed in excitement over singer Frank Sinatra. In 1959, Mark Abrams, a pioneer of social and market research in the United Kingdom, defined teenagers as people old enough to have their own money to spend, but not yet an adult, so between the ages of 13 and 19. 'Teenager' is generally an English-language term to describe adolescents, young adults or youth, but is not a term used globally. Its use reflects the spread of American culture following World War II.

Once teenagers had been identified as a lucrative target market for product or content sales, moving-image media stories featuring teenagers as central characters soon followed. The first distinct 'type' of adolescent on screen appeared in the 18 'Andy Hardy' films produced by MGM between 1938 and 1946. Child actor Mickey Rooney grew up on screen and starred as the title character, Andy Hardy, fighting against the expectations of a stern but loving (upper-middle class, wealthy, white) parent. The young Andy Hardy struggled to control hormonal impulses, was wholesome, enthusiastic and tried ineffectually to improve his social standing through social relationships.

In the economic boom following World War II, this 'wholesome' teenager found a wider audience through television and the newly emerging sitcom format. The 1954–60 television sitcom *Father Knows Best* presented a highly idealised version of American family where the children, despite little disagreements, always listened to their parents and everything turned out well. To this was added a contrasting representation, echoing across the English-speaking world, of the 'rebel' (Figure 11.37). One of the most iconic examples of the 'rebel' stereotype hit the screen in Nicholas Ray's 1955 film *Rebel Without a Cause*. James Dean's character drives fast cars, smokes, engages in violence with a gang of denim-clad friends and in so doing became a popular culture icon. *Rebel Without a Cause* introduced the world to the 'teen film' as a concept: a story featuring a young person



Archive PL/Alamy Stock Photo



Photo 12/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.37 The two contrasting representations of young people from the 1950s – wholesome family member (as seen in *Father Knows Best* [top]) versus rebellious teen (immortalised in *Rebel Without a Cause* [bottom]) – reflected the values and attitudes of the creators and of the society they felt they were representing: white, middle-class, adult America.

who is repudiating the parental generation, with the dreams and experiments of youth as the central narrative. The teenage boy is portrayed as rebellious yet glamorous.

With the emergence of rock and roll, male performers such as Elvis, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones often dominated the charts. These performers had a significant young female fan base, in an era of growing disposable income among teenagers. American screens began, for the first time, to feature teenage female protagonists. The *Gidget* films



Album/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.38 Police struggle to hold back crowds of screaming teenage fans from swarming the Beatles outside the gates of Buckingham Palace in 1965. 'Beatlemania' constructed a heightened representation of youth in the popular news media. Young people were portrayed as hysterical, unable to control their emotions and willing to do or spend anything in pursuit of a (mostly shallow) ideal – despite their parents knowing what is best for them.

(1959–63) and *Gidget* the television series (1965–66) were about a young woman who dreams of becoming a surfer but ultimately ends up falling in love and getting married.

The new, unpredictable mass of pleasure-loving screaming youth was unnerving and often created moral panic for older generations. These older generations were those behind the cameras, producing the content and in the writers' rooms. However, popular culture highlighted youth as a demographic willing to spend money on products and pleasure. Youth were capable of purchasing a hefty audience share, so creators and advertisers took notice. Youth-centred pop music programs, for instance, began to appear on television in the late 1960s. Australian shows *GTK* (1969–75) and *Countdown* (1974–87) were influential worldwide in helping to create the music video format.

Since the emergence of the 'teen film' in the 1950s, several elements have been common to representations of teenagers and youth culture:

- **Technology.** Teens seem to have possession of current technology, regardless of the era, whether it be cars, radios, computers or mobile phones (e.g. John Hughes's *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986))
- **Peer groups.** Acceptances, friendships, dreams and experimentation are central to coming-of-age stories (e.g. Greta Gerwig's *Lady Bird* (2017; Figure 11.39a))



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo; Album/Alamy Stock Photo; Album/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.39a-c Moving-image media products on cinema and television screens since the 1950s have showcased a variety of representations of youth. Common to all are friendships (a: from Greta Gerwig's 2017 *Lady Bird*), possession of current technologies, a rebellious attitude (b: the 'girls' pose in Lisa McGee's television series *Derry Girls*) and a clear visual identity created through contemporary or subculture fashions (c: in Amy Heckerling's 1995 hit *Clueless*).

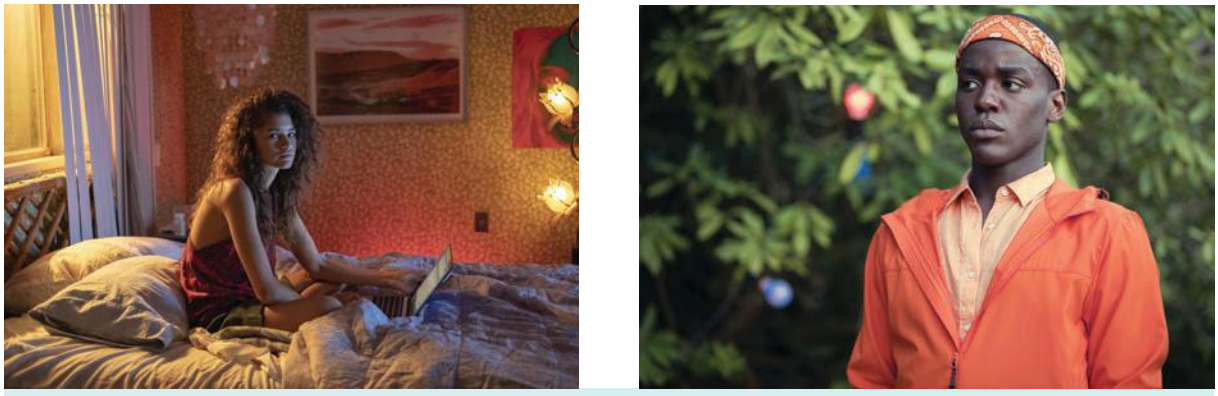
- **Attitude.** Distinct attitude and sassy bold behaviour creates good narratives (e.g. Lisa McGee's *Derry Girls* (2018–22; Figure 11.39b)).
- **Pop culture.** Contemporary fashion and music create a clear visual identity, (e.g. Amy Heckerling's *Clueless* (1995; Figure 11.39c))

In the 1980s, the rise of the multiplex cinema influenced an explosion in content targeted at youth, with rebellion a key theme. Youth were frequently stereotyped as sports-mad 'jocks', awkward nerds, beautiful but ditzy cheerleaders and moody criminal types. These stereotypes are central to John Hughes's cult teen film *The Breakfast Club* (1987). These stereotypes persisted into the 1990s (such as in 1999's teen romantic comedy hits, *She's All That* and *10 Things I Hate About You*) and early 2000s (for instance, 2006's *High School Musical*). The 'troubled highschooler' stereotype rose to daily prominence through popular 1990s television shows such as *Heartbreak High* (1994–99) and *Dawson's Creek* (1998–2003), with dramatic narratives featuring sex, drugs and alcohol.

Content targeting Generation Z audiences (born from the mid-1990s to early 2010s) often portrays youth as technology dependent, device-addicted and narcissistic, such as in shows like HBO's highly successful and controversial *Euphoria* (2019–22). Stories often focus on identity and sexuality, and represent youth as increasingly diverse and values-driven (Figure 11.40).

Age

For millennia, age has been venerated. In the ancient Roman Republic, it was not possible to become a senator until well into middle age because with age came the wisdom required for government. The phrase 'coming of age' captures the transition



Album/Alamy Stock Photo

Album/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.40 Representations of youth in moving-image media have been growing increasingly diverse since the late 2010s, providing a more accurate reflection of society. The exploration of sexuality as central to coming of age is more openly explored in stories representing Gen Z. Pictured: (left) Zendaya as Rue in HBO's *Euphoria* (2019; MA15+) and (right) Ncuti Gatwa as Eric in Netflix's *Sex Education* (2019–23; MA15+).


Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo


Maximum Film/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.41 (Left) A frequent representation of older male characters throughout time has been the authority figure, such as Marlon Brando's patriarch in *The Godfather* (1972). (Right) Older women appear frequently eccentric and 'other', such as Maggie Smith's homeless *Lady in the Van* (2015).

from the tribulations of youth to the wisdom of 'age' or adulthood.

Older adults are prominent figures in culture and society in the real world. In many cultures around the world, older adults are respected and valued as community leaders or Elders. However, older adults in English-speaking countries are not looked up to in the same way. Older people are therefore significantly underrepresented on screens.

A 2015 study of 3000 films from the American box office revealed that while those over 60 comprise almost 20 per cent of the American population, only 11 per cent of speaking characters were over 60.

When moving-image media stories from English-speaking contexts feature an older protagonist, these stories often explore:

- loneliness and isolation – for example, Chloe Zhao's Academy Award-winner *Nomadland* (2020)
- navigating life after the loss of a partner or loved one – for example, Ricky Gervais's series *After Life* (2019–22)
- being a parent of grown-up children – for example, Sadie Sealy's *Lucky Grandma* (2019)
- finding love again – for example, Joel Hopkins's romance *Last Chance Harvey* (2008)
- reflections on what could have been – for example, Academy Award-winning *Everything Everywhere All At Once* (2022) by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert.

In fiction productions, older characters have often been placed on the sidelines in supporting roles. Frequently, these side characters, often male, are there for comic effect or as authority figures, whereas older women can often be portrayed as eccentric (Figure 11.41).

Documentary stories provide more balanced representations, given the reality-based nature of the form. In Maite Alberdi's *The Mole Agent* (Chile, 2020), an 83-year-old man is hired by an investigator to go undercover in an aged care facility and uncover signs of abuse. Lina Plioplyte's *Advanced Style* (USA, 2014) follows seven New York women with vibrant, eclectic style who are undaunted by age. In Matthew Walker's *I'm Wanita* (Australia, 2021), a neurodiverse country music singer is determined to achieve her dream of heading to Nashville and international stardom. *Writing With Fire* by Rintu Thomas and Sushmit Ghosh (India, 2021) follows a group of women journalists of varying ages breaking traditions and exposing injustice in Uttar Pradesh.

As the global population ages and contexts of production and use develop and change, representations of age are growing more inclusive and genres are diversifying. Older characters appear as more than comic relief or authority figures, but as nuanced protagonists across all genres.

11.7 ACTIVITIES

1 Representations of age change over time. Select an original and a remake of a moving-image media story about a young or older person. This could be an advertisement for a long-lived brand such as Coca-Cola that has experienced several iterations; or it could be a narrative film or television product such as *Anne of Green Gables* (CBC, 1985) and *Anne with an E* (CBC, 2017–19). **Research** the context of production and use of each product. **Analyse** the changes in representation. **Draw links** to contexts of production and use.

2 **Identify** current contexts of production and use. Consider popular culture, technology use, social trends and the economic situation for various generations. **Create** a character outline for a protagonist in a story targeting older audiences that reflects current trends. Do the same for a story targeting younger audiences.

3 Through a class discussion, **evaluate** this statement: 'Without student film, youth experience cannot be represented authentically on screen'.

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REPRESENTATIONS OF THE FAMILY

Historically, the representations of family in film and television have often been the 'nuclear' family unit, with a mother, father and two or three children. In Australia, the 2021 Census revealed that only 43.7 per cent of families are a couple with children. Modern families come in different forms. The census counted over a million single-parent families and 2.6 million couples without children, while almost 25 000 same-sex marriages were recorded in the context of the changes to the *Marriage Act* in 2017. The 2023 report by the Australian Institute of Family Studies also notes that people's definitions of family and relationships are not always a match for legislation. For example, the survey showed over half the respondents considered their pets to be part of their family. Representations of family on screens are starting to show the diversity in modern families, such as blended or one-parent families (Figure 11.42), families with and without children, families with same-sex parents and multigenerational families.

The traditional representations of family on the screen are often linked with traditional gender roles, such as the father being the 'breadwinner'. However, this is starting to change. For example, although the children's show *Bluey* (2018) has the recognisable family unit of mother, father and children, the mother Chilli is shown going to work and the father, Bandit, spends time at home with his daughters. The representation of Bandit also challenges the stereotypical 'bumbling dad' trope that has been seen in many TV shows, such as Homer in *The Simpsons* (1989–).

Family relationships are often a focus in **domestic comedies**, which are TV sitcoms about the family and the home. The families in these shows are often traditional 'nuclear' structures. However, they can also feature blended families (e.g. *The Brady Bunch* (1969–74)), or extended families, such as Will Smith's character living with his aunt, uncle and cousins in *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* (1990–96). The family was often represented as an idealised, stable family unit, and these patterns of representation are highlighted in contemporary parodies or homages such as Marvel's *WandaVision* (2021).

The 'dysfunctional family' representation rose in popularity in the 1990s in both live-action and animated series, as well as in indie films in the past



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Figure 11.42 The relationship between Mikey and his dad in *Hardball* (2019–21) is notable for its positive representation of a contemporary father–son relationship. Mikey's one-parent family is expanded in the opening episode when they move to Australia to live with his aunty, a mechanic in Western Sydney.

20 years. These productions generally portray a chaotic version of family life. Despite the conflict between characters, there are usually moments that uphold the ideas of love and the importance of family.

Modern family representations show more variety in family structures and relationships. Multigenerational families are shown in the ACTF show *The Unlisted* (2019) with the Sharma family. In the film *Windcatcher* (2024), the main character Percy lives with his aunt and grandpa. In *Hardball* (2019–21), Mikey's rival Tiffany has two fathers, played by the show's creators Guy Edmonds and Matt Zeremes.

The relationship between parents and their adult children can also be a source of conflict and comedy, such as the original *Mother and Son* series (1984–94) and the 2023 remake of the show. Josh Thomas' *Everything's Gonna Be Okay* (2020–21) portrays a sibling caregiver relationship, where 25-year-old Nicholas unexpectedly becomes the legal guardian for his teenaged half-sisters after their father passes away.

Family and relationship representations also require consideration of the nature of the connection, such as a family relationship portrayed as being close-knit, loving and supportive, or distant, challenging or unsafe. The opening of season two of *Heartbreak High* (2022–), for example, shows Harper signing paperwork to become emancipated from her father. The iconic Australian film *Muriel's Wedding* (1994) includes representations of family and relationships that challenge ideas of happy, loving

families and ultimately results in Muriel rejecting her often destructive family to find happiness. This film also highlights the representation of the 'family of choice', where people form alternative family units or consider each other 'family', regardless of whether they are legal or blood relations.

Diversity and realism in representations of family is important not only to reflect modern society, but also to create relatable characters and stories for audiences.

11.8 ACTIVITIES

1 Choose the most recent film or series you have viewed and **identify** the different families represented in the production. **Analyse** the structure and character roles of the different families (e.g. one-parent families, couples, multigenerational) and **examine** if there is diversity in the types of families included. **Describe** the relationship dynamics between family members and **make judgements** about whether the family is shown as loving and supportive, or otherwise. **Draw conclusions** about whether the representations of family are realistic or if they rely on stereotypes or tropes. **Evaluate** how the representations of family in the production support the narrative and will appeal to the target audience.

REPRESENTATIONS OF LGBTQIA+

Weblink
Queer Representation Matters timeline

LGBTQIA+ is an 'umbrella' acronym referring to people with diverse gender identities and/or sexual orientations. LGBTQIA+ represents lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex and asexual, with the + representing other terms not explicitly defined by the acronym, such as pansexual or non-binary. It is important to recognise that language and terminology continue to evolve, and language preferences and experiences can vary between individuals and communities. The word 'queer', for example, was used in the past as an insult, but the word has been reclaimed by many in the LGBTQIA+ community to be an affirming and inclusive term.

The early years of silent films and the start of the 'talkies' included some portrayals of LGBTQIA+ characters, but the introduction in America of 'The Hays Code' in 1927 (see page 116) meant the next 30 years of Hollywood films were prohibited from including such representations. This resulted in some 'coded' representations, where the sexual or gender diversity of characters was hinted at or could be inferred by audiences, without being explicitly stated within the films. The documentary *The Celluloid Closet* (1995), based on Vito Russo's 1981 book of the same name, shows there was a rise of LGBTQIA+ stereotypes during this period, such as the 'sissy' and queer-coded villains. Another trope that emerged in film, and later in television storylines, was the tragic and often violent ending for LGBTQIA+ characters.

Australia is credited as having some of the earliest LGBTQIA+ representations on TV screens such as the first kiss between two women on *The Box* (1974–77) and trans actor Carlotta's (Carol Byron) role in *Number 96* (1972–77). Although there has been a numerical increase in LGBTQIA+ representations in recent years, especially on streaming services since 2020, senior Cultural Studies lecturer Dr Hannah McCann points out that more representation doesn't always mean authentic or diverse representations. Dr Evangeline Aguas from the University of Technology in Sydney argues that LGBTQIA+ characters in contemporary media are still portrayed as 'disposable', where they are secondary and periphery characters, often used as comic relief or included briefly to support a main character's story. There is also a more recent issue where new shows with LGBTQIA+ characters



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Figure 11.43 The series First Day (2020–22) follows 12-year-old Hannah as she starts at a new high school. In a world first for children's television, Hannah's character is trans and is played by trans actor Evie McDonald. Writer/Director Julie Kalceff believes authentic casting is an essential part of creating any production with trans characters, along with meaningful engagement with relevant communities the production is representing.

are premiered on streaming services, but are often cancelled after one or two seasons, leaving fans confused and disappointed.

Dr Natalie Krikowa, media scholar and screenwriter, points to shows such as *Heartbreak High* (2022–) as positive examples of diversity in LGBTQIA+ representations and developments in the media industry. In a milestone moment for Pixar, for instance, their animated film *Lightyear* (2022) included a montage showing Alisha Hawthorne's relationship with her wife, complete with an on-screen kiss during a 40th anniversary party scene. *Umbrella Academy* (2019–) is also a highlight in authentic transmasculine representation, where Elliot Page's real-life transition was reflected in his on-screen character, Viktor Hargreeves. It is important to show the richness and complexity of the LGBTQIA+ community on screen, argues Dr Krikowa, where the characters have complex story arcs and their sexual orientation or gender identity is one part of their identity, but not the only focus of their story. Director Tony Ayers points out that there are other possible stories beyond the 'coming out' template, such as LGBTQIA+ characters in science fiction shows or murder mystery films, and there are exciting narrative opportunities ahead as Australian stories diversify.

11.9 ACTIVITIES

1 **Analyse** the changes in contexts of production and developments in LGBTQIA+ representations on screen using the interactive 'Timeline' feature on the Queer Representation Matters website.
2 Inspired by the Bechdel test, the Vito Russo test was created by the GLAAD organisation to analyse LGBTQIA+ representations in films.
   a Research and **identify** the three criteria for productions to satisfy the Vito Russo test.
   b Select a recent film or TV show you have viewed and **analyse** whether it passes the Vito Russo test. If not, **describe** how the story and characters could be **redesigned** to ensure it meets the criteria of the test.
   c **Draw conclusions** about how these criteria can help filmmakers create multidimensional LGBTQIA+ characters.

REPRESENTATIONS OF PLACES

The representation of place in moving-image media is key to storytelling. Setting is not only an element of *mise en scène*, but also often a character in the story. How a place is represented helps to define the rules of the story world. Place creates atmosphere, establishes tone, provides symbolism and supports immersion of the audience in the story. Just like for characters, there are numerous global stereotypes or commonalities for how a place is represented on screen. Where place is a character in a story, these common representations often tend to extremes of positives or negatives. These contrasts can often appear in the same story, in order to make comment or create tension (Figure 11.44).

Human environments

Cities

Cities are generally represented in two contrasting ways. The first is as a bustling, wealthy, fashionable place, where family is comprised of friends. The sun always shines, the streets are always clean, and every location within the city is glossy and lit with perfect three-point lighting. This is a very common portrayal of cities in American sitcoms. Examples of this optimistic representation are NBC's *Seinfeld* (1989–98) and *Friends* (1994–2004), and in cinema, Richard Curtis's *Love Actually* (2003).

The second prominent representation of cities is pessimistic. Streets are grimy, dirty and dark. Rain



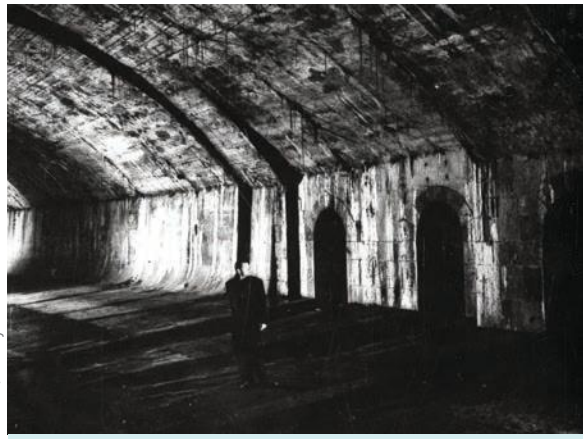
Album/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.44 In Zhi Wei Jow's film *Tomorrow is a Long Time* (Singapore, 2023), half of the story follows the father's life in the outskirts of Singapore, and the other half follows the son through national service training in the forest. The lack of dialogue in *Tomorrow is a Long Time* means the places and their symbolism weigh down upon the viewer – the city becomes suffocating and lonely, and the forest becomes terrifying and oppressive.

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is frequent, and the city is lit with flickering street lamps and low-key lighting. The city is shown as a place without hope, where the individual is overlooked and uncared for. Corruption is rife and families are fractured by problems such as cost of living or violence. Gotham City from DC's *Batman* franchise is an excellent example of this. This darker portrayal of cities has been present since the early days of cinema, and is often associated with genres such as drama, *film noir*, thriller and action. Examples from around the world include:

- Yuusuke Hirota's animated children's fantasy film *Poupelle of Chimney Town* (Japan, 2020), where the sky is blackened from factory chimneys and no one has ever seen the stars
- German neo-noir series *Babylon Berlin* (2017 onwards; MA15+), set in the nightclubs and ganglands of poverty-stricken, war-damaged Berlin during the 1920s and 1930s
- Singaporean drama *Tomorrow is a Long Time* (2023), where a widowed father toils silently in dark, lonely buildings and suffocates his relationship with his son
- Billy Wilder's *film noir* classic *Double Indemnity* (1944) adds shadows and rain as the morality of its main characters decreases
- Science-fiction cyberpunk blockbuster *Bladerunner* (1982), set in a dystopian future Los Angeles of high technology and urban decay



Album/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.45 Carol Reed's classic *The Third Man* (1949) is a story of conspiracy, lies and corruption. It was filmed in dark, damp streets and decaying buildings among the bomb damage of post-Second World War Vienna. *The Third Man's* iconic chase sequence through the underground sewer tunnels of the city added the notion of 'the underground landscape' to portrayals of cities.

- Australian crime drama *Animal Kingdom* (2010; MA15+), capturing the grime of Melbourne's metropolitan area.

When contrasted in the same story, these representations of cities often create social commentary, as in Fritz Lang's silent epic *Metropolis* (Germany, 1927), where the city's oppressed workers toil down on the grimy industrial ground, and the wealthy float above in shining towers.

Suburbia

The stereotype of the suburb is as a location home to middle-class families, a place of normality and safety in which to raise children. For these reasons, the setting of suburbia presents an excellent storytelling opportunity for creating tension by looking 'behind closed doors' and playing on the question of how much a person really knows their next-door neighbour.

Television and cinema products from Australia are frequently centred around the suburbs, with soap operas such as *Neighbours* (1985–2022, 2023–) marketing Australia's suburbs as an internationally iconic symbol of Australian identity. The family home, kitchen, dinner table and backyard are central features of the suburbs.

There are four key representations of suburbia that appear across the world:

1. The suburbs as a supportive, family-based and very personal place, but often full of eccentric characters (in Australia, the 'bogan' stereotype is common in suburbia), to much comedic effect. Examples of this representation are seen frequently in sitcoms, such as *Modern Family* (USA, 2009–20), *Kath & Kim* (Australia, 2002–22) and *Upper Middle Bogan* (Australia, 2013–16). Supportive, family-based suburbs also feature in movies – *The Castle* (Australia, 1997; Figure 11.46) is an excellent example of this.
2. The suburbs as a threatening and dysfunctional place of unemployment and, often hidden, crime. An excellent example of this unnerving portrayal of the suburbs is *The Boys* (Australia, 1998).
3. The suburbs as a place of cultural tension, where apparently contrasting values clash, such as in the Birmingham estates of *Man Like Mobeen* (UK, 2016–24) or the *Cronulla of Down Under* (Australia, 2016).
4. The suburbs as a lonely, very dull and conformist place that has to be escaped from. People attempt



WORKING DOG/Alamy Stock Photo



RGR Collection/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.46 The suburbs commonly feature as a setting in Australian and American film and television. *The Castle* (1997), in which a family man fights to maintain ownership of his home in the face of developers, is an iconic example of the suburbs as a host to supportive, family-based communities. In contrast, *Pleasantville* (1998) transports modern characters into restrictive 1950s American suburbia, highlighting the conformism of the suburbs through the use of black and white.

to maintain a facade of happiness. Examples of this representation include *Pleasantville* (USA, 1998; Figure 11.46), *Edward Scissorhands* (USA, 1990) and *Muriel's Wedding* (Australia, 1994).

Small towns

The representation of small towns is very often clichéd, reflecting the longings or fears of city-based creators. In Australia, for example, small country towns have come to represent all that is bad in Australian culture (and all that city people can pretend they are above): racism, sexism, violence, homophobia and aggressive male dominance. Rural communities are portrayed as insular. Examples extend from *Wake in Fright* (1971) to *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994) and *The Dressmaker* (2015; Figure 11.47). This trend in Australian cinema is the opposite of that in television soap opera or comedy, where small towns are generally portrayed in a positive light, reflecting a longing for traditional close-knit communities.

Common across both positive and negative representations is the small town as a highly connected, pseudo-family linked by gossip and tight-knit relationships.

There are several key plot tropes in terms of representations of small towns:

- **Return home.** A character living in the city to pursue their career is forced to come 'home' but is reluctant to do so. This representation is common in Hallmark Channel Christmas movies; an Australian example is *Hoodlum's Christmas on the Farm* (2021). However, this representation appears worldwide, for instance, in the Mongolian film *Harvest Moon* (2022).
- **Fish-out-of-water.** An outsider, usually with modern or urban values, arrives in the town. They might try to make a new life, be in hiding or be there to put together pieces of a puzzle. Depending on the characteristics of the town, this story will usually be comedic (e.g. *Panchayat* (2020), *The Vicar of Dibley* (1994–2000), *Schitt's Creek* (2015–20), *Oyster Farmer* (2004) and *Hot Fuzz* (2007)) or horrifying (e.g. *The Wicker Man* (2006), *Dogville* (2003) or *The Village* (2004)).
- **Pastoral idyll.** A character seeks rejuvenation or self-discovery by connecting to small town values. This is a common documentary



Ian West/PA Images/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.47 The representation tropes of small towns provide plentiful material for comedies and dramas. Jocelyn Moorhouse's comedy-drama about revenge, *The Dressmaker* (Australia, 2015), takes place in the small fictional town of Dungatar. Dressmaker Tilly Dunnage must return to the small-minded, unfriendly rural town she was hounded out of as a child to care for her unwell mother.


Allstar Picture Library Limited./Alamy Stock Photo


AJ Pics/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.48 The office is often shown as a place without individuality. In *The Apartment* (Billy Wilder, 1960) and *9 to 5* (Colin Higgins, 1980), the idea of an office looks very similar, despite the films being made 20 years apart.

representation, appearing in reality series such as *Escape to the Country* (UK, 2002–).

- **Village life.** The story follows the interactions of the (potentially eccentric) characters that inhabit the small town. This is common in comedies such as *Hamish Macbeth* (1995–97) and *The Dish* (2000), and in period dramas such as *Lark Rise to Candleford* (2008–11).

Places of work and learning

Places of work and learning are common to everyday human experience, and therefore make frequent appearances in moving-image media.

Workplaces, such as offices, are almost universally portrayed as generic and uniform (Figure 11.48). Offices have cubicles, desks, neutral walls, white fluorescent lighting, whiteboards, meeting rooms and a door between the workers on the floor and the boss's private office.

In Billy Wilder's 1960 comedy *The Apartment*, the main character works in one of these regimented, uniform offices – a space that the viewer assumes reflects his personality. The protagonists of workplace comedy *9 to 5* (1980) seek to allow employees to personalise their desk spaces but are not allowed. The uniformity of workplaces can be easily poked fun at, as in the British/American television series *The Office* (UK, 2001 and USA, 2005–13).

Places of learning, such as schools, colleges and university, are socially divided spaces, where everyone has their place.

Common to places of learning are the following sublocations:

- **The library**: the hangout of study groups, as in the 2009–14 American sitcom *Community*
- **The hallway:** in a school, this will usually be a long white corridor with lockers on either side, as in Disney's 2006 *High School Musical*
- **The office:** with an authority figure seated behind a large desk and the student at a lower chair opposite them, such as in guidance officer Ms Perky's office in 1999 film *10 Things I Hate About You*
- **The classroom:** with single desks, each facing the board, this is a common representation worldwide, as in the classrooms of Indian coming-of-age comedy *Aatmapamphlet* (2023)
- **The outdoor space:** in a school, this could be the oval or the playground, such as in Australian series *Little Lunch* (2015); in a university, these might be benches under shady trees outside.

Transport vehicles

Cars, trains, buses and aeroplanes are daily locations experienced across the world. It is therefore unsurprising that numerous moving-image media products have chosen transport vehicles as settings for stories.

Vehicles are small, confined places. Those inside are trapped together, which is perfect for the creation of tension. There are two key representations of vehicles that centre on the idea of occupants being trapped:



Photo 12/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.49 When occupants are trapped together in a confined space such as a vehicle, opportunities for tension and realisation abound. Ryusuke Hamaguchi's 2021 Cannes- and Academy Award-winning film *Drive My Car* explores grief through the relationship between a driver and her passenger.

1 **Inside the vehicle, the occupants must fight to survive.** Examples of this representation are seen in films such as *Train to Busan* (South Korea, 2016), *Snakes on a Plane* (USA, 2006) and *Speed* (USA, 1994), and in episodes of television series such as *Star Trek: Voyager* (USA, 1995–2001) and *Firefly* (USA, 2002–03).
2 **Passengers spend the time inside the vehicle reflecting and therefore reach a pivotal realisation.** This realisation might be about love, friendship, belonging or purpose. Examples featuring this representation include films such as *Green Book* (USA, 2018), *Drive My Car* (Japan, 2021; Figure 11.49) and *Drive* (USA, 2011).

Natural environments

Bush, forest, woods

Forests, woodlands and bush (as these are known in Australia) have figured for millennia as the settings of myths and mystery. In fairytales, forests are represented as dark, untamed, tangled places where children get lost or where witches, evil spirits or terrifying creatures live. In fantasy stories, the tangled, aged trees hide magical, often wise creatures. For the Romantic painters and poets of the 19th century, this landscape presented a place where sunlight was diffused through leaves, birds sang and a person could commune with nature. Such representations continue through to contemporary moving-image media storytelling. Examples include Lothlórien, the forest home of wood elves in *The Lord of the Rings* (New Zealand, 2001–03) and the enchanted, magical forest in *Wolfwalkers* (Ireland, 2020).

The bush is a common motif in Australian moving-image media stories, with two common discourses:

- **The bush as paradise.** Many films celebrate the bush as a place where the natural world allows people to reach their full potential. In the bush, there is a purity and honesty not found in the city. People can build proper relationships with nature and with one another. This can be seen in *The Man from Snowy River* (1982) and *Crocodile Dundee* (1986).
- **The bush as unknowable and hostile.** The overwhelming sense of emptiness in the outback can often inspire fear. Films often portray the Australian landscape as an awesome opponent or as the source of some mysterious terror. These movies show how the outback twists and disturbs people in some way. Examples include *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) and *Japanese Story* (2003). In each case, there is a sense of something overpowering or supernatural in the bush.

Both of these discourses can appear together in a story and are not limited to Australian content. In the West Papuan film *Orpa* (2022), a teenage girl runs away from an arranged marriage in her village and her journey through the forest will help her reach her full potential. But for the lost Indonesian student she meets in the forest, the bush is unknowable and hostile, filled with danger.

Outback and wilderness landscapes

Across the world, outback and wilderness landscapes are places of extremes: extreme heat, such as the Sahara desert or Australian outback, or extreme cold, such as the frozen Arctic or Mt Everest.



Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.50 Peter Weir's eerie film *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) is part of a tradition of Australian films using the emptiness of the bush to create a sense of fear.

Wilderness (or the outback as it appears in Australian cinema) is almost universally represented as a place of loneliness, isolation and hostility, yet strangely beautiful. Existence in these landscapes is a struggle because resources are scarce. The concept of survival after being stranded is understandably common to films set in the wilderness, such as in *Arctic* (Iceland, 2018) or *Walkabout* (Australia, 1971). Survival is dependent on the support or knowledge of the land's indigenous peoples.

For modern Australia, the outback has become a recognisable national symbol, filmed to look awe-inspiring and grand, or inhospitable and sometimes eerie or haunted.



Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.51 The eerie, beautiful, hostile and resource-scarce emptiness of remote wilderness landscapes supports stories about loneliness and survival. In *Arctic* (2018), a pilot survives a plane crash in the Arctic desert.

Beaches, islands and oceans

In Australia and the USA, the beach has become a representation of a particular way of life. The 'surfer' character rode the waves to mass popularity in the *Gidget* films and television series of the 1960s. Beaches commonly appear as space for rejuvenation or as a place to start over, such as in the Australian television series *Seachange* (1998–2000, 2019). The beach is a place of freedom and revitalisation, where characters connect to purity and nature, and learn what really matters to them.

However, the beach when represented as part of an island becomes a place where characters are trapped and isolated, often seeking to be found. Examples of this representation include the films *Cast Away* (USA, 2000) and *The Beach* (UK/USA, 2000), and the hit television series *Lost* (USA, 2004–10). Sitcom *Gilligan's Island* (USA, 1964–67) provided a comedic approach to being trapped on an island.

Beaches are often used to symbolise the line that separates life from the afterlife, or the known from the unknown. This is why in Jane Campion's *The Piano* (New Zealand, 1993) when Ada and her daughter Flora arrive in the remote South Island of New Zealand to meet Ada's unknown husband, she is washed ashore on a beach. In Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* (Sweden, 1957), a knight challenges Death to a game of chess on a beach. In the post-apocalyptic science-fiction film set in Melbourne, *On the Beach* (USA, 1959), a submarine sets off on a potentially fatal voyage to find possible survivors of a nuclear fallout, and is farewelled from a beach.

Oceans, in contrast, are often represented in moving-image media as being dark, unpredictable places where danger lurks unseen beneath the waters. A blockbuster example of this is *Titanic* (USA, 1997), in which the unsinkable ship hits an iceberg lurking in dark Atlantic waters and breaks in two. Ocean-based stories often fall into the horror, thriller or adventure genre, as characters try to escape the dangerous waves or creatures in the depths. Examples of this representation include shark-attack films *Jaws* (USA, 1975) and *The Meg* (USA, 2018), and biographical disaster movie *The Perfect Storm* (USA, 2000).



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo; AJ Pics/Alamy Stock Photo; FlixPix/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.52a–c Beaches are often used to represent the boundary between known and unknown, between life and afterlife. These moments in *On the Beach* (**a**: 1959) and *The Piano* (**b**: 1993) use the beach to represent crossing from a known past into a new, unknown future. The dark depths of the ocean, however, are almost always portrayed as a source of danger, as in *Titanic* (**c**: 1997).

11.10 ACTIVITIES

1. In a small group, **identify** 10 or so Australian films or television series you have seen between you. **Identify** the locations of these films on a map. **Describe** what common aspects you notice. Report to the class.
2. Individually, organise the examples for each place outlined in this section into the first column of a table. In the second column, **identify** whether each example is a film or television product. **Analyse** the examples listed by viewing scenes or stills, and write down trends in representation practices for each place in the third column. In the fourth column, **interpret** the meaning of these representations.
3. From the table created in Activity 2, select two places. For each of these places, **identify** two different representations. **Design** a storyboard frame for each place and each representation, using technical and symbolic codes such as lighting, colour or setting to create meaning.
4. Working with a partner, **analyse** a selection of tourism advertisements for common representations of place. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of these representations in terms of communicating a message or idea or targeting an audience.

REPRESENTATIONS OF IDEAS AND EVENTS

Events and ideas can be linked and often influence each other. In stories and in real life, this is often through cause and effect.

The time-based nature of films means that 'ideas' are impacted by events. Robert McKee, story expert and academic, says that ideas are in stories for active reasons. He calls this the 'controlling idea', guiding the story forward.

McKee also sees conflict as vital to narrative, arguing every controlling idea needs the opposition of a counter idea. Every scene is only included to support one idea or its opposite, and these ideas carry positive or negative values for characters. According to McKee, 'Story events create meaningful change for characters, experienced as a positive or negative human value, and achieved through conflict'.

Critical literacy and ideas and events in the media

Critical literacy requires understanding and the ability to question. A critically literate person will ask three fundamental questions of a media text:

1. Whose story is being told? (Whose version is presented?)
2. Who is being left out? (Where are the silences and what viewpoints aren't being heard?)
3. Why is it told this way? (Whose interests are being served?)

Critical media literacy also comes from an understanding of the key concepts (see page 4).

Six ways to identify and analyse ideas in media

Looking for ideas and values that are expressed through media texts can be made easier using the following techniques:

1. **Making oppositional readings.** Making an **oppositional** or resistant reading (see page 47) can help make embedded ideas more visible. Take the ideas in the text and refuse to go along with them. For each of the key ideas, ask 'Why should I go along with that?' or 'Who benefits if that point is accepted?'
2. **Trying commutation tests.** Select certain characters, events or even objects and apply the commutation test to them (see page 47). The meaning of a sign can often be discovered by commuting it into something else. Swapping one element for another can result in vastly different meanings (Figure 11.53).
3. **Investigating codes and conventions.** Codes and conventions communicate because their meanings are shared. There is variation in the meaning, but it is not infinite. Codes are therefore a product of the social and cultural context. As such, they will carry social values and ideas.
4. **Challenging representations.** As with codes and conventions, representations are the carriers of social values and ideas. Challenging these or coming up with alternatives can help identify what ideas are being promoted. It is also important to investigate and challenge the representations of major and minor characters.

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5 **Checking identification.** The characters you **identify** with (see page 148), and from whose point of view the story is told, can promote certain ideas. When the text encourages you to identify, it is also discouraging you from taking on other values, and looking at different ideas.
6 **Disrupting transportation.** The more you are swept away and involved in a media text, the more likely you are to put aside any reservations you have about its values (see page 148). Disrupting transportation can challenge this process. Transportation can be disrupted by stopping and starting the text, by calling out challenges to its ideas or by watching it on small screens (making it easier to see it as 'just a text').



Allstar Picture Library Limited/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.53 In this scene from *Gone With the Wind* (1939), performing a commutation test by reversing the roles could reveal a great deal about the social values of the time. The movie is set at the time of the American Civil War, but its values also reflect those of its time of production. As the first African-American actor to win an Academy Award, Hattie McDaniels needed an exemption to collect her Oscar in a whites-only hotel.

Gathering evidence showing the social values and ideas are there

There are several ways to show that certain ideas are coded into a text (Figure 11.54). They can range from talking to people to detailed research:

- **Knowing the context.** Researching the context of the text and the events and circumstances of the time can provide additional evidence.
- **Looking at other texts**. If the social values and ideas are there, they might also be present in other texts. Media texts often take ideas and inspiration from each other and from the society generally. Any text is a part of its context. A point of contrast can be found in texts that deal with similar material, but from the perspective of a different culture or time period.
- **Using the statistics.** The world represented in the media can be compared to the world according to collected facts and statistics. Statistics provide useful indicators about how people are living their lives in the real world.
- **Talking to those who lived through it.** Another way of comparing media representations of events to reality is to investigate the stories of people who have direct experience of the events.
- **Accessing academic social analysis.** Media representations can also be compared to the detailed investigations of society carried out by university academics or social commentators from various institutes set up for such purposes.



Photo 12/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.54 A daughter is separated from her mother during an alien invasion in *Home* (2015). The global quest to reunite the family leads to Australia, signifying a link to ideas about the Australian First Nations' experience.

Representations of ideas

Ideas are concepts that are not physical. They cover any area of human thought, from farming to time travel. The ancient Greek philosopher, Plato, imagined that ideas existed in a 'perfect realm' and that the physical version of anything in our real world was an inferior. For instance, a truly perfect circle could never be drawn, only imagined.

On screen, ideas can be very specific to the story situation but still have societal values and embedded ideas attached to them. The values associated with ideas are important representations, according to Robert McKee. They are 'equipment for living' and stories teach us how to act. However, they can also influence our world view and our actions.

Some ideas are common across cultures and can return to popularity in cycles. For example, ideas of a human afterlife are common to most religions and

have sustained haunting stories, such as *The Others* (2001) and *The Lovely Bones* (2009). Secular western cultures explore romantic attachment to the non-living in *Ghost* (1990), *City of Angels* (1998) and *A Ghost Story* (2017).

Idea representation can be redefined to suit circumstances. Wartime British Prime Minister Winston Churchill claimed, 'History is written by the victors'. Those with the power to record official history or to make films can also determine the representation of ideas. Dominant groups with economic or political power have the means of recording the dominant representations.

The *zeitgeist* – different eras and their ideas

At some point, everyone has watched movies from the past and thought they seemed to have a special feeling about them unique to that era. The world, the way of looking at it and the associated ideas seemed different then. Every era has its own character and particular spirit. The Germans have a word for this: **zeitgeist**. There isn't really an exact English equivalent, and so the German word has been adopted into film study.

Zeitgeist comes from the German words for 'time' (*zeit*) and 'spirit' (*geist*). Geist in this sense means spirit, mood or ethos, rather than ghost as it's used in 'poltergeist' (playful ghost). *Zeitgeist* refers to the particular outlook of an era, and the thinking trends of the time. Because media texts are highly tuned into audience demand and the mood of society, they often exhibit the *zeitgeist* in obvious ways. The *zeitgeist* can develop out of:

- ways of looking at the world
- intellectual or academic thinking
- the media and its viewpoints
- economic and political trends
- lifestyle trends
- art, literary and musical expressions of ideas
- fashion developments.

Decade-by-decade *zeitgeist*

The arts and popular culture reflect the context of the society in which they were produced. They can also lead society into new ways of thinking. However, society at any given time is not homogenous and of one single view.

Films, television, video games and music are not representative of the whole of society. Most of the arts are produced by a small section of society. Different art forms, such as music or film, may have different perspectives. Mainstream media, and especially Hollywood, are often some distance behind changes in society.

Ogburn's theory of cultural lag states that different parts of modern culture do not change at the same rate (Figure 11.55). Some parts are changing rapidly and other parts slowly. But since everything is interrelated, a rapid change in one part will eventually require a change in the other parts.

Decades of the 20th century

The second half of the 20th century, after World War II, was a period of rapid change. Some key ideas showing the *zeitgeist* in different decades are as follows.

- **1950s.** The 1950s is often seen as a decade of conservatism, with quite rigid social roles and an emphasis on respectability and keeping up appearances.
  - **Fear of communism.** George Clooney's film *Good Night and Good Luck* (2005) shows the fear and suspicion generated by the politics of the time.
  - **The Cold War nuclear arms build-up.** The film *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) shows concerns about the Bomb, an early United Nations, fears of UFO invasion (or communist invasion in disguise) and beliefs about the military as a protective force in society (as opposed to a 1960s view of the military as an oppressive force). The movie also shows stereotypical 1950s family and gender relations.



Everett Collection/Shutterstock.com

Figure 11.55 Broadway dancers in the late 1940s dressed as timepieces. Changes in society and its ideas and values do not fit into neat timeslots. Decades are useful divisions, but they are not sealed off from one another. People do not suddenly change their ideas once it starts to approach midnight on New Year's Eve.

- **1960s.** The overwhelming political feeling in the 1960s was of protest against the old ways and the older generation. So different were young people from their parents that the media coined the term 'the generation gap'. Young people wanted change.
  - **Civil rights movement.** *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967) portrays a romance between a black man and a white woman. *Malcolm X* (1992) portrays the struggles of African Americans for civil rights.
  - **Vietnam War protests.** The musical *Hair* (1967–73) was a part of 1960s dissent and the anti-Vietnam War protests. It was also famous for a scene in which the cast appeared nude, strongly challenging the censorship codes of the time. It is depicted in the 1979 movie *Hair*.
  - **Second-wave feminism.** *She's Beautiful When She's Angry* (2014) portrays this era in feminism, as does *I am Woman* (2019).
- **1970s.** The 1970s was a decade when all the turmoil of the 1960s was 'digested', and the ideas and values of the 1960s were 'mainstreamed'.
  - **Feminism.** The television series *Charlie's Angels* (1976–81) sought to exploit the new gender values, but the boss was still male and the women were still dressed in a sexualised way.
  - **Family and living.** Ideas and values concerning the family began to be affected by no-fault divorce legislation (starting in 1969 in America and 1975 in Australia), and single-parent or blended families became more visible, as in *The Brady Bunch* (1969–74).
- **1980s.** Discussions about money making and get-rich-quick business deals rose to prominence in this decade.
  - **Entrepreneurs.** The film *Wall Street* (1988) expressed many of the values that were dominant at the time, coining the term 'Greed is good' and celebrating the emerging workaholic with the phrase 'Lunch is for wimps'. Popular sitcom *Family Ties* (1982–89) presented a money-savvy teenager in humorous conflict with his hippie, boomer parents.
- **1990s.** The 1990s was the decade of globalisation and the internet. It also saw the collapse of communism in late 1989 and the triumph of market-based capitalism as the dominant economic force around the world.
  - **Material wealth.** Teen films such as *Clueless* (1995) and *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999) portray wealthy young people prominently displaying consumerism and brand consciousness. Films often depicted a preoccupation with material wealth and brand consciousness together with a sense that none of that brought happiness.

Decades of the 21st century

The first decades of the 21st century were a period of increasing diversity in society and a polarisation of politics. Some key ideas showing the *zeitgeist* in different decades of the modern age are as follows.

- **2000s.** The 2000s is often termed the decade of insecurity. Insecurity arose on at least two fronts. The decade began with the 9/11 attacks, sparking concern about terrorism. In the middle of the decade, concern about climate change also spread to the mainstream. Financial insecurity and fears about wide-scale financial mismanagement by large institutions rocked the world with the onset of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC).
  - **Environmentalism.** In films, ideas about the impact of unchecked climate change are reflected in *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) and the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006).
  - **The internet and social media.** The 2000s was the decade when social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram emerged. The film *The Social Network* (2010) looks behind the scenes at the development of Facebook.
  - **Financial mismanagement.** The film *The Big Short* (2015) explores the financial schemes that triggered the GFC.
- **2010s.** This was the decade that came to terms with the dominance of 'online life' and the societal disruption brought about by the new technologies (such as the smartphone) of the previous decade. Streaming services such as Netflix emerged and multiplied, and superhero stories gained a firm foothold on both cinema and television screens. On social media, the 'influencer' emerged as a major marketing tool.
  - **Climate change noticeable.** *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015) dystopia.
  - **Social media influencers.** The idea that social media influencers' lives are not real took

prominence as society became more aware of their actual lives, as shown in the film *Ingrid Goes West* (2017).

- **2020s.** The 2020s began with the global COVID-19 pandemic and mass lockdowns, bringing to light increased conversations about mental health. This decade has featured closer examination of society and culture. Social media has been labelled a troublesome space of bullying, echo chambers and extremism. Smartphones have been viewed as tools for schoolyard bullying. However, the 2020s have also seen greater focus on diversity, mental health and identity politics.
  - **Diversity.** The diversity of society is beginning to be reflected on screens. *Black Panther* (2018) showed the box office success and critical impact of authentic casting. Successful television and streaming shows feature diverse casting.
  - **Humanity-level challenges.** Fears about the impact on humanity of climate change, pandemics and AI have been explored in speculative or science-fiction films and series. *Dune* (2021, 2024) is set in a society where use of AI is illegal because it caused a major war. The characters wear masks because the environment is dangerous.
  - **Changing ideas about social media.** Long-term impacts of social media use are questioned in the documentary *The Social Dilemma* (2020).
  - **Polarisation and fracturing.** The growth of popularism and extremes in the political sphere is emphasised in *Don't Look Up* (2021).
  - **Individual desire for worth and meaning.** The COVID-19 pandemic changed the workplace, with working from home (WFH) enabled for the first time on a wide scale. Mass-quitting movements highlighted a growing desire for work that is meaningful and fulfilling. *Nomadland* (2020) shows a woman living in her van, finding work along the way, seeking fulfilment, independence and community. Wim Wenders' *Perfect Days* (2023) is about finding joy in simple things.

Representations of events

Events are moments in time when something of some importance happens that later is seen to be of significant meaning. Usually, these events have causative factors leading up to the memorable moment happening. After an event, the spectacle may be over, returning to normality or a new state of being that is ushered in. Moving-image media is naturally suited to documenting events with its flow of time and ability to show the before and after.

Moments of high emotion are often favoured by the makers of moving-image media. This produces personal stories of romance, birth and death, separation and re-uniting, and intellectual discoveries. An example is *Freeman* (2020) about Cathy Freeman's emotional and symbolic win at the 2000 Olympics.

Spectacle also attracts audiences to screen stories of events such as disasters, journeys, shoot-outs and battles, chases and quests, and physical discoveries.

Rare films have been described as stories where 'nothing really happens'. A few examples hold audience interest through tension in the acting or editing, but they mostly serve to explore ideas and emotions. Better known examples include *Lost in Translation* (2003) and *The Big Chill* (1983). A woman waits for medical results in real time during *Cleo from 5 to 7* (1962). A man sleeps for 5 hours 21 minutes in the edited film by pop artist Andy Warhol in *Sleep* (1964).

Traditional history and moving-image media

The traditional study of events in time and the continuous process of change they bring about is the subject discipline of history. It is often seen as an exact discipline. It relies on well-supported statements and corroborated evidence.

Film and game makers are not historians. Popular narrative films and video games have not usually been allowed to occupy the same status as formal history texts. Some academics argue that this does not mean they aren't useful and important, though. Yale University film academic Noel Carroll argues that, 'representations are never equivalent to what they represent, but they are presented so that an event can be recalled beyond its actuality and will be coherent to audiences'.

The usefulness of some moving-image media representations of events and history was recently shown clearly. So too was the problem for all movie and game representations. The beautiful and symbolic French cathedral Notre Dame, in Paris, caught fire in 2019 and the roof collapsed. Hope turned to the 2014 video game *Assassin's Creed Unity*, for which the

game designers had spent more than a year mapping the cathedral. However, demands of the game design and game mechanics meant that even then, the representation wasn't completely accurate.

Each moving-image medium has its constraints and also its budget and commercial considerations. In Hollywood, for example, a film must be about 180 minutes in length and it must succeed with a worldwide audience.

French film academic and historian Pierre Sorlin notes that historians 'are coming to realise that any film must be understood in the context of its production and the way elements are assembled'. Some degree of inaccuracy is inevitable.

Audiences and historical events on film

Events captured or reconstructed for film can be confused with the actual history. When a single movie dominates the representation of a historic figure or event, it can create a pop-version of the history. Examples of such films are *Titanic* (1997), *Golda* (2023), *Schindler's List* (1993), *Ghandi* (1982), *Gallipoli* (1981) and *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962). Movies such as *JFK* (1991), about the assassination of the American president, have a complex relationship with history. Although a historical event is at its centre, the contested facts of conspiracy theory are explored by fictionalised characters, based on real people.

Some historians now have a view that populations develop their own historical identities by consuming images based on the past. Writing about World War II, John Chambers and David Culbert argue that the general public do not have an actual experience or memory of war in the 20th century. Instead, they have 'a manufactured past, one substantially shaped by images in documentaries, feature films and television programs'.

The power of the visuals in moving-image media plays a role in constructing a collective memory that makes historical feature films and video games a cultural force of history in their own right. They provide an audience size that no academic history text can ever muster.

Video game players and historical events in games

Historical events are a rich source of stories for video game designers. Increasingly, games are immersing players in complex worlds set around historic events, landscapes and cultures. Developers spend a lot of time and money on historical research before they begin designing the games and modelling the environments. The developers of *LA Noire* (2011) set the third-person game in the city of Los Angeles in 1947. In their research, they examined over 180 000 historical sources, including police records, newspaper articles and photographs of the time. In a similar way, the *Assassin's Creed* (2007–) series hires historians and academics as consultants.

Playing a game is different to watching a film or streamed series. The player experiences what Karlstadt University's Eva Kingsepp calls 'immersive historicity'. This degree of immersion is almost like time travel. The player is immersed as both a participant and a witness to historical events. They can also interact with the spaces and walk through famous buildings.

However, not all games take great care in their representation of history before they immerse their players. PhD researcher Manuel Martinez argues there are four levels of representation in video games:

1 **History as story.** The focus in these games is on the importance of the story and less so the historical accuracy. Often, there is an 'us and them' approach and whole viewpoints are often left out.



Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.56 The *Assassin's Creed* game developers hire historians and academics to ensure greater historical realism. In *Assassin's Creed Unity* (2014), they researched the paintings that would have been hung in Notre Dame cathedral at the time.

For example, in *Medal of Honour: Frontline* (2002), players fight Nazis wearing medieval armour.

2 **History as discipline.** These games take a more 'scientific' approach to history and focus on realism. Documents, historical maps and direct quotes might be used as the justification for greater accuracy. *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018) bases several characters on real people and specific missions are based on real outlaw activity.
3 **History as legendary and mysterious.** Some games put the player in the position of explorer or discoverer of historical 'truths'. For example, *Renowned Explorers* (2015) is a turn-based video game set in a fictional 19th century environment.
4 **Possible histories.** Alternative histories and their futures subvert the usual interpretations and allow other viewpoints and outcomes. These games can even present histories that are counter-factual. *Fallout 4* (2015) is one example. It poses the question of what would happen if history had unfolded in a different way and the Cold War had ended in nuclear disaster.

Unlike films or textbooks, video games open up the story space to the player. The player can influence the outcomes, and operates in conjunction with the developers and historians. The player also gets to understand cause and effect, and the conditions and circumstances of the history.

However, a game is its rules and mechanics. Representation becomes a balancing act between historical authenticity and an engaging game experience.

Invasion events in war films

The moment of invasion or a battle charge for territory are pivotal scenes in war films. Epic scale shows the high stakes of conflict, which can be represented in various ways. According to film critic Camilla Long, each period gets the war films it deserves. The *zeitgeist* of the era can dictate how winners or losers are painted and the positioning of the audience.

Positioned as the invaded

Invaded winners are portrayed in *Pearl Harbor* (2001) in a surprise attack on the US Navy that brought them into World War II. America is the initial victim, joining the war for an eventual victory. Invaded losers are followed in the stories of *Letters from Iwo Jima* (2007) from a Japanese perspective, and *Dunkirk* (2017) and *1917* (2019) from the view of the Allies.

The final victory is not clear at the end of *Tomorrow, When the War Began* (2010). A surprise invasion by a country to Australia's north destroys normal life for a group of teenagers, forcing them to take up arms without any experience. In a brief moment of reflection, a character pauses under fire to look at a poster of First Nations Australians, implying a realisation of possible role reversal.

Positioned as the invading

Invading losers from a German perspective are worn down in *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022, 1979, 1930). The movie of *Gallipoli* (1981) cemented the battle story in the Australian psyche. It is unusual for a heroic national story to celebrate a defeat in war, rather than a victory. *Dunkirk* (2017) tells a similar story of British retreat.

11.11 ACTIVITIES

1 **Create** a list of films or television programs you have seen where the representation contained ideas that you disagreed with. **Describe** these ideas and contrast them with your own opinions.
2 Select a moving-image media text that explores an idea that is part of the *zeitgeist* of an era. Often a text set in the more distant past can make this recognition easier. **Analyse** how the idea is depicted through each of representations, codes and conventions, and story elements.
3 Select a movie and **analyse** the ideas it supports. Use the six ways to identify and analyse ideas in a moving-image media text (see page 205). Support your statements using some of the ways of gathering evidence.
4 **Analyse** the dialogue in the movie *Home* (2015). View the movie, pausing to record lines which metaphorically **describe** an aspect of the Australian colonial era.
5 View two different films or video games that explore the same historical events. **Analyse** the differences and similarities by **examining** particular scenes and key moments. **Evaluate** the representation for authenticity using historical **research** as a point of reference.

REPRESENTATIONS IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media and digital gaming have become important spaces for shaping and spreading ideas and meanings in the digital age. These virtual spaces offer unprecedented opportunities for self-expression, identity and community building.

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However, they also create challenges regarding stereotyping, objectification and the perpetuation of dominant ideologies and narrow views of the world.

Social media

In social media, media artists encode representations with specific meanings using codes and conventions familiar to the audience. The audience then decodes this content based on their own cultural background, experiences and understanding of these codes and conventions.

In the realm of social media, content creators employ various features to represent ideas, places or things effectively:

- **Visual codes**. Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok heavily rely on representations. Content creators use specific colour schemes, filters, camera angles and composition techniques to convey certain moods, emotions or aesthetics.
- **Linguistic codes**. Captions, hashtags and comments are essential elements of social media representations. Content creators use language, slang and emojis to engage with their audience, convey humour or express opinions.
- **Audio codes.** Music, sound effects and voice-overs are used in social media representations to create atmosphere, evoke emotions or emphasise certain aspects of the content.
- **Genre conventions.** Social media platforms have their own set of genre conventions. For example, Instagram Stories often feature short, candid and less polished content compared to regular posts. YouTube vlogs have a conversational and personal style, often featuring direct address to the camera.
- **Platform-specific conventions.** Each social media platform has its own conventions that creators must consider. For instance, X's character limit encourages concise and witty messages, while TikTok's short-form video format has led to the popularity of dance challenges and lip-syncing videos.

Representations and the selfie

The selfie has become an extremely popular form of self-expression (Figure 11.57), as evidenced by the millions of hashtags with #selfie and related terms on social media platforms such as Instagram. The tools for capturing, stylising and sharing selfies have made it extraordinarily easy to create and disseminate self-portraits, defining the aesthetic or look of younger generations. The platform's filters and hashtags allow users to customise and fragment identity in countless ways, fascinating viewers with the possibilities for self-expression.



Wavebreak Media ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.57 The selfie remains the most used form of media representation on social media platforms. The allure of taking photos of ourselves has become a type of language that is instantly recognisable across all audiences.

'All the network's a stage'

The act of taking a selfie for social media platforms such as Instagram involves a complex interplay of self-presentation and performance. Usually this image is enhanced with filters. When an individual takes a selfie, they are not merely capturing a moment but actively curating and presenting a specific version of themselves to their audience. This performance is important for several reasons:

1. **Impression management.** Photographers engage in 'impression management' to control how others perceive them. This performance allows them to highlight what they perceive to be their best features, convey certain emotions or align themselves with specific identities or lifestyles.
2. **Identity construction.** Selfies serve as a tool for identity construction and self-expression. Individuals can showcase their personality, interests and values by carefully crafting their representations. Through this performance, individuals can assert their uniqueness, belonging to certain groups or adherence to social trends.
3. **Social validation.** Social media platforms operate on a currency of likes, comments and shares. Individuals often seek validation and approval

from their audience through their selfies. A well-executed performance that resonates with the audience can lead to remuneration in the form of positive feedback, boosting self-esteem and social status.

4 **Self-branding**. In the digital age, selfies have become a form of personal branding. Individuals can use selfies to cultivate a specific online persona or brand image. This is particularly important for influencers, celebrities or those seeking to establish a professional presence online.

5 **Narrative construction.** Selfies allow individuals to construct and share their narratives. By selectively presenting moments, experiences and aspects of their lives, individuals can create a desired storyline or convey a particular message to their audience.



Ammentorp Photography/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.58 Taking the selfie is an act of self-preservation. The image is not just a candid moment but a carefully constructed representation of the self, complete with performance and technical and symbolic codes.

Attention and visibility

In the digital age, attention and visibility have become valuable commodities. Selfies play a significant role in capturing and maximising these resources in the following ways:

- **Attention economy.** Social media platforms operate within an attention economy, where the currency is user engagement and time spent on the platform. Selfies serve as a powerful tool to capture attention in this economy. Eye-catching, visually appealing or provocative selfies are more likely to stop users from scrolling and encourage them to engage with the content through likes, comments or shares. The more attention a selfie receives, the more valuable it becomes in the attention economy.
- **Algorithmic visibility.** Social media platforms use algorithms to determine the visibility of content in users' feeds. These algorithms often prioritise content that generates high levels of engagement and interaction. Selfies that receive a lot of attention in the form of likes, comments and shares are more likely to be pushed to the top of feeds and gain even more visibility. This creates a feedback loop where attention breeds more attention, and visibility becomes a self-reinforcing cycle.
- **Viral potential.** Selfies have the potential to go viral, spreading rapidly across social media platforms and garnering massive attention and visibility. A single selfie that captures the right moment, emotion or message can be shared and re-shared countless times, catapulting the individual into the spotlight. The pursuit of viral visibility can motivate individuals to create selfies that are highly shareable and emotionally resonant.

It is important to recognise the potential drawbacks of this relentless pursuit of attention and visibility through selfies. It can lead to a culture of narcissism and constant comparison. The pressure to create attention-grabbing selfies can also result in risky or dangerous behaviours, such as taking selfies in hazardous locations or engaging in extreme acts for the sake of likes and shares.

Moreover, the guiding logic of attention and visibility can create a distorted sense of self-worth and validation. Individuals may begin to equate their value and worth with the number of likes and followers they accumulate, leading to a fragile sense of self-esteem that is dependent on external validation.

Networked empowerment or digital vanity?

The ongoing debate about the link between selfies and narcissism draws on the psychological dimension of identity formation. Vietnamese filmmaker and theorist Trinh Minh-Ha offers a reinterpretation of digital self-promotion practices. Minh-Ha challenges the common dismissal of such practices as mere narcissism, instead proposing the concept of networked empowerment as a form of self-representation for marginalised groups.

Selfies are a form of empowerment that allows marginalised people to control their own image and claim space in digital networks. Posting selfies can serve as a tool for social activism by fashioning alternative identities and representations. These digital practices are situated within a longer

history of oppressed groups using spectacular self-presentation to assert dignity and humanity.

Representations of alternative identities

Representations of alternative identities, particularly LGBTQIA+ identities, have become increasingly visible on social media platforms. Following are some key features and aspects of these representations:

- **Visibility and pride.** Many individuals use social media to express their identity openly, often sharing photos and content that celebrate their gender identity or sexual orientation. This visibility helps to normalise and destigmatise alternative identities.
- **Self-expression.** Instagram and other platforms allow users to curate their own content, enabling individuals to express themselves authentically. This may include sharing photos with partners, participating in Pride events or showcasing their unique fashion and style choices that align with their identity.
- **Community building.** Social media has facilitated the creation of online communities for individuals, fostering a sense of belonging and support.
- **Challenging stereotypes.** Some individuals use their social media presence to challenge stereotypes and preconceptions about their identities. They may share content that showcases the diversity within the community, breaking down monolithic representations.
- **Intersectionality.** Many individuals on social media also highlight the intersectionality of their identities, exploring how their identities intersect with race, ethnicity, religion, disability and other aspects.

Representations of political figures

Representations of political figures on social media platforms such as TikTok have become increasingly prevalent and influential in shaping public perceptions and spreading political values (Figure 11.59). These representations often exhibit distinct features and are frequently shaped through satire and parody.

Features of representations of political figures on social media

- **Shortened and simplified narratives.** Social media representations often condense complex political issues and personalities into brief, easily digestible content, focusing on key moments, quotes or characteristics that capture attention.
- **Emphasis on visual elements.** Platforms such as TikTok prioritise visual content, leading to representations that rely heavily on images, videos and memes to convey messages about political figures.
- **Emotionalisation.** Social media representations tend to focus on the personal lives, quirks and emotional responses of political figures, humanising them or portraying them in a specific light.
- **Polarisation and echo chambers.** Representations can be heavily influenced by the political leanings of content creators and the algorithms that curate user feeds, leading to polarised depictions that reinforce existing beliefs.
- **Rapid dissemination and virality.** Viral content quickly shapes public perceptions of political figures. However, just as quickly, those representations swiftly disappear in preference for new viral trends.



UPI/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.59 Donald Trump's inability to dance was made the target of a viral TikTok Dance Challenge, first uploaded by Julia Keith. Since then, the dance style itself has shifted across to popular culture, appearing in a number of ways in social media and mainstream television.

Satire and parody in shaping representations

As social media continues to play a significant role in political discourse, it is becoming increasingly important to approach representations of political figures with a critical eye, recognising the potential for both insight and commentary, as well as misleading narratives shaped by satire and parody.

The following are features of satirical political representation on social media:

- **Exaggeration of characteristics.** Satirical representations often exaggerate or caricature the

physical appearance, mannerisms or perceived traits of political figures to highlight their flaws or peculiarities.
- **Juxtaposition and irony.** Parody can involve placing political figures in unexpected or contradictory situations, using irony to underscore their actions or statements.
- **Mocking and ridicule.** Satirical content may seek to undermine the authority or credibility of political figures through mockery, ridicule or humorous imitation.
- **Subversion of expectations.** Parody can subvert the typical narratives or images associated with political figures, presenting them in a different or surprising light.
- **Viral memes and trends.** Satirical representations can quickly inspire trends that spread rapidly across social media, shaping public perceptions through repetition, shared humour and viewer participation.

While satire and parody can serve as powerful tools for political commentary and critique, they can also contribute to the oversimplification of issues attached to political figures. The line between satirical representation and misleading content can sometimes be blurred on social media platforms.

Representations of wealth and poverty

Representations of wealth and poverty on social media platforms are often shaped by issues pointing to identity, desire and social comparison.

Some common representations of wealth on social media include:
- **Luxury lifestyle:** posts showcasing expensive cars, designer clothing, high-end vacations and lavish parties are common representations of wealth on Instagram
- **Influencer culture:** many influencers and celebrities use their Instagram presence to flaunt their affluent lifestyles, setting aspirational standards for their followers (Figure 11.60)
- **Conspicuous consumption:** displaying material possessions and experiences is a way for individuals to signal their wealth and status to their social media audience.



Olena Holubova/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.60 Influencers are increasingly representing themselves in the context of affluence and excessive spending. More often, this is a bid to distance themselves from their ordinary life, and strategise ways to attract followers.

Pressure to adhere to affluence

Social media representations can create significant pressure to present a specific image, sometimes even influencing the audience to follow certain brands, creating pressure to have the products or lifestyle portrayed in videos and photos:
- **Social comparison.** Instagram users may feel pressure to present an affluent image to keep up with their peers and maintain a certain social status.
- **Fear of missing out (FOMO).** Seeing others' wealthy lifestyles can create a sense of FOMO, leading individuals to aspire to similar levels of consumption and display.
- **Influencer marketing.** Brands often partner with influencers to promote products and services, reinforcing the idea that affluence is desirable and attainable.

Identity and desire

Social media is a platform for personal branding, aspirational content and self-expression:
- **Personal branding.** Representations of wealth are often tied to an individual's personal brand and identity, with affluence becoming a key aspect of how they wish to be perceived.
- **Aspirational content.** Images of wealth and luxury can evoke desire in viewers, leading them to aspire to similar lifestyles and consumption patterns.
- **Self-expression.** For some users, displaying wealth is a form of self-expression and a way to assert their status and success.

Social comparison

Social comparison is an important factor provoked by social media. Social comparison via social media representations is a powerful motivator shaping consumption and portrayals of identity and status:
- **Upward trajectory.** Viewing representations of wealth can lead to upward social comparison,

where individuals compare themselves to those they perceive as better off, potentially leading to feelings of inadequacy or dissatisfaction. This can lead to pressure to 'keep up' with the affluence portrayed.

- **Downward trajectory.** In some cases, viewing representations of poverty or struggle can lead to downward social comparison, where individuals feel better about their own circumstances by comparison.
- **Distorted reality.** It is important to recognise that representations of wealth and poverty are often curated and may not accurately reflect reality, leading to skewed perceptions and expectations.

11.12 ACTIVITIES

1. **Analyse** how different social media platforms (e.g. Instagram, TikTok) portray wealth through the content shared by users. **Examine** case studies of social media influencers who showcase luxury and opulence in their content. **Evaluate** the role that displays of wealth on social media may play in driving consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions.
2. **Evaluate** the argument that social media creates unrealistic expectations around wealth and consumption, especially for younger users.
3. **Create** a social media campaign to promote more inclusive and realistic portrayals of financial wellbeing online.
4. **Describe** how social media has changed the way political news and events are reported and consumed.
5. **Create** a set of guidelines for politicians to promote transparency, accountability and civil discourse on social media.
6. **Evaluate** arguments for and against whether social media platforms should fact-check or moderate posts made by politicians.

REPRESENTATIONS IN GAMING

The context for representations in video games is multifaceted and complex. Representations are not photorealistic in the same way that they are in film and television. This is because gaming technologies construct representations in real time through a game engine and graphics processing unit (GPU). Movies, however, are composed of a series of



Lenscap/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.61 Video games cannot currently match the photorealism observed in movies. Sometimes game developers will make aesthetic choices that deliberately steer away from realism, which emphasise colour and shape instead. Users are well-accustomed to the gaps in realism presented by video games and have learned to negotiate their immersion accordingly.

prerecorded and carefully crafted images, allowing for much higher levels of detail, realism and visual fidelity. In short, gaming hardware currently lacks the power to do more.

Games and the representation of gender

Historically, video games have been dominated by male protagonists and characters, with female characters often relegated to secondary or sexualised roles. Many video games have been criticised for perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes, such as the 'damsel in distress' trope or hypersexualised female character designs.

Females are not the only ones critical of game representations. 'Action hero' types are often the only successful male characters. They are muscle-bound with model good looks. A study comparing the body size of male video game characters to that of the average American male has come up with some startling results. Video game characters were measured by importing their images into Photoshop and noting exact body dimensions. Male video game characters had chest sizes of around 145 centimetres (57 inches). The authors of the study concluded it would not be possible for the average male to reach this without excessive weightlifting.

The move towards massively multiplayer online games in which players create their own characters has led to a wider variety of character representation.

The female hero

The representation of female heroes in video games has evolved significantly over the years,

reflecting changes in societal attitudes and the gaming industry's efforts to promote diversity and inclusivity. While early video games often featured male protagonists and relegated female characters to secondary roles, recent decades have seen a notable increase in the presence of strong, capable and complex female heroes in the following ways:

- The rise of female protagonists in the 1980s and 1990s, such as Samus Aran (*Metroid*) and Lara Croft (*Tomb Raider*), challenged traditional gender roles but still faced criticism for their sexualised designs.
- Growing emphasis on creating diverse, well-rounded female characters who are defined by their abilities, personalities and narratives rather than their appearance.
- A wider range of cultural diversity, sexual orientations and body types, promoting relatability for a diverse player base.
- Industry improvements in hiring more women in various roles, from developers to writers and designers, shifting representations to more authentic and nuanced designs.
- Prominent female heroes in modern gaming, such as Aloy (*Horizon Zero Dawn*; Figure 11.62) and Senua (*Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice*).



Miguel Lagoa/Shutterstock.com

Figure 11.62 Games such as *Horizon Zero Dawn* (2017) offer new approaches to the idea of heroes by offering gamers an experience told through the perspective of a young independent female hero.

The male hero

The representation of male heroes in video games has evolved over time, reflecting societal norms, player demographics and the growth towards equity in the gaming industry. Traditionally, male heroes in video games have been portrayed as hypermasculine, strong and courageous protagonists with model looks. These characters often embody stereotypes such as physical strength, aggression and emotional stoicism. Classic examples include characters like Snake (*Metal Gear Solid*, 1987), Kratos (*God of War*, 2005) and Altair (*Assassin's Creed*, 2007).

However, as the gaming industry has matured and the player base has diversified, there has been a shift towards more diverse and complex male characters. Developers have begun to explore male heroes who display vulnerability, emotional depth and flaws. Characters such as Nathan Drake (*Uncharted*, 2007) and Geralt (*The Witcher*, 2007) demonstrate a blend of traditional masculine traits with more relatable human fallibilities.

Representations of violence

Representations of violence in video games receive more focused attention than violence in film and television because of the way in which interactivity informs the context. Violence has been a prominent feature in video games since the medium's beginning. Many games are centred on combat, warfare and physical conflict (Figure 11.63). Even simple games such as *Space Invaders* and *Pac-Man* required the destruction of opponents to succeed.

Violence in games happens outside the normal moral universe. There is no remorse, no pain and sorrow, and the player is not punished for killing; in fact, violence and killing are rewarded.

In many games, the player is faced with challenges in which the only solution is to blast their way out. Critics say this effectively rewards violent behaviour and demonstrates there are no other solutions. Some critics want games to offer multiple solutions or more complex and engaging narratives so that the player has to rely more on intuition and intelligence.



Dmytro Skrypnykov/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.63 Games have built entire franchises on the idea of violence as a central game mechanic.

Some researchers and critics argue that violent video games can desensitise players to real-world violence and aggression. Others argue that video game violence is a form of catharsis and escapism, allowing players to explore and express aggressive impulses in a controlled environment.

Violence often serves as a central mechanic or plot device. Gamers have little choice but to embrace violence as the game bestows it. Violence in games can be because of two factors:

1 Games, particularly in the action and shooter genres, often rely on combat and conflict as core gameplay elements.
2 Violence can be used to create tension, stakes and dramatic impact in a game's story.

The representation of violence in games is not monolithic and the same everywhere. Different games approach violence in different ways, and the context and framing of violence can vary significantly. Some games use violence to explore moral dilemmas, such as the consequences of war or the human capacity for cruelty. Other games present violence in a more stylised or cartoonish manner, lessening its impact or realism.

CALD in games

The video game industry has made progress in recent years in terms of diversifying antagonist representation and moving away from harmful stereotypes. Many modern games feature players and antagonists from a wide range of ethnicities without relying on stereotypical traits or behaviours associated with their background.

Increased diversity among game developers and a growing awareness of the impact of representation in media have contributed to more thoughtful and nuanced portrayals of ethnicity in video game antagonists. By promoting diversity, inclusion and thoughtful character design, the gaming industry can continue to move towards more equitable and respectful representations of villainy in video games.

11.13 ACTIVITIES

1 **Analyse** your favourite media characters. **Explain** what qualities you admire about them. **Examine** how they might represent or diverge from common stereotypes.
2 Games researcher Dr Kathryn Wright says, 'Male gamers see that most male characters are portrayed as unrealistic, muscle-bound Thor-types, but they simply are not that affected by this. Many female gamers, on the other hand, are irritated when they cannot identify with their female character'. **Evaluate** this statement. **Reflect** on your own reactions to these game characters. **Draw conclusions** from further research either online or by small-scale classroom surveys.
3 **Create** a diversity scorecard or rubric to assess and compare the representation in different games. **Plan** the criteria and metrics to include. **Apply** the rubric to examples and present your findings.
4 **Create** a proposal for an original video game that features an underrepresented group as the main characters, a non-stereotypical muscle-bound male or a female hero. **Generate** a non-violent story premise. **Describe** the characters, setting and storyline. Explain how the concept promotes diversity.

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12 Language conventions in media stories

ABOUT STORY

We have been telling each other stories since the beginning of time. The media are just the most recent entrants on the storytelling scene. While each medium uses story, it is film that has made storytelling its primary role.

A narrative is often defined as a way of expressing a chain of events in a cause-and-effect relationship occurring in time and space. Or, a narrative is a construction that, for a period of time, tells a sequence of events with a particular **setting**. Narratives begin with characters in a situation. An event causes a change that results in a snowballing series of effects. Finally, the changes come to rest in a new situation that brings about the end of the story.

Difference between narrative, story and plot

In casual discussion, people use the terms 'narrative', 'story' and 'plot' interchangeably. The meanings are so similar that usually there is no problem doing this. However, in the study of narrative, it is necessary at times to define what separates each term.

- **Narrative.** This is the way the entire storyline is communicated to the audience. For instance, a film has a different narrative approach from that of a novel. Both may deal with the same story, but the way it is communicated to the audience is different.
- **Story.** Events that have happened and characters who exist but are not shown on screen are still part of the story. This refers to all the events that have ever happened in the world of the story. The story includes events that are shown on screen, together with those that are not.
- **Plot.** The part of the story that happens on screen is called the plot. This can also include material that the characters cannot see or hear



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Figure 12.1 *Casablanca* (1942) is number three on the American Film Institute's list of the top 100 films of all time. Rick Blaine (Humphrey Bogart) owns Rick's Café Americain in Casablanca, Morocco, where refugees seeking to escape to America gather to wait for exit visas. A previous girlfriend, Ilsa Lund (Ingrid Bergman) turns up at the cafe with the Nazis on her trail. Rick helps her escape, but with unforeseen consequences. The pleasure in narrative comes from being transported into a story world where events much more dramatic than those in our own lives are taking place.



Foto-Ruhrgebiet/Shutterstock.com

Figure 12.2 A narrative is a chain of events in a cause-and-effect relationship occurring in time and space.

Weblinks

What is narrative structure?

Narrative structure – build a better narrative

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but the audience can (non-diegetic material). This may include the musical score, title cards and voice-over narration (from a source other than one of the characters).

- **In combination.** These definitions lead to a narrative equation that illustrates how story, plot and narrative fit together and get presented to an audience.
  Narrative (way audience is told) = Story + Plot

Diegesis – world of the story

The ancient Greeks originally called the narrated world of the story the **diegesis**. In modern narrative film theory, the diegesis is the whole world of the story, including the characters, setting and events. It also includes the inferred aspects of the story (those not shown; Figure 12.4). Everything on the screen that is part of the world of the story is the diegesis. All films contain elements that are both diegetic and non-diegetic. The audience sees and hears the world of the characters, but also some things that the characters cannot hear or see.

For the audience, the total film experience includes the following:

- **Diegetic elements.** Anything within the world of the story is a diegetic element. If the actors can hear it or see it, then it is diegetic. Gunshots, street noises or sounds of a band playing on- or off-stage are diegetic if they occur in the world of the actors.
- **Non-diegetic elements.** Anything outside the world of the story is non-diegetic. Anything added by the director that the audience can hear or see, but the actors cannot, is regarded as non-diegetic. For example, romantic orchestral soundtracks and voice-over narration are non-diegetic elements. Characters cannot see titles, credits and inter-title cards. They are not part of the world of the story, even though they add to the audience's experience of the narrative.



FlixPix/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 12.4 *Oppenheimer* (2023) is based on the book *American Prometheus* (2006) that is based on the story of real events. The film approaches the narrative (the way of telling the story) slightly differently to the book. Yet, both refer to a story world that includes events not depicted in either the book or the film. These events are definitely part of the 'back story' but are not part of the plot.

12.1 ACTIVITIES

1 Interview your classmates on one or more of the following topics:
   - Memorable moments in film narrative that have really moved them.
   - Moments of high excitement in film narrative that have almost produced a bodily reaction.
   - Times when they have suspended disbelief and been completely taken in, or times when they have had to remind themselves that it is possible or even safer to disbelieve.

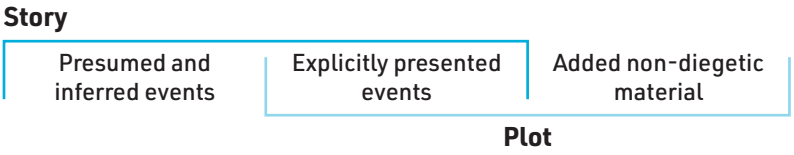


Figure 12.3 Film analysts David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson show how story and plot work together. The narrative is how both story and plot are told to an audience.

Describe your results to the class, **identifying** key moments and **illustrating** your points with examples of what your classmates have said. Provide additional information about the films themselves.

2 View a short segment from a well-known film of your choice. **Create** a list of all the diegetic and non-diegetic elements, systematically going through and arranging each element into the appropriate category. **Evaluate** which elements are more significant and **draw conclusions** as to why, based on your own reactions as an audience member.

3 Some filmmakers reject non-diegetic elements. They believe the audience should only experience the world of the story. Do you think they are right or wrong to do so? **Describe** your response, **clarifying** your own point of view but also providing information about the opposing view.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

A typical Hollywood movie has 40 to 60 scenes. Each of these scenes is about two or three minutes long and has something happen in it – a 'story event'. Usually, every scene represents a minor **turning point** in the plot. Every three to five scenes can be considered a sequence. At the end of every sequence there is a small **climax** that is another turning point. A set of sequences can be considered an act, and most films have three acts (occasionally four). At the end of each act is a major climax and turning point. Finally, the last turning point and climax of the whole film comes before the resolution.

Each of these events has been a cause that has had an effect. The final cause comes about as a result of all the previous decisions of the main characters. It brings about the effect of the final equilibrium (or resolution). From the smallest unit of the film right up to the whole movie, the chain of cause and effect is the basis of plot development.

Important turning points in films are often signalled by the directors through camera work, editing or sound. Perhaps the camera pauses on an important event, or music may underscore the significance. Sometimes a camera movement such as a crane shot can establish that the scene is a turning point.

Causal agents

The cause-and-effect cycle in a narrative sets up the chain of events; one thing then leads to another in a way that seems natural and lifelike. While the effects of a causal action depend totally on the particular story and are too varied to review, the **causal agents** themselves usually fall into one of four categories:

1 **Human characters.** Characters cause things to happen through their actions. In other words, people do things that start the story. This is especially true of narratives in the Hollywood tradition (and in western literature as a whole). The psychology of individuals and their personal motivations are the basis of most Hollywood movies (Figure 12.5). In western culture, without individual character, there is no story. Other cultures do not necessarily focus so strongly on individual motivation.



Ronald Grant Archive

Figure 12.5 In *The Matrix* (1999), when Neo is offered the red pill or the blue pill by Morpheus, he must make a choice. His decision then becomes a key cause of many of the effects that occur throughout the rest of the film. The psychology of individuals, and their personal motivations and choices, is the basis of most Hollywood movies.

2 **Human society.** A narrative can be based on opposition to a whole society. This can be seen in films such as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984), where individuals are oppressed by the surveillance culture of Big Brother. Usually, however, the society is represented in the narrative by individual human characters.

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3 **Non-human characters.** Animals, monsters, spirits and aliens are common causal agents in narratives. Usually, some kind of human motivation is accorded to these non-human characters. King Kong, for instance, is motivated by a combination of protectiveness, pride and even love. The shark in *Jaws* (1975) is motivated by revenge.
4 **Natural events as causal agents.** Meteors, earthquakes, tidal waves and other disasters are also causal agents in narratives, but what interests us is the effects of these natural agents on the lives of individuals who struggle to survive. Disaster movies are examples of narratives in which natural occurrences begin the chain of cause and effect.

Conflict

Conflict is the basis of all narratives. It relates to the cause-and-effect structure because it is the outcome of causal agents. There are several categories of conflict in drama, some of which overlap with the notion of cause and effect.

- **Internal conflict.** Person against self is the conflict individuals have with their own weaknesses and failings – or their own emotions. Inner conflict usually pulls the main character in two directions at once.
- **Person against person.** A struggle between individuals is probably the most common narrative conflict.
- **Person against society.** Many narratives with social justice themes use this as the central conflict.
- **Person against nature.** Environmental forces are pitted against individuals.
- **Person against fate.** Fate as an opposing force most often appears in narratives as death or disability. This is clearly demonstrated in Ingmar Bergman's film *The Seventh Seal* (1957), in which a medieval knight plays chess with Death.

Classical causal progress – equilibrium, disequilibrium, equilibrium

> 'An "ideal" narrative begins with a stable situation, which is disturbed by some power or force. There results a state of disequilibrium; by the action of a force directed in the opposite direction, the equilibrium is re-established. The second equilibrium is similar to the first, but the two are never identical.'
>
> **Tzvetan Todorov**, historian and narrative analyst

When a story begins, it is usually in the middle of things, before anything happens to change the natural order. This can easily be seen in the most classical narratives – fairytales. They begin with a world in which everything is in its proper place: 'Once upon a time, a king and a queen had a daughter.'

The state of normality that opens a story is called narrative **equilibrium**. Everything is in balance when the audience arrives on the scene. Equilibrium may not be a happy state, and it can be full of unpleasantness, but it is a stable situation because nothing has occurred to unbalance things.

The action that begins the cause-and-effect chain of events is called the **disturbance** or **disruption**. The disturbance upsets the equilibrium and creates **disequilibrium**. It disrupts and unbalances things, sparking a sequence of reactions that throws everything completely upside down. **Complications** and **conflicts** follow as characters react according to their individual psychology.

Eventually a new normality or equilibrium is arrived at, as all the complications are resolved. This may be a happier state, or it may still be unpleasant. However, the ending of a typical narrative sees a return to stability and balance. There may be room for a new disruption if a sequel is planned, but the stability is strong enough to hold things in balance for the time being.

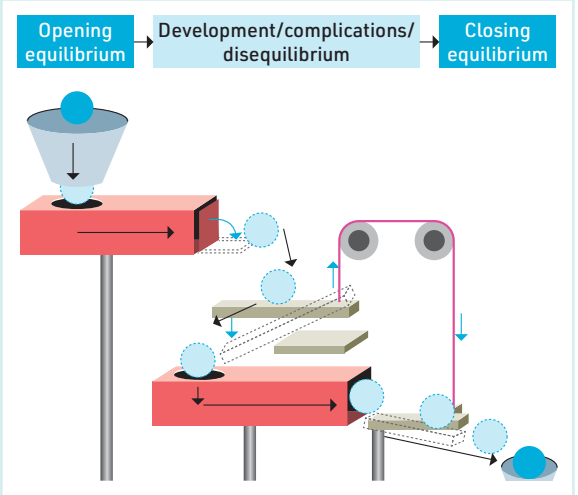
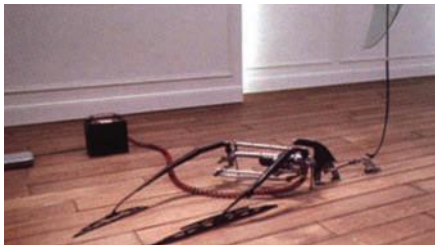


Figure 12.6 An illustration of a narrative drawn in the style of a Heath Robinson machine. The initial equilibrium is in balance until the ball of the disruption is introduced. This starts a chain reaction of complications until the final climax. The resolution comes, and a new and different equilibrium has been achieved.


Retro AdArchives/Alamy Stock Photo


Retro AdArchives/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 12.7 Narratives work a little like this advertisement for Honda called simply *The Cog* (2003). A single disruption from a car transmission bearing changes the equilibrium of the car parts and begins a process of chain reactions until a completed car rolls off a platform. The whole advertisement is real, and not computer generated. It took 606 takes before it finally worked; for 605 times before that, a small error meant the whole thing had to be set up again.

A 2003 television advertisement for Honda called *The Cog* is a good technical illustration of how a narrative works with its equilibrium and disequilibrium (Figure 12.7). *The Cog* opens with a single transmission bearing rolling down into a gear hub. This one disruption starts a chain reaction of events involving different car parts until finally a whole vehicle rolls off a tilted platform.

Heath Robinson machines (in the UK) or Rube Goldberg machines (in the US) also depict a whole chain of events occurring as a result of a disruptive single event (Figure 12.6).

12.2 ACTIVITIES

1 Select a movie you are very familiar with. The movie should have a good linear storyline, without many flashbacks and other complicated story structures. **Create** a flow chart of cause and effect. On the flow chart, **systematically arrange** each major scene. **Describe** the effect that the ending of each scene had on the characters at the point at which each following scene begins. Continue this process through to the resolution, **providing information** about each major plot point.

2 **Create** a list of movies and decide which of the four categories of causal agents apply to each one. **Justify** your decisions with a brief statement that **clarifies** your choices.

3 For each category of conflict, provide a movie example. Share your list with a partner and discuss whether there are hybrid or overlapping conflict situations in the films you have listed. **Describe** your choices to the class, **providing examples** from the movies that **illustrate** each category.

THREE-ACT STRUCTURE

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The three-act structure

The Cog

Traditional narrative is based on the **three-act structure**. Every story has a beginning, a middle and an end.

First act: the opening or orientation stage

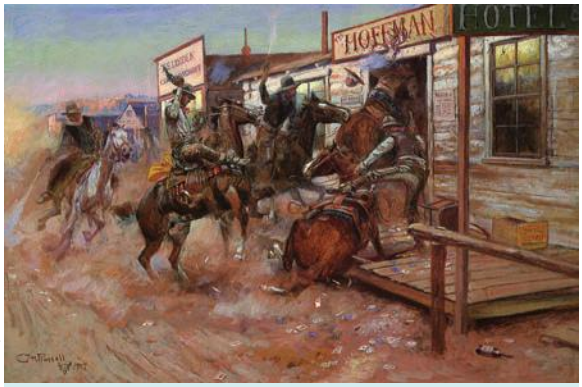
The first act (the opening or orientation stage) brings the audience into the narrative and introduces the characters in their current situation. It orients the audience to the story, engaging them in it. The purpose of the opening scenes is to introduce normality and then to create the circumstances that allow the disruption to begin (Figure 12.8). This establishes the central problem of the narrative and gives the characters their motivations. The orientation stage is usually quite short. In a film, it may represent only 15 minutes or so of screen time.

The exposition/showing stage of the opening

At the very beginning of a film you are like an alien in a strange land – the world of the story. You need to know about the characters and the environment they inhabit, and there is much to learn in a very short time. The few scenes right at the start of the movie bring the audience up to speed.

The exposition stage of the movie is a very short period of film time in which the audience is shown all the narrative details they need to know to begin the story. This includes background information about events that happened before the first scene. It includes showing the setting and introducing the main character. Exposition is used here to mean 'a showing', not in the

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Figure 12.8 *In Without Knocking* (1909) by Charles M Russell is a powerful illustration of the disturbance in the Western genre. The orientation stage of any narrative ends when the disturbance changes the narrative equilibrium (normality) and starts a chain reaction of cause-and-effect events.

documentary sense of exposition as argument. The exposition/showing scenes establish the world of the story.

There are a number of ways that the exposition/showing can take place. A narrator can relay it, as was common in early detective movies, or the audience can be shown the necessary details through flashbacks. Sometimes, a title sequence will convey the necessary information.

In *Rear Window* (1954), the exposition stage is when the camera pans across the courtyard, cuts to a thermometer and then moves into the apartment. In this time, a whole lot of information is given about the character and his surroundings. In *Memento* (2000), the exposition shows the audience that time will be structured very differently in this film. A Polaroid photograph is exposed in reverse, suggesting time running backwards.

Ending the opening

The orientation stage ends when the disruption/disturbance is introduced. This is sometimes called the first-act turning point. In Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), the orientation stage ends when Marion steals the money. In the horror classic *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), it ends when Freddy attacks Tina. In *Thelma & Louise* (1991), it ends when Louise shoots Harlan.

What the first disruption achieves

The disruption at the end of the opening gives the characters a problem to solve or a goal to achieve. In combination, these two aspects of the opening scenes are often called the set-up, and there are techniques that scriptwriters use to establish a good set-up:

- **Introducing the disturbance quickly.** A film in which normality goes on for too long quickly becomes boring.
- **Making the disturbance an action.** A good disturbance involves something being done. The action that creates change is an unusual or unexpected event.
- **Ensure whatever starts it finishes it.** Many different genres are composed of the same basic elements: suspense, violence, romance, spectacle and so on. The combinations vary from genre to genre, and again with hybrid genres. However, a simple rule of thumb is that whatever element starts the disruption must also finish it. Therefore, if love starts the disruption, love must resolve it. Similarly, if a gunfight is the disruption, violent gunfire must eventually restore order at the end of the film.

Narrative possibilities in the opening

The set-up of a narrative creates a set of narrative possibilities: directions in which the story could go. Part of the writer's task is to keep the audience guessing all the way to the end of the narrative. This is done by presenting characters with situations that could have multiple outcomes depending on the characters' actions. The characters' actions always have the possible outcomes of success or failure all the way through to the end of the film.

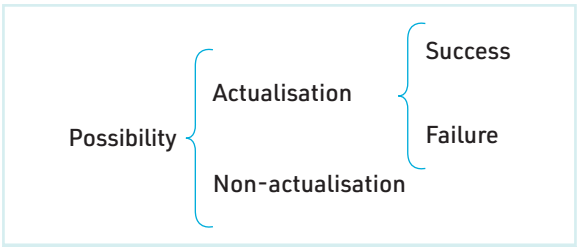
Two factors that are external to the actual story can heavily influence the narrative possibilities:

1. **The medium.** Whether the story is told on radio, film or television, or portrayed in a video game, the medium determines narrative possibilities.
2. **The genre.** The nature of the story is determined to a large extent by its genre, even though many basic elements are found across genres. The type of disruption introduced early in the set-up narrows down the narrative possibilities considerably by helping to establish the genre.

A narrative possibility only represents something that may happen. Not all possibilities will happen. A graphic organiser developed by Claude Bremond demonstrates this process (see Figure 12.9).

Foreshadowing

The process of suggesting narrative possibilities may include a technique called **foreshadowing**. This involves the early introduction of an element that



Claude Bremond

Figure 12.9 Every narrative possibility will either happen or not happen. If it occurs, the characters will either succeed or fail in dealing with it. At the beginning of the film, there are many possibilities. As choices are made and meet with success or failure, the narrative possibilities narrow down.



Ronald Grant Archive

Figure 12.10 The German film *Run Lola Run* (1998) deliberately plays with the idea of alternative narrative possibilities. It establishes a basic situation and then presents three possible outcomes that depend on small changes in the characters' actions.

appears unimportant at the time but takes on much greater significance later. Foreshadowing discreetly hints at the likely direction of the story, so when it develops in a certain way, the audience has already been cued to accept it. For example, foreshadowing occurs in the orientation stage of *Thelma & Louise*, when Thelma makes jokes about Louise packing a gun in her luggage. Foreshadowing also occurs in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) – the entire black-and-white section at the beginning can be seen as foreshadowing the characters and events Dorothy encounters in the later colour section of the film.

Second act: the development or complications stage

The second act (the development or complication stage) begins after the disturbance, when the lead characters accept the problem they have been given. What follows is a series of complications or additional problems that flow from the original one. Traditionally, each problem is a little worse than the one before and seems to take the lead characters further from their goal.

The second act ends at the second-act turning point. This is an event that shows the characters the enormity of what they are facing. The shower scene is probably the most climactic moment in *Psycho* (1960). The second-act turning point is when the detective, Arbogast, meets his fate. In *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), it is when Rick is murdered. In *Thelma & Louise* (1991), it is when Louise rings on the roadhouse payphone and Detective Hal Slocumb tells her they will be charged with murder.

Narrative possibilities in the development stage

As the plot progresses, the narrative possibilities begin to narrow down. In the first act, it seems as if anything could happen. In the second act, choices have been made and there are consequences. At this stage, narrative possibilities can be divided into two simple types:

1 **Possibilities favourable to the main characters.** These are possibilities in the plot that allow the main characters to establish a final equilibrium that is in their favour. The writers will need to have included enough of these so that when



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Figure 12.11 In classical Hollywood narrative, favourable and unfavourable narrative possibilities battle it out all the way to the final climax. By then, the main characters have their 'backs to the wall'. One narrative possibility, skilfully foreshadowed, will come good just before the resolution.

the final climax arrives, there is adequate foreshadowing of a favourable resolution.

2 **Possibilities unfavourable to the main characters.** These are possibilities that suggest the forces opposing the main characters will win. In most narratives, the unfavourable possibilities loom large. We are not interested in stories where the characters have an easy win. Possibilities for misfortune increase as tension rises.

Third act: closing or resolution stage

The third act (the closing or resolution stage) includes the final climax and the resolution. The final climax is the do-or-die event during which the characters face the ultimate test. Once their fate is sealed, the resolution happens quickly.

The final climax in *Psycho* (1960) is the revealing shot of the mother; it is at that point that Sam and Lila face the possibility of their own death. In *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), it is when Nancy overcomes her fear and faces up to Freddy. In *Thelma & Louise* (1991), the final climax is the police stand-off at the Grand Canyon.



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Figure 12.12 In the closing scenes of *Thelma and Louise* (1991), the police finally trap the two women. The closing resolves the central problem established by the disruption in the first act. Whatever caused the initial disruption is usually also present at the main climax and resolution. For example, a violent disruption begets a violent main climax. The resolution 'ties up all the loose ends'. Sometimes this can be done in a single shot.

Narrative possibilities in the third act – the endgame

The closing sequence represents the destination of the narrative – the one place it is heading to. One by one, character choices close off all but one possibility. The ultimate choice is made in the final climax. Just before this climax, the main characters must have their backs to the wall. This is their end-game moment. The most unfavourable possibility of all looks likely: the dashing of all hope of solving the central problem of the film. It is a do-or-die moment but, from the jaws of defeat, the characters snatch victory. One favourable possibility, foreshadowed earlier, manages to be their saviour.

What the closing achieves

The resolution is not merely an ending – it must close off every other narrative possibility in the film. In other words, it must tie off all loose ends. A narrative that is not fully closed off can leave room for a sequel, but there must be a sufficient sense of completion to meet audience expectations.

As with the opening scenes, there are some techniques that scriptwriters commonly use to help resolve a narrative. The first technique is by resolving the central problem. The final climax and resolution should provide an answer to the problem encountered when the disruption first appeared. As well, the resolution should answer all the other minor questions posed throughout the narrative. In film, these minor issues can even be resolved in a single shot. This happens several times in the big finish of the musical *Dirty Dancing* (1987).

The second technique is by ending straight after the climax. It is rare to find a successful film or television narrative that lingers for more than a few minutes after the final climax. In many cases, the resolution and climax come together in the same scene.

Denouement

This is the final stage of the film, where all the loose ends are tied up and the final secrets are revealed. **Denouement** is a French word meaning 'untying'.

'Imagine the feeling you would have had if *Saving Private Ryan* had ended and the credits rolled immediately after Captain Miller's hand stopped shaking, indicating that he had drawn his last breath. Bad enough that Tom Hanks has died on screen. But now we're expected to walk outside and get in our cars and head home?'

Drew Yanno, screenwriter and script consultant

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It comes after the climax and just before the credits. In *Psycho* (1960), the denouement takes place as the psychologist explains the background to Norman's behaviour. The denouement is a time for the audience to untangle themselves from the narrative and get ready for the lights to come on.

Open closure

Many narratives leave room for a sequel. If this is happening, the audience must still be left with a sufficient sense of closure to be able to leave the narrative at this point.

Climaxes and turning points – narrative intensity

A climax is a high point in the drama. Narratives generally have only a few genuine high points: the initial disturbance, the second-act turning point and the final climax. However, every narrative has other minor high points or secondary climaxes. Climaxes are twists and turns that appear to change the fortunes of the characters, or obstacles that must be overcome. Most Hollywood screenwriters aim for a significant high point for every 10 to 15 minutes of screen time. As well, each scene has its own (much smaller) high point.

Secondary climaxes help build towards the final climax. This is called the 'rising tension' or 'rising action' model of narrative progression.

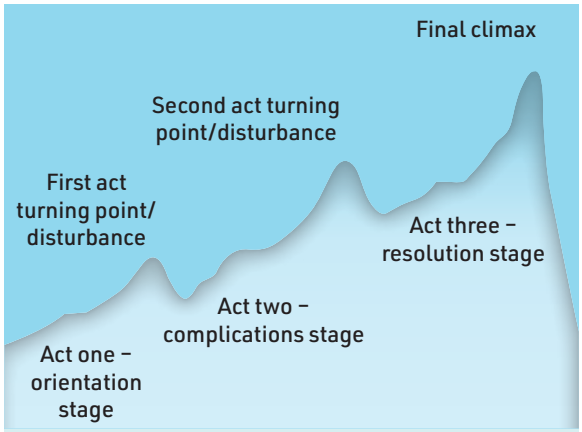


Figure 12.13 The rising tension of the traditional narrative structure is often depicted in graph form as a mountain range, with a number of smaller peaks eventually rising to the largest one before falling away sharply during the resolution stage. Jeopardy (danger) increases until the final climax. Some writers use the idea of a rollercoaster ride to depict the plot's ups and downs and twists and turns.

Some genres of film also change **register** at the moments of high tension. A register is a different scale or range that allows for a different kind of communication. Martial arts movies and musicals are two genres that do this. Musicals have the additional register of music, and martial arts movies have the additional register of hand-to-hand combat. At the most intense moments in the plot, the dialogue-driven narrative switches register and becomes either song and dance or fighting. The rhythmical interaction of the actors' bodies with the music represents a different kind of storytelling.

In musicals, these moments of spectacle are cut off from the linear narrative in some way. They work in the opposite way to how tension works in a thriller. Instead of delaying and suspending enjoyment (as in suspense), they give small doses of immediate pleasure at regular periods. These culminate in the final, irresistible pleasure of the big finish (Figure 12.14).

Movie fights are different from real-life fights because they are trying to convey a story to audiences. The fight is choreographed so that audiences can understand what is going on. This is the opposite of a real fight where the participants often try to hide their game plan; real combatants would be disadvantaged if their opponent knew what to expect.

Fight sequences do not freeze the narrative – instead, the martial arts display progresses the story. The narrative simply shifts to another register – that of physical action and movement rather than of storytelling through dialogue.

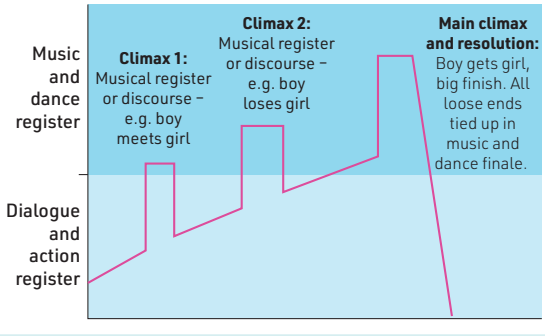


Figure 12.14 The song and dance in a musical still moves the narrative forward. Music occurs at the most intense moments of the narrative, when it seems to be the only way emotions can be expressed. Audiences do not feel the music is an interruption because the plot is still progressing.

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The hero's journey and narrative progression

> 'There are only two or three human stories and they go on repeating themselves as fiercely as if they had never happened before.'
>
> **Willa Cather**, in the novel *O Pioneers!* (1913)

Joseph Campbell (1904–1987) and his ideas on the hero's journey have been enormously influential for the writers of Hollywood narratives. *Star Wars* franchise creator George Lucas is a fan (Figure 12.15), as is screenwriter Chris Vogler, whose ideas in turn influenced the development of the Disney film *The Lion King* (1994).

Weblinks
What makes a hero?

Joseph Campbell and the hero's journey

Chris Vogler: The Hero's Journey Outline

Campbell studied myths from around the world during the 1930s and 1940s and came to think that they were all basically the same story. Despite variations across cultures, all the myths seemed to share a certain basic pattern. Campbell was also influenced by the work of the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, who had developed the idea of archetypes: characters who constantly appear in the stories, myths and dreams of people in all cultures. Jung believed archetypes reflected the deep structures of the human mind. He argued that there exists a 'collective unconscious', which is common to all people in all parts of the world.

Building on this idea, in 1949 Campbell published his theory of a universal structure common to all myths. He called this the monomyth – the single myth that, at a deep level, lies beneath all other myths.



Maksym Gorpenyuk/Shutterstock.com

Figure 12.15 Part of the abandoned *Star Wars* film production set in the Sahara Desert, Tunisia, used in *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace* (1999). A huge sand dune is now bearing down on the set, and it is expected to be fully engulfed in five years. *Star Wars* creator George Lucas is a fan of Joseph Campbell's idea of the hero's journey. This approach to plot structure has now found its way into a number of big-name Hollywood movies.

The hero's journey – Joseph Campbell

According to Campbell's universal structure, the hero's journey passes through 12 stages. These can be grouped into three broad phases:

1. **The departure.** The hero receives a call to action in the form of a threat to peace or the community. The hero may initially refuse but eventually accepts the call. The hero receives help from a protector of some kind – sometimes supernatural help.
2. **The initiation.** The hero crosses the threshold out of the previous ordinary world and into a special world. To do this, an ordeal must be survived. The hero faces a special supernatural world of obstacles and threats that must be overcome. A helper with supernatural powers may secretly be assisting. A final battle is fought in a life-or-death climax that allows the future resolution of the journey.
3. **The return.** This is often a rebirth or resurrection of some kind, or perhaps just a return into daylight. Having achieved the goal of the quest and overcoming the threats, the hero returns to the ordinary world with special powers or gifts that can be used to help ordinary people. Sometimes the gift is no more than an awareness of the hero's newfound place in the world.

The hero's journey – Vogler

Hollywood screenwriter Christopher Vogler applied Campbell's ideas to movie scriptwriting. Vogler's interpretations were especially influential during the 1990s, and many Hollywood blockbusters of the time were written with the mythic structure in mind.

Vogler's adaptation of the stages of Campbell's monomyth is set out in Table 12.1, together with examples of the stages from several movies.

'A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons [gifts] on his fellow man.'

Joseph Campbell, scholar of comparative mythology

Table 12.1 Vogler's adaptation of Campbell's 'hero's journey'

	MOVIE EXAMPLES		
STAGES OF THE JOURNEY	*THE WIZARD OF OZ* **(1939)**	*STAR WARS* **(1977)**	*THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING* **(2001)**
ACT ONE			
Ordinary world	Dorothy's dull life in Kansas	Luke Skywalker as a farm boy	Frodo in the Shire
Call to adventure	Miss Gulch threatens to take Toto	Princess Leia's hologram	Gandalf calls
Initial refusal of the call and later acceptance	Dorothy runs away from home and then a tornado takes them to Oz	Luke refuses but finds his aunt and uncle murdered	Frodo is hesitant at first but then realises the danger the ring poses to the Shire
Meeting with the mentor (teacher)	Glenda the Good Witch	Obi-Wan Kenobi gives Luke the light saber that belonged to his father	Bilbo asks Gandalf to keep an eye on Frodo; earlier he gives Frodo the ring
Crossing the first threshold into the changed world	Dorothy first sees Munchkinland	Luke commits to the quest	Ringwraiths/Council of Elrond
ACT TWO			
Tests, allies and enemies	Dorothy meets friends on the Yellow Brick Road	Luke forms an alliance with Han Solo but makes an enemy of Jabba	The fellowship is forged and the journey to Moria shapes group dynamics
Approach to the innermost cave and facing the ordeal	The Wicked Witch is dead	Luke and his crew are sucked into the Death Star and face Darth Vader	The mines of Moria and the loss of Gandalf
Reward	Dorothy gets the broom from the Wicked Witch	The rescue of Princess Leia	Galadriel, Lothlórien and rejuvenation
ACT THREE			
The road back and the gift or boon (can be treasure, wisdom, freedom, knowledge, etc.)	The wizard's balloon leaves Dorothy stranded but Glenda explains the way	Luke overcomes Darth Vader	Orcs must be faced; Galadriel's gifts aid the travellers in the next stage of the journey
Resurrection (a second life-or-death moment that is cleansing, like a rebirth, or gives insight)	Dorothy tries on the ruby slippers	The final battle when Luke is almost killed	The sacrifices of friends before Frodo and Sam's departure
Return with elixir, boons, gifts or newfound place in the world	The discovery that home is the best place after all	Peace is restored to the universe	Subsequent *Lord of the Rings* sequels

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12.3 ACTIVITIES

1 **Create** a list of five films that have used foreshadowing. If you are having trouble getting started, thrillers often use the device. For example, Hitchcock used it in *Psycho* (1960). **Describe** how the element is introduced and **clarify** how it becomes significant later. **Identify** and **locate** the position of the foreshadowing in the narrative chain of events.

2 View a film with a powerful title sequence (a sequence of scenes over which the initial credits roll). Suggestions include *Garage Days* (2002), *Idiot Box* (1996), *Se7en* (1995), *Spider-Man 2* (2004), *Vertigo* (1958) and *Psycho* (1960). Many of the classic James Bond movies, such as *Dr. No* (1962) and *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977), are also suitable. **Describe** how the titles express the mood and narrative of the film. **Illustrate** your explanation, describing examples from the sequence with reference to the codes and conventions. **Describe** how the titles seem to stand for the whole story or reinforce the central problem that the disruption will introduce. **Identify** which images are first seen and what possibilities they suggest to the audience. **Analyse** the connotations of the text and images. **Examine** the sequence as a set of constituent parts. **Interpret** each image, considering its most likely associations. Make a list of all the ideas that come to mind: how many of these eventuate in the film?

3 Select a movie you are familiar with that has a straightforward linear plot. **Create** a roadmap (with a drawing of a road) **representing** the twists and turns of the plot in each scene of the second act (the development or complications stage) as twists and turns in the road. Begin by drawing a road to represent the progress of the plot. Each major scene should represent a change in direction. Place a signpost on your map to **identify** each major event and character choice that occurs at each turning point. In the off-road and overgrown areas, you could place other signposts to **represent** choices the characters could have made but didn't (other narrative possibilities). **Describe** the roadmap, **clarifying** how it represents the plot in symbolic form.

4 Tying off all the loose ends is the task of the closing section of the film. **Represent** this idea in an illustration. Select a film and depict its third act (the closing or resolution stage) in the following way. Draw a thick piece of rope with a frayed end tied off to represent the central problem being resolved. Underneath that, draw smaller, thinner ropes to represent the subplots and minor problems. Label each of the loose ends that are tied up. **Describe** how the plot is tied up, providing additional information for each loose end you have labelled. **Clarify** how the audience is reassured that the loose end has been resolved.

5 Select a movie with a linear three-act structure. **Resolve** the narrative in a graphical representation as a mountain of rising tension. **Identify** and **locate** on your mountain the three stages, together with the disturbance, the main twists and turns, the second-act turning point, and the final climax and resolution. **Describe** each of the events in the three stages to illustrate the turning points.

6 Using Christopher Vogler's Hollywood version of Joseph Campbell's hero's journey (see page 229), apply its stages to a movie of your choice. The stages can be applied to many different genres, ranging from action movies (such as *James Bond* films) to romantic comedies (such as *Pretty Woman* (1990)). The stages can also be applied to the other films in the *Star Wars* franchise. Respond to the areas of activity in the following table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe the story of the movie, **identifying** the plot points that correspond to Vogler's stages. **Give information** about each of the story points at each stage and the kinds of imagery used.	**Analyse** at least three of the stages from the movie overall, **examining** each stage and **considering** the degree to which it matches Vogler's. **Interpret** the meanings of some of the images at the key stages in conjunction with the music and sound effects. **Make a judgement** about the strengths and weaknesses of the key stages using audience appeal as the criterion.	**Evaluate** the significance of Vogler's version of Campbell's hero's journey, **drawing conclusions** about the worth of it to the overall purpose of movie storytelling. **Evaluate** the status of your selected movie's use of the hero's journey stages, **drawing conclusions** about the degree to which the concept has been applied.

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POINT OF VIEW IN STORIES

Point of view (POV) is a term that has two meanings in cinema: narrative POV and camera POV.

- **Narrative POV.** The POV from which the narrative is told to the audience. In this meaning, POV is a story element and part of narrative structure. It refers to the way the audience is invited to identify with characters.
- **Camera POV.** The perspective from which the camera is 'looking'. Camera POV is usually referred to as a POV shot. It occurs when the audience temporarily sees things from the perspective of a particular character. The camera points in the direction that the character is looking. Camera POV is a production element.

Narrative point of view

Originally, POV was a term used in the literary analysis of novels. In novels, the distinctions are easier to understand because they are in words rather than filmed images. POV in television and film differs somewhat from that in a novel.

Narrative point of view in novels

There are three main narrative POVs in novels. It is easier to distinguish them in literature because written words are used, and it is possible to tell by the pronoun used (*I*, *you*, *he/she*) what the POV is.

- **First-person narrative.** Self-narration occurs in a novel when the narrator tells his or her own story. The narrator is a character in the story and exists in the story world along with the other characters. The narrator can therefore use the pronoun I.
- **Second-person narrative.** This is extremely rare and occurs when the reader is in the story and is referred to as you. This makes the reader a character in the novel. The closest audiovisual experience to this is a video game where you are an active participant in the narrative.
- **Third-person narrative.** This is the most common style of narration in novels, and many of the great classics are written in the third person. You know you are reading a third-person narrative when the writer uses he or she to refer to all of the characters – especially the **protagonist**. There are two types of third-person narrative:
  - **Limited third-person narrative.** Where the writer limits the reader's understanding to the POV of a single character (the protagonist). The plot centres on their POV. In film, this is known as restricted information.
  - **Omniscient third-person narrative.** Where the writer freely tells the reader a whole host of details about what every character is doing and thinking. Nothing is held back or limited. In film, this is known as unrestricted information.

Narrative point of view in television and film

In film and television, POV is not as strictly established. There are not the same clearly defined markers in film as those that exist in written language with its specific pronouns. The film equivalent of *he/she* or *I* (in other words, the voice of the narrator) is the lens of the camera. Telling whether the eye of the camera is speaking as *I* or *he/she* is not so easy. Film tends to just as easily fall into the third person.

First-person narrative in film

Many films use a narrator who speaks in the first person. However, this tends to be only at specific times in the film and the narrative POV falls naturally back into the objective view. In the objective view, we are just observing the characters as they go about the business of the story. Thus, there are very few films which are truly and technically first-person narrative in the way that many novels are. First-person narrative in film is only a shadow of first-person narrative in a novel. Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) is an example of a first-person narrative film that switches from subjective POV shots to objective shots (and therefore back to third person).

> 'In film, the viewer identifies with the lens, and thus tends to *fuse* with the narrator. To produce first-person narration in film, the camera would have to record all the action through the eyes of the character, which, in effect would also make the viewer the protagonist.'
>
> **Louis Giannetti**, Case Western University

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Figure 12.16 The *film noir* movie *The Lady in the Lake* (1946) is one of the very few examples of a film told in true first-person narrative. The camera shows the subjective POV of the male protagonist all the way through. In this image, you can see the protagonist reflected in the mirror behind the female lead. But we never see him as we see the other actors. The camera 'looks' through his eyes only.

Third-person narrative in film

This is the most common narrative POV in film and television. Third-person narrative allows the filmmaker to show the experiences of a number of different characters, rather than only ever being able to show one (as in first-person narrative). Every different camera shot provides a new perspective of the characters and the action. Close-ups can show emotions. Long shots can include many characters. Lots of locations can be seen, not just where the protagonist is. In the terminology of film analysis, the third-person narrative can be either restricted or unrestricted.

Third-person restricted information

Restricted-information narratives relate the plot according to the POV of one or more characters, without the aid of a narrator. This is the most common form of film narrative because it allows the filmmaker to keep the audience surprised by twists and turns. The audience finds out information at the same rate as the main characters do. The story seems to unfold naturally as more and more is revealed. In a film with restricted information, the audience identifies with one or two characters because the film relates the experiences of those characters. Therefore, a strong protagonist is required. *Cloverfield* (2008) is an example of a film with restricted information.

Most films do not stay in the restricted mode all the time. Quite often in a restricted film, the director may give a glimpse of unrestricted information. There are several reasons for these brief moments of omniscience:

- **To create suspense.** For example, in a horror movie, the audience might be briefly shown what is 'behind the door'. This increases tension because the audience knows more than the characters, and wants to call out, 'Don't go in there!'
- **To explain story events.** The filmmaker may need to give the audience information about what is happening outside the experience of the character. The fact that the character cannot be everywhere can be inconvenient for the telling of the story. For example, we may need to see the landing of the spaceship on Mars, or the damage done by the missile in a foreign country.
- **To help the audience identify with characters.** This happens as the film focuses on different characters' responses to their plight.

Third-person unrestricted information

Unrestricted-information narrative is less common in film. It occurs when the audience knows much more than the characters do individually. In an unrestricted narrative, it is as if we are looking at the world of the story from above. We know what is happening in multiple locations and to multiple characters. Cross-cutting, or simultaneous time, is a technique that is often used in films with unrestricted information.

It is rare for a film to be completely unrestricted. Something has to be held in reserve to keep the audience watching. Often, there is a surprise twist or piece of additional information that was withheld until the end.

Character point of view

The character POV refers to the way the narrative deals with the characters' realities or experiences. There are two main ways of presenting character POV: objectively or subjectively. Films often slip in and out of both.

Objective character point of view

The objective POV is the most commonly occurring in classical Hollywood narrative style. In an objective view, the audience sees the characters from the outside. Actions and reactions are observed, but inner thoughts and feelings are just 'felt' by the

audience – not by the camera. The actors can make their inner world visible to the audience by their expressions, but the inner world is not directly part of the narrative.

Subjective point of view

The subjective POV shows events the way a particular character perceives or feels about them. The camera actually responds the way a character would. For example, if a character is drunk, the scene may appear temporarily blurry and confused. The subjective POV is less likely to be sustained all the way through a film. Many films momentarily take a subjective POV to allow the audience to more closely identify with a character.

There are several types of subjective POV:

- **Single-protagonist subjective point of view.** The narrative focuses on the POV of just one character. If that character is not included in a scene, we do not see it. All information is kept from the audience unless the protagonist knows it as well.
- **Minor-character subjective point of view.** This is similar to single-protagonist POV, except that the narrative is told from the perspective of someone who is not a protagonist. This means that the story happens to someone else, while the minor character is there as well.
- **Multiple-character subjective point of view.** These narratives tell the story from different characters' perspectives, one at a time. The viewpoint of the narrative switches between two or more characters. There are several scenarios that lend themselves to multiple-character viewpoints:
  - **Romance scenarios.** The POV switches from one partner to another. This can work like parallel editing. Eventually the two must come together.
  - **Bitter rivals.** Instead of lovers, the split perspective is between two people who are enemies.
  - **Ensemble piece.** The scenes focus on different characters often united by being members of a family or group, such as a school reunion or military group. *American Beauty* (1999) is an ensemble POV, based around family members and associates.

12.4 ACTIVITIES

1 Investigate some classic *noir* films to research the way that films have traditionally dealt with first-person narrative. *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) and *Double Indemnity* (1944) are suggested starting points. Write short responses to each of the following areas of investigation. **Describe** what happens in the openings of the films and find the earliest point when first-person narration gives way to objective action shots (in the manner of third person). **Identify** the number of times that the film moves in and out of first-person narration in the first act. **Apply** your knowledge of narrative POV to suggest possible reasons. **Analyse** your own identification with the protagonist in the first-person narrative story. **Interpret** your reactions to determine if identification was stronger than if the protagonist were in a third-person narrative. **Evaluate** the strengths and weaknesses of this approach in increasing audience identification.

2 Select a third-person narrative film. **Create** a list of the scenes where the protagonist is present. **Contrast** this list with one showing the scenes in which other characters are present, but the protagonist is not. **Apply** your knowledge to suggest reasons for the differences in frequency between the two lists.

CHARACTER

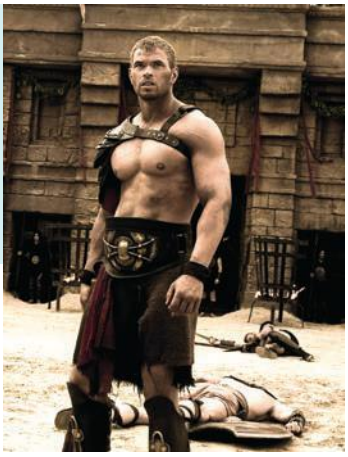
Characters are people presented in dramatic narratives. Making them come to life for the audience is called characterisation. Across all types of narratives there are basic categories of characters. These categories remain constant regardless of the topic or genre of the narrative because they exist to perform certain essential narrative functions.

The protagonist

The **protagonist** is the leading character in a narrative (Figure 12.17). The term, originally associated with classical Greek drama, is based on the Greek words *proto*, meaning 'first' or 'leading', and *agonistes*, meaning 'one who is engaged in a struggle'. Widely used in reference to all narratives, the term works well because it is precise in its meaning. It is a broader term than 'hero' because the

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protagonist may be a thoroughly unlikeable character whom we despise rather than look up to. The term 'protagonist' may apply to both hero and antihero (someone who lacks heroic traits).



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 12.17 Kellan Lutz as Hercules in *The Legend of Hercules* (2014). Rather than use the terms 'hero' or 'main character', it is more correct to use the term 'protagonist'.

Australian television and film scriptwriter Linda Aronson has identified the following characteristics of protagonists:

- The protagonist does not die unless it is at the very end of the film. (In a sense, this is even true of *Psycho* (1960), in which Hitchcock substitutes Marion with her sister Lila.)
- The protagonist is the character who faces all the difficulties.
- We are 'inside the head' of the protagonist.
- The protagonist changes and develops.
- The protagonist usually makes things happen and makes the decisions.
- If the voice-over is delivered by a character, it is usually the protagonist. Most *noir* films operate in this way. So too does *The Piano* (1993). (A voice-over protagonist should not be confused with a narrator, who is not a character.)
- The action-line protagonist and the relationship-line protagonist are the same person.
- Some films have several protagonists. An example is *American Beauty* (1999). Traditionally, there is only one truly leading character, but modern usage allows for several equal leads.
- The protagonist is present during all the climaxes.

The antagonist

The **antagonist** acts against the protagonist, as an opponent or adversary. The word 'antagonist' is also of classical Greek origin, built from *anti*, meaning 'against', and *agonistes*, which has been defined as 'one who struggles'. 'Antagonist' is preferred to a word with narrower meaning such as 'villain' because it can refer to a character who is not evil or bad but simply troublesome to the protagonist. It can also refer to non-human forces.

Linda Aronson has identified the following characteristics of antagonists:

- Antagonists are stronger than the protagonist, or at least an equal match (Figure 12.18).
- Antagonists cause trouble for, or force change on, the protagonist.
- The antagonist is highly motivated, perhaps fanatical.
- We are not taken inside the antagonist's head; otherwise we might identify with them too much.
- Antagonists often die. Minor ones die early. Major antagonists do not die until the end.
- The **action line** of a narrative can accommodate several antagonists; for instance, the villains in *James Bond* movies have lots of henchmen. However, the **relationship line** usually has just one antagonist.



Entertainment Pictures/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 12.18 Jodie Foster as Secretary Delacourt, the antagonist in the science fiction thriller *Elysium* (2013), who lives in a high-tech space station while the rest of the population struggles to survive on Earth. The antagonist's role is to make life difficult for the protagonist. A good antagonist will be stronger than the protagonist – or at least evenly matched.

Mentor antagonists

A mentor is a teacher or adviser. Some antagonists are not enemies of the protagonist, but agents of change

whose intervention forces the protagonist to undertake a painful journey of personal growth. According to Aronson, who coined the term **mentor antagonist**, these people teach the protagonist new values.

Raymond (Dustin Hoffman) in *Rain Man* (1988) is a mentor antagonist whose innocent troublemaking eventually transforms the selfish protagonist played by Tom Cruise.

Foils

A **foil** may be an antagonist or just a minor character. The purpose of the foil is to show up the strong points of the protagonist, so the foil often has weaknesses that reveal the protagonist's strengths.

Two examples of foils are found in the musical *Dirty Dancing* (1987), in which Frances's (Baby's) older sister Lisa is her foil, and Robbie is Johnny's foil. Lisa and Robbie's flawed union forms a perfect foil to that of the main couple.

Creating characters

Writers need to make us care about the characters in narratives or we will lose interest in the story, says Joseph Boggs of the University of Western Kentucky. Boggs notes the following ways of creating believable characters in films (the list can also be applied to narratives in other mediums):

- **Characterisation by appearance.** Casting is important in character creation because the audience begins to make assumptions as soon as they see the physical appearance of the character.
- **Characterisation through dialogue.** What a character says and how they say it can be very revealing.
- **Characterisation through action.** What a character does helps to define them and reveal their psychology and motivation. Ultimately, these drive the progress of the story.
- **Characterisation by reaction of other characters.** Sometimes it is easier to portray a character by showing their impact on the people around them.
- **Characterisation by caricature or motif.** Simple characters can be defined by one or two features. In the manner of a caricature, these can be exaggerated to make a strong impression in the minds of the audience. When a character is known for a particular trait or saying that is often repeated, this can be seen as characterisation through motif.
- **Characterisation through choice of name.** There is an audience expectation that certain names will represent certain types of people. This is called name typing. Writers select names that are memorable, have a good rhythm to them and also suggest certain expected behaviours.

Character development and motivation

Character development and motivation are two of the most basic principles in screenwriting. Essentially, the audience wants to see the characters go on an intellectual, emotional or physical journey – a character path or character arc. The audience also wants them to do so with good reason – character motivation.

Character development arc

The journey that a character makes from the beginning to end of a narrative is called the character arc or path (Figure 12.19). A character arc can be confined to a single text, or it can carry on over several sequels or episodes. During the course of a narrative, characters can either grow or change:

- **Character growth.** James Bond does not change in his films. However, he does grow as he encounters obstacles and strives to overcome them. He acquires new knowledge and skills. At the end of each movie he is an even better James Bond.
- **Character change.** In many movies the character undergoes a change and ends up seeing the world in a different way. Character change can be either one of the following:
  - **Transformational change.** This is the kind of major change that comes from a character waking up to what they really want or what is really important in life. Transformational change happens for characters who have a set world view at the start of the movie. Their philosophy is later tested and found wanting. Therefore, they must change to accommodate the new reality.
  - **Incremental change.** Smaller changes can occur for leading characters if their primary goal is more action-oriented.

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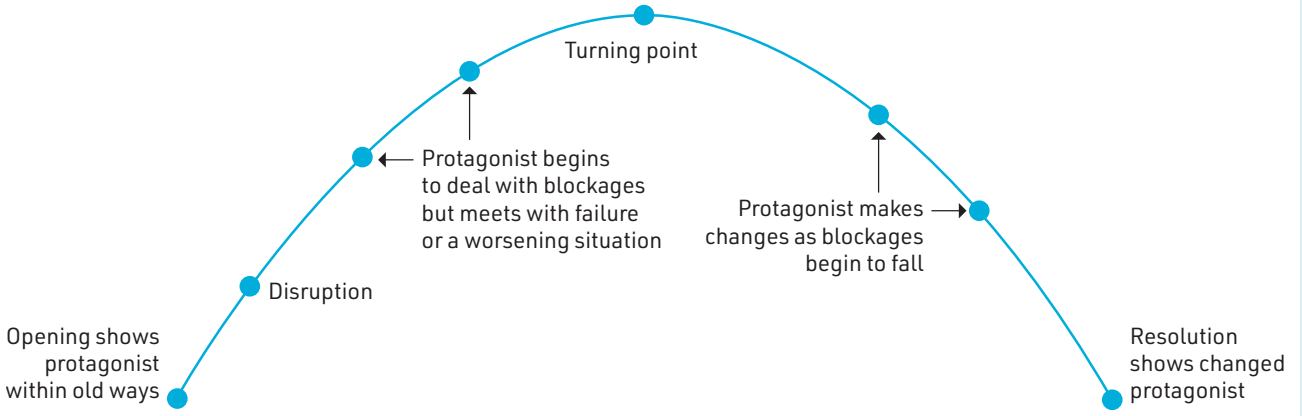


Figure 12.19 A classic character arc. It is often referred to as an arc because the uphill side represents the worsening situation the character faces, and that requires some kind of growth or change. The top of the arc is the turning point where the character begins to realise that something more is needed. The downhill side represents the growth or change phase of the character's pathway. Other ways of representing a character arc can be as a gentle uphill or downhill arc.

Character motivation

A character's motivation is simply what drives them to act as they do. In the case of the protagonist, their primary motivation will be solving the central problem of the narrative. Equally, the primary motivation of the antagonist will be to block the protagonist from achieving that goal. Character motivations lead to decisions and actions. The protagonist is forced to make decisions and consider the best strategy for achieving their goal.

Types of character development and motivations

Characters come in four basic types, and these can be placed in two general categories: those who change and those who do not.

Characters who don't change

Unchanging personality and motivation

Some characters always seem to be the same, and they always want the same thing. The goal for these characters is introduced very early in the plot, and the quest continues right through to the end of the film (Figure 12.20). Once the goal has been achieved, there is little point in the movie continuing, so the resolution comes almost immediately.

Unchanging personality but changing motivation

This type of character does not change or learn anything very much during the course of the plot. However, they change their tactics and their motivations throughout the film. These characters are usually heroes or villains. Their personalities do not change because they are already sufficiently heroic or villainous. Their motivations and tactics change as they encounter new obstacles.



Bryan Steffy/Getty Images Entertainment/ Getty Images

Figure 12.20 A series of six waxwork James Bonds from the 1960s to the present day at Madame Tussauds in London. James Bond is always the same in every film, even when he is played by different actors. His motivation never changes. Even if he is with one of his 'Bond girls', she never changes him. He returns to his main motivation in the next scene.

Characters who change

Changing personality but unchanging motivation

In films, it is common for a major character to change. Life events in the movie teach them a lesson. The events are usually so dramatic that the character has no option but to make a change. The response to the events must be emotional in order to change the personality. However, the character keeps their central goal in mind the whole time. Their motivation doesn't change.

There are several ways a changing personality can keep a constant motivation:

- A character has a single goal but fails to achieve it. They become 'sadder, but wiser'.
- A character has a single goal but comes to empathise with other people, becoming 'nicer' as the plot goes on.
- The character has a single goal but gradually comes to see that it is not all it seemed to be at first. For example, they may realise that money does not buy happiness.

Changing personality, changing motivation

Changing a character's goals and motivation throughout the plot is obviously a complex process. The complexity can confuse audiences. Therefore, it is the least common of all of the combinations. To start with, the character needs to be strong and wilful. Events must be emotionally dramatic to make them want to change and the chain of events must take many twists and turns to deliver a need for different motivations.

Propp and character roles

The Russian scholar Vladimir Propp (1895–1970), who studied hundreds of fairytales and folk stories, concluded that there are only seven basic character roles. **Propp's narrative theory** calls these roles **spheres of action**.

The spheres of action that characters fulfil are not quite the same thing as character types. One character, with all their individual personality traits, can be involved in more than one sphere.

Many people apply Propp's ideas to modern popular culture, arguing that in some ways television and film are just modern means of telling folk stories. Analysts have applied Propp's theory to films such as *Star Wars* (1977; Table 12.2), *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) and *North by Northwest* (1959). Others have criticised Propp's approach, arguing it is too simplistic and does not apply to a postmodern society.



A.F. Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 12.21 Sam, in *The Lord of the Rings*, fits into Propp's category of the helper. Without his support on the journey, the hero Frodo could not have succeeded in his quest to restore equilibrium to Middle Earth by destroying the One Ring in the fires of Mount Doom.

Table 12.2 There is a neat fit between Propp's character types and the characters in the original *Star Wars* (1977), says Graeme Turner, Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Queensland. 'It is possible that the modern feature film and the folktale serve similar functions for their audiences.'

PROPP'S CHARACTER ROLES	*STAR WARS* (1977)
The hero	Luke Skywalker
The villain	Darth Vader
The princess	Princess Leia
The donor	Obi-Wan Kenobi
The helper	Han Solo
The false hero	Darth Vader (again)
The dispatcher	R2-D2

Turner, Graeme, *Film as Social Practice IV*, Routledge, Abingdon (UK), 2006, pp. 99–102

Propp's character roles are as follows:

- **The hero** must embark on a journey to overcome the problem posed at the beginning of the story. The hero also restores equilibrium at the end of the story. The hero in traditional folk tales was usually male and won the princess as a prize for undertaking his quest. Propp found two types of hero:
  - The victim hero is the focus of the villain's troublemaking.
  - The seeker hero is on a quest to help others who are preyed upon by the villain.
- **The villain** is the antagonist who creates the original problem or disturbance and continues to place obstacles in the way of the hero.
- **The princess** is the prime target of the villain and must be rescued by the hero.
- **The donor** passes on something helpful to the hero for the journey. Sometimes this character gives the hero a magical object to help in the quest.
- **The helper** is a sidekick whose role is to help the hero achieve resolution and equilibrium. The helper may also have some special or magical power.
- **The false hero** is at first thought to be the one who will save the day but is later revealed to be a bad character. The false hero often takes credit for

Weblink
Vladimir Propp

the hero's achievements and sometimes tries to claim the princess.
- **The dispatcher** sends the hero off on the quest. Often the dispatcher is the father of the princess.

Flat and rounded characters

In all narratives, certain characters are more important than others. Some are little more than extras, while others become important and familiar to us – almost like real people. These differences stem from the degree of characterisation that the writer has provided.

Flat characters have little characterisation. They are not fully rounded people, but instead represent certain character traits that are essential to their role in the story. It is very difficult to get inside the head of a flat character. They are usually antagonists or are given subordinate roles to the protagonist.

Rounded characters seem like real people. They have multiple personality traits, often including flaws and inconsistencies, just as people do in real life. They frequently come to the narrative with a personal history and a convincing psychology or motivation. While rounded characters can sometimes be antagonists, the protagonist should always be a rounded character.

Another way of considering characterisation is to think in terms of developing and static characters. The protagonist is a developing character. Other characters can also change during the course of the narrative. A developing character is any character who is affected and changed by the events in the story. This change is permanent – they can never return to the situation of the old equilibrium or normality (Figure 12.22).

Static characters remain the same for the entire narrative. This could be because they are not central to the story, or it could be because they are just not sensitive to the events that are happening around them. A static protagonist is taken as a sign of a failed narrative, yet it is common for antagonists to be static characters.

Relationships between characters

Characters are the active agents in film and television narratives. Without them, nothing happens. How they interact with each other determines the plot. Characters fulfil important functions such as protagonist and antagonist. They may also operate within Propp's 'spheres of influence'. However, from



A.F. Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 12.22 In *Pleasantville* (1998), a young man and woman are transported from the modern world into the world of a 1950s black-and-white TV sitcom. Everything is pleasant and there is never any conflict. The only interest in the first part of the movie lies in the reactions of the two modern teenagers to this perfect world. However, these two outsiders inevitably bring change. The people of Pleasantville experience love and all of its associated problems. Characters come into conflict, realise they need each other and then change into full-colour human beings.

a scriptwriter's point of view, character interactions need to fulfil the following:
- **Characters must need each other.** Some movies are completely about characters who come to see that they need each other. The romance genre is based on this inevitable realisation. However, all movies require characters who need something about the other. For example, heist movies such as *Ocean's Eleven* (2001) have characters with compatible but different skills.
- **Characters must come into conflict.** Since all drama is about conflict (see page 222), it is clear that there needs to be conflict between characters. Even allies will have some measure of conflict between them.
- **Character relationships change.** The degree of change in character relationships depends on the movie genre and the nature of the central problem. However, character relationships change during the course of the plot as a simple function of reaction to the chain of events.

12.5 ACTIVITIES

1 Select three of Aronson's identifying features of protagonists and antagonists, and find film examples that demonstrate the distinction. **Create** a sequenced video of these, editing

them together into a systematic arrangement that displays the conventions of the character role of protagonist or antagonist. **Describe** in subtitles over the sequence how the film examples illustrate the character role. Present your work to the class.

2 **Create** a list of the types of roles that a number of Hollywood A-list actors could undertake on appearance alone. Also list roles that it would not be possible for these actors to convincingly play.

3 Select a Hollywood blockbuster film and attempt to categorise the characters according to the roles identified by Vladimir Propp. **Describe** your reasoning as you categorise.

SETTING

The four factors of setting

In the visual narratives of television and film, setting is one of the most important elements (Figure 12.23). The term refers to the place and time in which a narrative occurs and, according to Joseph Boggs of the University of Western Kentucky, it is made up of four factors:

- **Time factors.** The period in which the narrative takes place is one of the most important aspects of setting and is established in the opening scenes.
- **Geographical factors.** The physical location can have a great effect on the psychological impact of the story. For example, the seedy city locations used in *film noir* are important in understanding why the characters act as they do. Australian films set in the outback are also heavily influenced by their setting.
- **Social structures and economic factors.** A story can be set within a particular institution or subject to certain economic conditions. For example, the film *8 Mile* (2002) is set within a poverty-stricken urban neighbourhood.
- **Customs, moral attitudes and codes of behaviour.** The point of a narrative can be to explore the customs and morals of a particular group of people or a particular time period.



Usa-Pyon/Shutterstock.com

Figure 12.23 The Bates Motel set at Universal Studios from the Hitchcock movie *Psycho* (1960). No other medium can provide as much information about a scene as film. Some analysts say that film is over-specified when there is too much information in the scene for the viewer to take everything in. Setting is therefore one of film's most important aspects, perhaps in horror movies more than in any other genre.

The purposes of setting

Setting is used to build on the problems and conflicts faced by the characters in a story. It can be used in fulfilling the following purposes, says Joseph Boggs.

- **Determining character.** The environment can shape individuals and sometimes even control their behaviour. In some cases, the environment can even be an antagonist in the narrative (see page 234). For example, the environment is a powerful shaper in *Crocodile Dundee* (1986) and an antagonist in *The Martian* (2015).
- **Reflecting character.** The environment a character has created around them can provide important clues about their personality. For example, the picture-perfect setting around Carolyn Burnham in *American Beauty* (1999) tells us something about her character.
- **Providing authenticity.** One of the main purposes of setting is to allow the audience to suspend disbelief. This is done by providing an authentic sense of a real place and a real time period, which is particularly important in historical dramas.
- **Providing visual impact.** In visual media such as television and film, the setting can provide the audience with a real compulsion to watch. The visual impact of Monument Valley (Arizona–Utah) has been important to the Western genre.
- **Creating emotional atmosphere.** In horror, science-fiction and fantasy films, an emotional atmosphere can be created by the setting. *The Amityville Horror* (2005) uses the house to create an atmosphere of terror.
- **The setting as a symbol.** Setting can be used to stand for something else. Usually, this is an idea or a way of thinking about the world. *The Piano* (1993) uses setting as a powerful symbol of entrapment and isolation.

12.6 ACTIVITIES

1 From a range of movies you have seen, find examples in which setting is used for each one of the purposes identified by Joseph Boggs. **Describe** how each movie uses setting, and **illustrate** the use with a still image from the scene.
2 Review the sequence shown in Figure 12.24. Because of the editing, the sequence makes complete sense in the film, but makes no sense if you know the geography of the area. The main character in the sequence zigzags across the Brisbane River and arrives by ferry at a landlocked school. **Resolve** a short American montage sequence (see page 243) where setting is important, but disrupt the actual geography of the setting in hilarious ways with an edited journey. **Solve** the **technical** and **creative problems** of joining unlikely locations into the sequence to create a coherent moving-image media product.



Figure 12.24 The comic coming-of-age film *48 Shades* (2006) is based on a novel by Nick Earls and is set in Brisbane. The school scenes were filmed at Brisbane Boys College (BBC). The main character Dan is picked up from the airport (north side of the river), driven to Toowong (west side of Brisbane) across the Story Bridge (heading south), then catches a quaint old ferry to BBC from Eagle Street pier in the CBD, and finally gets straight off the ferry and enters the school via the Moggill Road ovals. This makes no sense at all if you know Brisbane. For locals, the setting adds a layer of authenticity to the film and may encourage them to suspend disbelief more easily. However, familiarity may also have the opposite effect.

MULTIPLE STORY LINES

Many films have multiple plot lines. This occurs when a number of stories are connected to the main story. Multiple plot lines are becoming more common in films as audiences seek more complex cinema experiences.

Subplots in conventional films

While in most narratives the main plot is the primary focus of the story, this is not always the case. The classic film *The African Queen* (1951) is one well-known exception.

Other plot lines within the narrative are called subplots. Sometimes they are referred to as the background story. All plot lines necessarily follow the three-act structure, each having its own disturbance, complications and resolution. Subplots are usually only foreshadowed in the orientation stage of a narrative, when the main plot is the focus. Once the lead character's world has been changed by the disturbance, the subplots are allowed to develop.

All plot lines normally converge in the resolution stage, which is both pleasurable for the audience and economical for the writer.

Multiple-narrative films

In Hollywood film history, the first film with truly multiple plot lines is thought to be *Grand Hotel* (1932). However, it was not until directors such as Robert Altman and Woody Allen began using multiple plot lines in the 1970s and 1980s that the structure became popular. Later, directors such as Quentin Tarantino made multiple plot lines a signature style. *Pulp Fiction* (1994, R-rated) was one of the most successful multiple-plot films in the 1990s. Mainstream Hollywood began to take notice. *Traffic* (2000) won four Academy Awards. *Crash* (2004) won Best Picture.

Movies today often have multiple plots. This is also true of television soap operas and some sitcoms. Soap operas rely on multiple plots to keep the audience watching over many episodes.

Multiple-plot films develop separate story threads, each with about the same level of dramatic importance within the film. These kinds of films have more than one main character. The central problem faced by each separate main character may be only slightly linked together or may not be linked at all.

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Advantages of multiple-plot films

Some analysts say that television has trained audiences to respond to multiple narratives more positively. Modern audiences have become more interested in looking at things from different perspectives. A series of smaller stories can be interwoven in interesting ways.

Disadvantages of multiple-plot films

The length of time that the audience spends in the cinema remains the same, whether there is one main plot or five. Less time per story is the inevitable outcome of multiple-plot scripts. The same is true of characters. One of the most important tasks of a film is to get the audience to identify with the main character. Having to identify with multiple characters can weaken audience involvement.

Parallelism, metaphor and allegory in multiple story lines

If you go to see a movie with three plots in it, do you perceive it as one story in some way? Or do you simply think that you went to see three stories? Some research shows that, even if the plots are not connected at all, audiences somehow try to fit them together. However, many directors really do try to link their narratives, and they insert small clues within the film structure to provide viewers with the required information. The links allow the audience to construct themes or to make other kinds of connections.

Multiple plot lines can be linked together in at least three ways:

1 **Parallel plot lines.** Providing plot lines that are parallel is one way to link separate plots. One plot may be set in an earlier period in history. Or two plots may be linked by a single moment when a fateful decision created different pathways.
2 **Metaphor plot lines.** One plot line can exist as a comment on, or metaphor in relation to, another.
3 **Allegory.** An allegory is a story that appears on the surface to have a simple meaning but is actually dealing with a much larger subject on a deeper level. For example, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis is an allegorical treatment of the story of Christ. Aslan represents Jesus. The story can be understood for what it is at a surface level, or it can be understood at a religious level.

Action and relationship lines in conventional films

According to television and film scriptwriter Linda Aronson, the main plot line and subplots often work together as an action line and a relationship line.

- **Action line.** The action line is the chain of events or 'things that happen' in the main plot line. The action line moves from action to action until the resolution. The events of the action line permit the relationship line to happen.
- **Relationship line.** The relationship line explores the emotional relationships between the leading characters. The characters are forced into each other's company by the disturbance and subsequent events in the action line.

'A good example of the action line pulling along the relationship line occurs in *The African Queen*,' says Aronson. 'Here, the relationship – that is, the developing love between Rose and Allnutt – could not happen without the action line … the journey down the river.'

12.7 ACTIVITIES

1 Select a film with strong action and relationship lines that work together to progress the narrative. In these films, the action line allows the relationship line to develop. **Create** a table like the one below, making sure that the action line events are arranged to make visible the relationship line developments they allow to happen. **Describe** how the action line has allowed the relationship line to develop, **identifying** the changes in the relationship, **clarifying** the connections and providing **additional information** about the nature of the links between the two lines.

NAME OF MOVIE:		
Action line event	Relationship development	Connections between action and relationship lines

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2 Select a television program or film with multiple plot lines. If you cannot think of an example yourself, consider *Snatch* (2000) or *Love Actually* (2003). Respond to the areas of activity in the following table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe the story of the movie, **identifying** the plot points in each subplot. **Give information** about each of the relationship lines and the action lines. **Identify** the type of subplots that are used in the story, such as parallel, allegory, etc.	**Analyse** the interrelationships between the plot lines, **examining** each plot and **considering** the effect that it has on the other plot(s). **Interpret** the meanings of some of the subplots at the key stages in the story. **Make a judgement** about the strengths and weaknesses of the combined plots using audience understanding and appeal as the criteria.	**Evaluate** the significance of the use of multiple plot lines in the movie you have selected, **drawing conclusions** about the worth of it to the overall purpose of movie storytelling. **Draw conclusions** about the worth or significance of this film in the use of multiple plot lines. Has it advanced the art?

STRUCTURING TIME

Audiences make sense of a narrative according to the events they are shown. It is natural for people to fill in the gaps and to reorder events to make their own sense of the story. In a film narrative, there are three ways in which time can be manipulated, according to film academics David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson.

Temporal order of events

The ordering of events is the most important way that a narrative can structure time. The ways that time can be structured in a film include the following:

- **Structuring the plot as a whole.** The ordering of events is chiefly determined by the narrative progression.
- **Flashback.** This is when the present-day events are suddenly interrupted by images of what may have taken place in the past. Filmmakers usually give the audience some sort of signal that they are going to enter a different time. Usually there is a dissolve or fade, and often there is some kind of clue in the colour or texture of the film.
- **Flash-forwards.** The use of flash-forwards is rare. Flash-forwards interrupt present-day events and show events that will take place in the future. Flash-forwards are naturally confusing for the audience. This is because they do not make sense until the story 'arrives' at the future, much later in the narrative. This is unlike flashbacks, which can be understood as memories that add to background knowledge. Filmmakers can sometimes use flash-forwards to tease the audience with clues about the resolution of the narrative.
- **Simultaneous time.** Cross-cutting from one event to another can give the impression that the events are occurring simultaneously. In the last-minute rescue scenes of silent-screen melodramas, cross-cutting had the audience on the edge of their seats. In classic DW Griffith films, the villain is tying the heroine to the railway track, the train is steaming around the corner and the hero is rushing to the rescue. The excitement lies in the audience's hope that the three events, apparently occurring at the same time, will converge in such a way as to create the most satisfying conclusion. A rule of simultaneous time is that events in the parallel locations must come together in some way.



Louis Delavenne/Corbis Entertainment/Getty Images

Figure 12.25 Shooting inside a car during movie production. The car is in a studio and the character appears to be driving, but is just going through the motions. Car journeys are often shortened in movies. With compressed time, long periods can be shortened to just a few shots.

Temporal duration

Very few films take place in real time. Nearly all films adjust the events portrayed so that they fit into the 90 minutes they have available to tell the story. The action can take place within a single day, over several days or even over a whole lifetime – yet it still fits into the screen time.

- **Expansion of time**. Screen time can be expanded to draw out some events, thereby creating tension. A number of codes and conventions have developed to assist this, one of which is parallel editing, or cutting from one scene to another scene happening at the same time. With expanded time, it can appear to take ages for someone in a horror movie to walk up a flight of stairs. This can be much longer than the real time it would take. Prolonging the action can prolong the suspense or draw out the emotional response in the audience. Soap operas often use this technique, with the emotional responses of several characters shown one after another.
- **Compression of time**. Screen time may also be shortened to move the story forward. A long road trip can be achieved in three or four shots using montage editing. It could be shown with a shot of the starting point, a shot of the road in between and a shot of arrival at the destination.
- **Montage**. Hollywood directors commonly refer to montage as a series of shots that condense time. In early film, the classic American montage sequence might be a shot of calendar pages peeling off and blowing away as a character goes through a process that might have taken months or years, such as growing up. American-style montages (as opposed to dialectic montages) are also often used in training sequences to show a character getting more and more skilled. For example, in *Spider-Man* (2002), a montage shows Peter Parker dreaming up a costume he will wear to go with his newly acquired special powers.

Temporal frequency

The time-based frequency of an event can also be manipulated. An event does not have to appear just once – it can be returned to repeatedly, thereby gaining additional meaning. In *Citizen Kane* (1941), Susan's debut is seen several times during the movie from the perspectives of different characters.

Narrative progression and the temporal order

There are several types of plot progression. All of them rely on the three-act structure at the deepest level but, on the surface, some are unconventional. They utilise different methods of structuring time.

Linear plot progression

Most narratives still use linear plot progression. The story starts at the beginning and moves directly through time until the end. Events occur in chronological sequence and appear in the story at the time they are actually occurring (not as flashbacks or flash-forwards). Both *Psycho* (1960) and *Thelma & Louise* (1991) use this structure.



Allstar Picture Library Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 12.26 The genre of crime and detective films from the 1940s and 1950s known as *film noir* often uses a **circular plot structure** that starts at the end of the film, and then retells the story of the events that led up to that point.

Circular plot progression

Starting at the end of a story and working backwards to retell how it all happened is probably the second-most common narrative structure. Circular plot structures were particularly favoured by directors working in the *film noir* style during the 1940s and 1950s. These films might begin with a man's dead body and proceed to tell how it got there. In *film noir*, the voice-over was typically provided by the dead man himself. Another common device was to have someone typing out their police statement.

A good example of circular plot structure is found in Billy Wilder's film *Sunset Boulevard* (1950; Figure 12.27). More modern examples are *Moulin*



Ronald Grant Archive

Figure 12.27 *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) begins and ends with a body (the narrator's) being hauled out of a pool in a Hollywood mansion. However, the end of the film has two more scenes that form the resolution. It is common for a circular plot structure to include a few final scenes that go just a little bit further than the first scene.

Rouge! (2001), *Crash* (2004), *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) and *The Prestige* (2006).

Flashback narrative

Flashback narratives consist of at least two stories, says scriptwriter Linda Aronson. One takes place in the present day of the film, while the other takes place in the past and is told using flashbacks. The two stories are connected in some way that becomes clear, and is resolved, during the final climax. Flash-forward narrative is a less common variation of this structure.

Citizen Kane (1941) was one of the first films to use flashback narrative, although it is more often associated with modern films. *Memento* (2000), *Shine* (1996) and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) all use varieties of this structure.

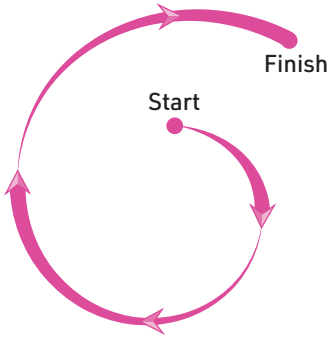


Figure 12.28 Circular plot structure typically starts and finishes with the same story event, but the resolution contains one or two extra scenes that complete the movie.

Multiple points of view narrative

Some narratives with a cast of several equally important characters jump between the perspectives of each one. The multiple points of view narrative often takes place in a limited time period. Each point of view occurs in simultaneous time. These stories, says Aronson, are often about reunions or sieges. Changing perspectives give energy to the story in a situation that can otherwise lack action and movement.

Films using this structure include *The Full Monty* (1997) and *American Beauty* (1999). In both these films, society puts the characters under siege conditions.

Parallel sequential narrative

Aronson uses the term 'sequential narrative' to describe narratives that chop up stories and tell bits of them in sequence, with each left on a cliffhanger. All of these stories are quickly revisited at the end and then united in an exciting final climax. Some analysts call this a braided narrative because the story strands are plaited together, like hair.

Examples of this structure include *Pulp Fiction* (1994, R-rated), *Run Lola Run* (1999) and *The Circle* (2017).

Tandem narratives

A tandem narrative is made up of several equal-sized stories that are interconnected in some way, says Aronson. Tandem narrative works best in epic films or films about big events that affect many people. Finality is often reached in a big event that draws people together, such as a wedding or a natural disaster.

Examples of films with this structure include *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989), *Crash* (2004) and *Babel* (2006).

12.8 ACTIVITIES

1 Time the distance between points of high drama (climaxes, twists and turns) in a film of your choice. Break the film duration down into its constituent parts by recording the time from the beginning of the film until the first disruption, and then recording the time between each of the main climactic points.
Analyse your results, **considering** the information revealed by marking the

divisions of time. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of this division, using audience engagement and suspense as the **criteria**.

2 Select a movie with an alternative plot structure. **Resolve** this structure into a graphic representation that suits the way the narrative progresses. For instance, flashback narratives may work with two-level design; sequential or multiple-viewpoint narratives may work with a branching design in the style of a family tree, and so on. **Create** a narrative progression to **illustrate** the graphic representation using the actual events and stages of your chosen movie. **Describe** your design, **clarifying** how it works.

3 Time an instance of expanded time in a thriller or horror movie and then compare that with a real-time attempt at completing the same activity. **Describe** the results of your research and **clarify** the effect of the difference.

DIGITAL GAMES AND STORY

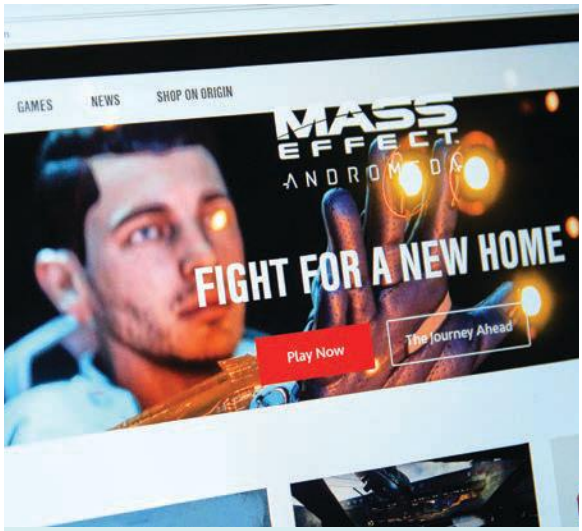
One of the enduring qualities of a movie is its ability to manipulate our emotions – to make us cry, make us angry or make us happy. Can video games ever hope to achieve this level of emotional engagement with a narrative?

The fundamental difference between a movie and a game is that in a game neither the plot nor the characters are normally the stars. In a game, the environment (and how you act within that environment) is the highlight of an engaging interaction.

Plot

The plot that a game uses depends on its category. Most games feature a simple, straightforward plot. Arcade games in particular have brief, sketchy plots. In most cases, the plot exists only to establish a context in which the action can occur. Flight simulation and racing games often have no plot at all, relying solely on the authenticity and excitement of 'virtually' experiencing the real thing.

The more narrative-driven types of games, such as role-playing and adventure games, have stronger plots. However, even here they are often simplified compared with the plots of feature films.



dennizn/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 12.29 *Mass Effect: Andromeda* (2017) set a new benchmark in intergalactic game narrative. The game allows team members to work together to overcome adversity, and also has an online multiplayer mode.

Increasingly, games are experimenting with complex cinematic narratives, with games less reliant on prescriptive user actions and allowing more environmental exploration within a structured narrative (Figure 12.29). Like movies, many of these narrative-focused games set out to manipulate our emotions. Most games that are successful at communicating emotion use fear, foreboding and horror – suitable triggers for the nature of the medium and traditional game narratives.

Digital games and the three-act structure

The plot structure for a video game generally follows the three-act narrative structure, but normally it has shortened first and third stages. Some games feature multiple conclusions.

Many games use cinematic sequences to introduce the narrative, set the mood and intrigue the player. Some games let the player trigger the first complication by extending the orientation stage, allowing the player to first explore their environment and character. Without first building a player's interest in their character, the game designer is in danger of disconnecting them from their character.

Half-Life (1998) was one of the first games to allow players to explore their character's identity. This game began with an animated sequence explaining the game's environment – a secret

research facility. Following this was an exploratory journey through the facility where the player could interact with other characters, building up a picture of an uneasy work environment and a sense of impending danger. Finally, it was the player who triggered the second stage of the narrative through initiating an experiment that goes horribly wrong.

Games, especially role-playing games, normally consist of a number of levels to be conquered. At the end of the final level there is a major confrontation. The standard game convention is that this final confrontation requires the use of a special process, power or trick. Some games feature stand-alone stories, while others are multi-part episodes of a larger story. In this case, the games use a three-act structure within another three-act structure.

The final complication before the third plot stage in the game *Half-Life* is meeting the alien demon. To destroy this character, the player first has to destroy its energy source on the walls and then attack it from above. *Half-Life* was unique in that it has multiple kinds of villains and heroes, who can act both for and against the player. In an ironic twist, your human enemy actually wins with your help.

Narrative progression

Game narratives build to a dramatic conclusion: an action, a confrontation or some other event to resolve the story's inner tension. The problem for an interactive storyteller is ensuring that all the characters are ready for the conclusion at the right time. As the player's actions are outside the author's control, there is no guarantee that the player will be ready for the conclusion. This is known as the 'problem of narrative flow'.

Many games stick to a simple puzzle-solving, level-by-level approach to game design in which the player's actions are linked to the plot progression. The player is unable to reach the conclusion until the right puzzles have been solved and the correct weapons have been gathered.

As more complex narratives are written, more sophisticated methods of resolving the plot and directing characters need to be developed. Traditionally, the approach of the ending has been signified through more difficult levels, culminating in the final, most difficult level. In many newer games, cinema-style conventions are used to signify that the conclusion is nearing. These include narrative clues such as story elements falling into place – building, step by step, a complete view and exposing the finale. Physical conventions include ever-darkening environments, changes in music, atmosphere closing in, greater environmental destruction, growing confusion, an increased sense of panic, changes in other characters and a general sense that things can't get any worse.

Cause and effect in game narrative

In a video game, the environment should acknowledge the player's presence. When a player initiates an action, there must be an environmental response. If the character walks into a room, other characters within the room must acknowledge this. If the character fires a shot or sets off an explosion, then the effect must be visible.

One of the most successful ways to draw the audience through the environment is with cause and effect – that is, by creating environments that allow players to form their own conclusions about what has previously occurred in that area. This can include doors broken open, traces of a recent explosion or a crashed car. These help the player understand what to expect later.

Cause and effect can also indicate the passage of time. A player can return to a previously visited area to see it now completely destroyed.

Having your player follow 'breadcrumbs' such as handwritten notes, graffiti or evidence of fighting left behind by other characters engages the player's imagination and enhances the drama of the story.

Characters

Video game characters often follow stereotypes derived from Hollywood-style action movies. Other characters, particularly from fighting and martial arts movies, are based on Japanese animation and Hong Kong martial arts films.

As the player is in control when character development takes place, they feel connected to the character. This allows greater emotional responses to be derived from actions affecting the character.

Early games such as *Tomb Raider* (1996) were shipped with a complete guide to the character and upbringing. This character construction did not make it into game plots; however, it served to make the characters and their actions more believable.

Some games are now including extra characters to complicate the narrative and allow the main character to develop through interactions with others. New characters can also be used to reveal more about the main character's personality and background.

Characters designed to allow players to create their own personality through their actions and interactions with others are becoming common. Massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) allow a character's persona to be built over months of interaction with the game and other players.

Character interaction

Character interaction in video games can be split into two groups:

- **First person.** A first-person game invites players to immerse themselves in the game – to become the main character. A first-person game should make it easy for players to believe they are part of the action. Their character must not interfere with the player's own 'illusion of immersion'. The character therefore should not act on their own or interact with others unless directed to do so. The character must remain in the control of the player at all times.
- **Third person.** In a third-person game, the player is controlling a character rather than becoming that character. The third-person point of view allows far greater freedom to tell a traditional story. This is because the character on the screen is a separate entity and is dissociated from the player, which allows the designer to give characters their own personalities and to control how they behave. Role-playing games and some action games such as the *Grand Theft Auto* series allow the player to control a unique third-person character on screen. Instead of seeing through the eyes of the character, we see the character.

Environment

There are two main environments for games:

- **Enclosed world.** In this, the character is restricted by walls or some other barrier. This means the character is limited to areas pre-programmed by the designer.
- **Open world.** In this, the character is free to roam anywhere. The world is so large the player will normally never find its limits.

Environmental storytelling

Game narratives are environment-based. The author tells the story through the experience of moving through a realistic or fantasy virtual environment. This is similar to film and television where any story is played out within a constructed environment. However, unlike viewers of film and television, the game players will have choices along the way. Players make decisions based on their relationship with the virtual world, as well as their everyday physical world experiences.

Restricting the world is a complex task for developers. Older games constrained the player within walls, corridors or rooms; newer games offer vast outdoor areas to explore.

Environmental storytelling opens up a wide range of opportunities within a game. Games are getting better at integrating narrative into unrestricted environments.

12.9 ACTIVITIES

1 Select a video game you have played recently. **Describe** how the environment within the story affected your perception of the narrative. **Illustrate** your explanation with specific **examples** of elements within the environment that contributed to the narrative or drove the player to make certain decisions.

DIGITAL GAMES AND MOVIES

Games have had a significant impact on the narrative, plot, characterisation and visual style of movies, especially action movies. Movies based on games encourage gamers back to the cinema. Seamus Blackley, gaming and film crossover specialist for Creative Artists, believes Hollywood and the game industry have entered a comfortable partnership after an uncertain relationship. But more Americans now play video games than regularly go to the cinema.

Many of the best-known games have taken longer to produce than a typical Hollywood movie. However, games are not in direct competition with movies – the

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two can benefit each other. In many respects, games and movies are quite different products. Games are generally played only once or twice. Blockbuster movies are typically seen by more people, and a proportion of those see the movie over and over again. Some great movies become classics and are watched time and again over many decades. Games have a shorter life span and do not last for decades. They also have a learning curve and much longer play times.

The effect of games on movies

The plots of many action movies mirror those of video games. Action movies often feature shortened first and third plot stages. Action movie viewers tend to dislike lengthy introductions with lots of character development. They want to get straight into the action, which normally occurs after the first plot complication. A movie, like a game, also provides an interesting environment for characters to interact in.

The action movie plot is usually more complex and engaging than that of a video game. This is because of the use of extra characters, their interactions with the protagonist and the exploration of emotional depth within those characters.

The first game-to-movie adaptation was *Super Mario Bros.* in 1993. Since then there has been a string of movies created to cash in on public loyalty to existing games.

Many critics are suspicious that scenes are being written into movies simply because they will make good video games. Two well-known examples are the waterwheel escape from cannibals in *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (2006) and the pod-racing scene from *Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace* (1999). Both scenes were a big feature in the movies and both were made into games.



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 12.30 The movie *Doom* (2005), based on the landmark first-person shooter game, used a similar narrative construction to the game *Doom III*, with a 'straight into the action' approach after only a short introductory sequence, and a short but dramatic climax. Unlike the game makers, the filmmakers included character development and a twist at the end.

The effect of movies on games

Games based on movies are used to capitalise on the success of a film by extending the movie experience. Video game adaptations of movies are best suited to blockbuster action movies. Not many people would think of creating games based on traditional drama movies, such as *12 Years a Slave* (2013) or *Oppenheimer* (2023).

However, movie adaptation games do provide cinema-goers with an experiential take of a film. Users can participate in the world of the story in a much more direct way: it gives them a chance to enter the setting.

Like all good adaptations, a game based on a movie (or vice-versa) just needs a good storyline and good characters. A good creator can then bring those to life and make a great game or movie. Whatever the secret was that led to the success of the original has to be there in the adaptation.

12.10 ACTIVITIES

1. **Create** a list of movies that have plots similar to those of video games. **Apply** your knowledge of narrative theory to the story of a selected movie that is similar to a digital game. **Interpret** the narrative in a flow chart or a climax mountain (see page 227), **representing** the major plot points from the beginning to the resolution. **Describe** how the movie is similar to a game by **identifying** the similarities at key stages.
2. **Describe** the plot of a video game. **Create** an outline for a movie that uses a similar narrative. You can try adding new characters and scenes, and 'fleshing out' existing characters and situations, giving them more depth and detail.
3. Select an existing movie. **Create** a treatment for an interactive version, having at least three different endings. **Describe** in the treatment the different ways in which you could navigate through the story.

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GENRES AND CODES AND CONVENTIONS

Genres (from a French word meaning 'type, classification or category') are repeated sets of codes and conventions. In the media, genres are ways of categorising texts according to the characteristics they share. For example, similar plot lines, characters or settings in different films suggest they belong to the same genre. The habitual use of genre conventions tends to mean their structure stays the same – at least for as long as they are a useful way of doing things. Consequently, they have predictable patterns.

However, unlike the clear classification systems of biology (for instance), genre classification is vague and blurry. Boundaries between genres are not strictly defined. **Hybrid texts** change those boundaries all the time. Film genre specialist Stephen Neale has argued that each new text extends or changes the genre by adding something new or altering one of the conventions. In this way, says communications academic John Hartley, the creation of just one Western film changes the whole genre.

Genres are based on shared knowledge held by the producers and the audiences. Genres are a means of selecting and constructing a certain view of the world. As such, they are closely related to **audience 'reading' practices**. An important feature of all genres is their tendency to progress in stages. For example, the narrative genre typically begins with an orientation stage before moving to a complications stage, possibly an evaluation stage and, finally, a resolution stage.



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Figure 12.31a Genres are made up of codes and conventions, as well as the expectations of the producer and the audience. The relationship among these factors is circular. A change in audience expectation or interpretation can mean the need for a genre change. Producer experimentation may meet audience approval and therefore change a genre.

Larger genres

Broad categories of genre are based on whether texts are fiction or non-fiction, and whether or not they use story techniques. The large genres are as follows:

- **Narrative genres.** These use storytelling codes and conventions such as plot, character and setting. They are fictional or literary genres. The narrative genre includes most Hollywood movies.
- **Report genres.** These are based on the retelling of factual information but can use aspects of narrative as they relate to events. News stories fall within the report genre.
- **Exposition or expository genres.** These aim to convince or argue a point of view. Documentaries and newspaper feature articles are regarded as expositions.
- **Non-narrative genres.** These are genres that do not tell stories. For instance, a single-frame newspaper cartoon does not have any plot development and so is a non-narrative text (Figure 12.31a). Music videos that don't rely on a story and use jumbled imagery are another example.

Smaller genres

Most people use the smaller categories of genre when they think of genre texts. These may be divided into the following:

- **Specific genres.** There are many well-known media genres such as the horror movie, the



Chesnot/Getty Images News/Getty Images

Figure 12.31b The *Red Dead Redemption* game uses genre features that were once unpopular with younger audiences and thought outdated. Genre features do not just cross into other genres; they can jump to other artforms.

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newspaper feature article, the situation comedy (sitcom) and so on. Each of these will fit into one or other of the larger categories.

- **Subgenres.** Genres are often divided into subgenres. For example, the horror film genre encompasses at least five subgenres – slasher, supernatural and so on.

Features of genres

Genres have the following characteristics.

Genres have a step-by-step structure

Genres have a relatively predictable structure of stages that follow one another in a sequence. In the narrative genre, the Hollywood formula for musicals was said to be 'boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl'. This is an example of the familiar narrative structure of orientation, complication and resolution.

Audiences can usually identify genres because they have recognisable features and step-by-step structures. Audience enjoyment of them is often derived from the familiarity of repetition, with just enough variation to add 'spice'.

Genres are a development of the cultural context

In a particular culture, people get used to interacting in certain ways. For example, the rituals of the traditional Māori greeting developed out of the habitual interactions of that culture. Within a culture, people like hearing stories with familiar subject matter. In Japan, a favourite genre is the samurai story; respect, loyalty and tradition are important to this genre.

The values and beliefs of a culture will affect the types of stories it prefers. For example, western culture generally favours stories in which good triumphs over evil. There is little demand for stories in which evil is rewarded or good and evil meet with random consequences. These preferences lead the audience to expect particular characters and familiar plots. The interest lies in the twists and turns along the way to resolution.

Particular communities and countries favour certain genres. For example, the Australian cultural context appears to have been favourable to the development of the television soap opera. Australian soaps are now shown around the world.

Genres can change

Genres change at about the same pace as the overall culture. Being closely tied to the culture, they reveal the concerns of the time as well as who has most power in that culture. For example, some 19th-century British novels, mostly written by women, portray a class-based society that denied women access to power. This is shown in the 1995 movie adaptation of Jane Austen's novel *Sense and Sensibility*.

Modern genres are changing relatively quickly. Technology has brought about a rapid transformation in culture, changing previously accepted ways of doing things. As genres are ways of doing things, they too are changing.

Weblinks
Australian film genres
Film genres
The Fundamentals of Genre

Multigeneric or hybrid texts

Many texts 'mix and match' a range of genres to suit new purposes created by a changing society. For example, television programs such as some modern crime dramas combine elements of the soap opera in the format. Documentaries, often regarded as belonging to the larger **exposition** genre, can also display features of the report genre. Docudrama combines both genres with the storytelling features of the narrative genre.

Intertextuality

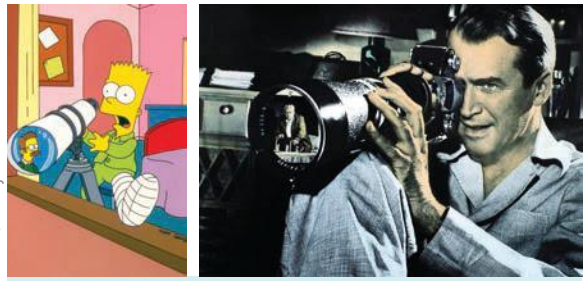
Intertextuality refers to the way in which any one text is woven into the whole culture and operates as a link to many other texts. It is also a reading practice carried out by audiences. The ability of the audience to use their familiarity with other texts is a skill built up as cultural knowledge develops. By drawing on references to other texts, audiences are able to derive more complex and enjoyable meanings.

The animated television sitcom *The Simpsons* is an obvious example of a text that uses intertextuality to maximum effect. When young children watch the program, they are largely unaware of the hundreds of in-jokes and references to other television programs, movies and books (Figure 12.32). As they become teenagers, more of these references become apparent and so they derive more enjoyment from watching the program. For adults watching with their families, this effect is often greater still, affording them extra pleasure when they watch the show.

Types of intertextuality

The following are types of intertextuality, according to John Hartley.

- **Genre relationships.** Other texts within a genre that the audience has seen can be used as a



(Left and right): United Archives GmbH/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 12.32 *The Simpsons* pays 'homage' to the famous opening scene of the mystery thriller *Rear Window* (1954), directed by Alfred Hitchcock. This scene is often used in film courses to teach about narrative. The reference is probably lost on young children, but more experienced viewers gain a heightened sense of pleasure from recognising the intertextuality.

reference point to help understand and predict a new text.

- **Character and actor relationships.** Well-known actors or characters provide a link to other texts and a sense of familiarity.
- **Direct-quote relationships.** Sometimes a text makes a direct quote from another text, using it in some new way. This kind of 'recycling' is common in music videos and in television comedies such as *The Simpsons*.

Genres and audiences

There has been very little research into how audiences make sense of genres to construct meaning for themselves. However, two possible approaches are indicated:

- **Genres build audiences.** A media genre is a way of creating an identifiable product for sale. This product will then attract a certain sort of audience. In the case of television genres, the audience attracted can then be on-sold to advertisers. Genres also serve as a way for producers to manipulate audience memories and expectations.
- **Audience members use genre to build their own identities.** Some research has been attempted into gender preferences for particular genres. There is also some indication that people may use preferences for certain genres as building blocks to their sense of self. For instance, someone who has seen the romantic comedy *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) several times may possibly be using this movie to tell themselves something about their own desires or who they are.

Genres and industry

It probably isn't a coincidence that *Antz* (1998) by DreamWorks and *A Bug's Life* (1998) by Disney/Pixar came out in the same year. It just makes good economic sense! Once a genre has been found to be successful, various studios will produce more works in this genre to extract the most profit (Table 12.3). This is clearly on display in the Marvel Universe.

Recycling genre products has several other economic advantages. Reusing props, sets and costumes can save a considerable amount of money. Teams of writers and technicians can be built up, and their skills specialised into

Weblinks

Intertextuality in Moulin Rouge

A decade of Simpsons' movie references

A visual history of literary references on *The Simpsons*

Table 12.3 Movies with similar storylines released at around the same time

PLOT PREMISE	MOVIE 1	MOVIE 2
Female spy in World War I	*'Dishonored'* {US} (1931)	*Mata Hari (1931)*
International race to France	*Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines* (1965)	*The Great Race (1965)*
American combat pilots who bend the rules	*Iron Eagle* (1986)	*Top Gun (1986)*
Earth under threat from space collision	*Deep Impact* (1998)	*Armageddon* (1998)
CG animations about insects	*Antz* (1998)	*A Bug's Life* (1998)
Supernatural magic events set in late-19th-century Europe	*The Illusionist* (2006)	*The Prestige* (2006)
CG animations about supervillains who experience a change of heart	*Megamind* (2010)	*Despicable Me* (2010)
The US president is defended as the White House comes under armed attack	*Olympus has Fallen* (2013)	*White House Down (2013)*
Game characters from a mushroom planet / kingdom plan to misuse a mythical object	*Sonic the Hedgehog 2* (2022)	*The Super Mario Bros. Movie (2023)*

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particular styles of production. Producing more of something eventually leads to what are called economies of scale: cost efficiencies created by mass production.

Genres change relatively slowly compared with the pace of production. Therefore, media companies are able to standardise their production within genres and know that their techniques will suit the market for a reasonable period of time. Different audiences can be catered for using different genres. This increases profitability because it leads to better targeting.

12.11 ACTIVITIES

1 **Apply** research and referencing skills to **recognise** and cite the likely intertextual famous movie sources referenced in *Barbie* (2023) from the listed scenes.
   a Men in a beach volleyball game
   b Contra-zoom (dolly zoom or triple zoom reflex) on a beach to show shock
   c Men arrive improvising hoof noise for fake horses
   d Choice between types of shoe which lead to different paths
   e Giant pre-history Barbie discovered by girls playing
2 As a whole class, make a list of all the media text genres you can think of. Begin with movies and then consider other media texts. **Analyse** individually two of the genres listed by the class, and **dissect and describe** unique codes and conventions used by the genres. Systematically arrange a sequence of movie posters gathered from internet research that **illustrates** the genres you have chosen by **recognising** genre elements. **Apply** citations to acknowledge sources of the images (see page 390 for image referencing).
3 In small groups, list movies that came out in roughly the same time period and seem to have dealt with the same topic and used the same genre. **Analyse** some of the reasons for the similarities, **identifying** contextual factors such as historic events or new technology that may have influenced the development processes.
4 View an episode of *The Simpsons* and consider the use of intertextual references. **Construct** a list of textual cross-references. **Analyse** the references by **identifying** the original source of the intertextuality. **Apply** literacy skills to keep a reference list of where you find the information. **Evaluate** the worth of the 'joke' by **explaining** how the program challenges or adds to the original context to create further meaning.
5 View a list or video clip of *Ready Player One* (2018) textual cross-references embedded in the film by Stephen Spielberg. **Create** a list of the pop culture cross-references you have previous personal experience of or knowledge about.

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Film, Television & New Media – Unit 2

Areas of study in this chapter and unit question addressed:

FOUNDATIONS

LANGUAGES
How do signs and symbols, and codes and conventions create meaning?

INSTITUTIONS
How are institutional practices influenced by social, political and economic factors?

TECHNOLOGIES
How are tools and associated processes used to create meaning?

Media Arts in Practice

Topics in this chapter:

MEDIA ARTS IN PRACTICE

Media language:
- Elements and principles of design, style, symbols

Modes:
- Design products (pre-production)
- Media artworks (production)

Media technologies:
- Hardware
- Software

Media techniques:
- Scripting style and interview
- Soundtrack creation, voice tone
- Light manipulation
- Narrative sequencing and components
- Visual polish or realism
- Format purpose

PLAN MEDIA ARTWORKS

Analyse purpose and context

Solutions and strategy to achieve goals

COMMUNICATE IDEAS

Suit **purpose and context** in **pre-production** and **production**

Media language to communicate ideas (representations, thoughts, feelings, experiences, observations)

EVALUATE MEDIA ARTWORKS

Written, spoken or signed, responding using **media arts terminology**

(Judgements on plannning, reflecting on strengths, limitations, implications of media artworks and ideas)

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13 Types of FTVNM and MAP production tasks

Weblink
Cinema Australia Trailers

FILM TRAILERS

A film introduces itself to the world through its trailer. Most people learn about a new film by watching the trailer – either randomly (such as by seeing it screened before they watch the film of their choice in the cinema) or by choice (such as by watching the trailer on YouTube).

The internet has given movie trailers a long life, making them important media texts in their own right. We can now just as easily watch trailers of films that are 60 years old as we can watch the trailer of a film released this week. The life of a movie continues long after its release, through DVD sales, rentals, television presentation and online delivery. Across all of these, the trailer is probably the most important advertisement for the movie that studios have available.

A film trailer is a dramatically condensed version of a film created to advertise the film's theatrical release. A trailer uses selected imagery from the film to invite the audience to go to the cinemas to see the whole movie. The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) mandates that a trailer must be a maximum length of two minutes and 30 seconds.

A film trailer is a 'paratext' (some analysts use the term 'circumtext'). Paratexts are texts that are grouped around the original text. They are associated with the original text, but often escape notice – usually because they are of lesser importance. However, movie trailers are now receiving serious academic attention.

Features of film trailers

Not every trailer follows a formula, but most have some of the following genre features.

Narrative enigma

The narrative enigma is the mystery of the story. The audience must be given enough details to be excited by the story and create an imaginary film out of the fragments. However, none of the loose ends are tied up. There is no closure or resolution of any kind. The enigma or mystery can only be solved by going to see the movie.

Mini three-act structure

Just like the original film text, the trailer often uses a three-act structure. Segments of this structure can be very quick, or they can sometimes be combined:

- Opening shots set the scene for the movie and give an indication of the story. Setting can be a key part of the appeal to audiences. Opening shots also introduce characters.
- Developing complications in the trailer show the central problem that the characters must overcome.



Richard I'Anson/The Image Bank Unreleased/Getty Images

Figure 13.1 The film trailer is an advertising text. Its main purpose is to push audiences to buy tickets and increase box office sales.

> 'Trailers are about raising expectations. A trailer doesn't reveal the whole movie. It pitches the promise of the premise.'
>
> **Stephen Garrett**, Jump Cut trailer productions, New York

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- The resolution does not resolve the film story, but instead resolves the trailer by asking the audience to go and see the movie. Sometimes the trailer resolution is referred to as the 'kicker' – its role is to kick the audience into the cinema.

Characters and stars are introduced in action

Showing characters in story action is necessary because the climactic events have to happen as soon as possible. Recognisable stars are shown early to draw in their fans.

Faces in close-up

Use of the close-up is a common feature of trailers and gives a window into the emotional intensity of the story or the ordeals suffered by the characters.

Sharp transitions

Sudden changes prevent the audience from getting involved in the story because they have to be reminded of the main purpose – to persuade them to buy tickets to the cinema. Transitions include:

- sound effects that are sharp and loud to create breaks in the narrative
- sudden cuts and wipes that move the trailer into the next scene
- story elements such as explosions that provide a shock and allow a jump into the next scene
- title cards that break up sequences and cover missing details.

Climactic action

Dramatic events are shown from the best scenes in the film. The action is shown happening, but it is not resolved. The audience does not find out what the outcome is. Plot details are rarely given away.

Discontinuity editing

Breaks in the usual continuity editing are used to create short shocks for the audience, and to prevent them from forgetting that they must go to see the full movie. Scenes may be jumbled, and conversations may be cut up. Shots that are not connected to each other can be alternated. The use of montage and the Kuleshov effect is often very noticeable. The important editing elements include:

- **Visual highlights of the film.** These are often separated out and do not have to be used in the same way as they appear in the story.
- **Dialogue highlights of the film.** These are commonly used to heighten the tension and intensify conflict.
- **The soundtrack.** This provides unity and rhythm for the whole trailer. The soundtrack suggests the genre and helps build a strong audience response.
- **Sound effects.** These provide realism and often add shock and wonder to the trailer. Sound effects also work as transitions and markers of the rhythm.

Voice-over

The main purpose of the narratorial voice-over is similar to that of a street-side spruiker: to sell the product. Trailer voice-overs have the following features:

- **A story teaser** via voice-over provides an introduction to the narrative in about 25–30 words (without giving away the ending).
- **The film title is often stated** in the voice-over.
- **Star actors** are often referred to by name.
- **Asynchronous style voice-over** is the most common when title cards are used – what the voice is saying is different from what is written in the titles. There is no point in telling the audience what they can read for themselves – except for the film title, where the voice-over intensifies what is read.

No voice-over

Many modern trailers are dispensing with the voice-over. Instead they are just using fast-paced scenes from the movie with the dialogue providing the logic or sense of the narrative. Title cards fill in the gaps.

Film trailer conventions

> 'Trailers have their own internal logic and should function separately from the movie they are promoting. If cut well, a trailer can be something you want to watch again and again. But (of course!) it should also make you want to see more.'
>
> **Stephen Garrett**, Jump Cut trailer productions, New York

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The conventions of film trailers have been established over a long period of time. Important conventions are:

- **Film classification.** The trailer usually begins with the classification information. This is mandatory.
- **Company logo.** The studio logo lends credibility to the trailer and places the film in context for the audience. Usually the logo appears at the beginning of the trailer.
- **Cast.** Additional cast and credit information is given at the end of the trailer.



REX/Kobal/Warner Bros/Paul Faherty/Shutterstock.com

Figure 13.2 The famous car chase scene from *Bullitt* (1968) is said to be the best of its kind ever filmed. The chase starts the trailer for *Bullitt* and scenes from it are intercut throughout. The final outcome of the chase is not shown in the trailer. As a rule, trailers take the best and most climactic action from the original film. The action is shown happening, but not being resolved. It may also be edited in a jumbled way.

13.1 ACTIVITIES

1 **Create** a pre-production proposal, such as a storyboard, for a new trailer for an existing movie, game or television program. **Structure** climactic scenes or action from the original text into a systematically arranged sequence.
2 **Resolve** an existing movie or game trailer into a trailer for a different genre. For example, solve the problem of converting an action movie trailer into a romance movie trailer (see 'Genres', page 259).
3 **Create** a film or game trailer that follows many of the features of trailers outlined in this section. Your trailer should include a soundtrack and the main conventions, such as classification details and a production company logo. Respond to the areas of activity in the table below to complete the task.

DESIGN	CREATE	RESOLVE
Design a trailer using the **specific codes and conventions** of your film genre (e.g. action movie). **Arrange** the **elements** into a pre-production format such as a storyboard.	**Create** descriptions of video and audio elements and **sequence** them into a pre-production product, such as a storyboard, **systematically** assembling the elements of the trailer. **Structure** the trailer proposal into a series of **sequenced** climactic events.	**Resolve moving-image media elements** into a completed film trailer video. **Solve** technical or creative issues, keeping the finished product within the scope of the original concept. Maintain the conventions of the film trailer.

MUSIC VIDEOS

A music video (sometimes called a video clip) is a video produced to go with a song. Although there is no requirement that this be a pop or rock song, it almost invariably is. This is partly because music videos are produced as short promotional films to sell downloadable and streamed songs.

Music videos are three to five minutes long. They do not follow a traditional narrative structure – instead, they reflect the structure of the accompanying music. Music videos rely on rhythm, pace and lyrical imagery for their effect. As a communication form, music video works by combining images and sounds together inseparably (Figure 13.3).

Some critics argue that music videos are really a form of advertising, whereas audiences usually see video clips as entertainment. For the filmmaker and the artist, many music videos are regarded as short artistic films. However, music companies see them as providing free advertising for their products.

Music videos are aimed at an audience range between 14 and 34 years of age. This is also the age range of the big music buyers. It is no accident that many music videos are made at studios well known for their production of television commercials. Sometimes the same directors do both.

Packaged into rock programs, music videos amount to wall-to-wall commercials. Obsolescence is



Ollyy/Shutterstock.com

Figure 13.3 Music videos make heavy use of special photographic effects. The aim is to grab viewers' attention and to keep hold of it.

also built in – no sooner is the song bought than the music video is out of date. There is a new music video and another urge to buy, to stay with the fashion. Nonetheless, unlike the television commercial, the music video is not explicitly selling anything. It is a disguised commercial.

Types of music videos

The music industry divides music videos into two main types: conceptual and performance.

Conceptual videos

Conceptual music videos are based on a central theme. They often have a plot and tell a story, but sometimes they are made up of jumbled images that work with the music.

Conceptual videos can be further divided into two types:

- **Narrative music videos.** A simple or complex narrative can turn music videos into mini films. Simple narrative music videos provide a basic situation for a fantasy but lapse into jumbled imagery in between. The spaces in the story allow the audience to create their own fantasy. Complex narrative music videos often demonstrate the genre divisions of their full-length counterparts. Music videos can be horror, melodrama, *film noir* and so on. Complex narrative music videos move the song towards the ballad.
- **Non-narrative music videos.** A dreamlike reality can be created by non-narrative music videos as images and music combine to produce an emotional effect.

Hundreds of scenes can be cut into a music video lasting just three minutes. This constant shifting of topic resembles the structure of dreams. Like dreams, non-narrative music videos follow a loose theme rather than a story. Often the topic is approached from many angles in a short space of time. Perhaps the factor most similar to dreams is the use of images with powerful mental associations. These work like symbols, calling to mind thoughts that would normally take much longer to express.

Performance music videos

Performance music videos concentrate on the stage appearance of the musicians (Figure 13.4). The performance clip can look old-fashioned to modern audiences because it was at its most popular in the 1960s and 1970s. Some modern artists use the performance clip as an anti-commercial statement.

It is rare for a music video not to show the performers somewhere in the clip. When they do appear, they often look directly at the camera – something movie actors avoid. Looking at the camera is a direct appeal to the imagined audience and follows the conventions of musical performance on stage.

Features of music videos

Music videos have several general features: poetic imagery, a high number of symbolic images and rapid shot changes.



Stokkete/Shutterstock.com

Figure 13.4 Performance music videos focus on the performances of the artists. Most music videos include some performance shots. Some music videos focus exclusively on the performance.

Poetic images

Music videos use poetic visual imagery to build ideas and emotion in the minds of the audience. Grabbing attention and holding on to it are the two main aims of music video makers. This has led them to search for ever more bizarre and shocking images.

Symbolic images

Music video makers rely on images that are easily understood. The images are often highly symbolic. They create a host of associations in the minds of the audience. In three minutes, a huge number of shots are screened. None of them must be allowed to confuse the audience. Famous landmarks, lonely city streets and images of romance are all easily understood by the audience in a few seconds. References to famous works of art or well-known movies will also be easily understood. Music videos rely on these flashes of understanding to keep up the rate of ideas per minute.

Rapid shot changes

To keep the ideas-per-minute rate high, music video makers make rapid-fire shot changes. A three-minute video may contain hundreds of shots, often cut to the beat of the music.

Until the arrival of the music video, most filmmakers considered the shortest possible shot to be two seconds. Anything shorter was considered too brief to be understood. Today, music videos often have shots lasting less than one second and occasionally one-third of a second. The increase in shot speed corresponds to an increase in the amount of visual information the viewer receives.

How video works with the music

There are three ways in which music can be visualised in a music video:

1. **Illustration.** The video is illustrative if the imagery tells the story of the lyrics. It is also possible to think of the music as illustrated if the imagery is cut to the beat and the visuals seem to give a rhythm and feeling to the music. Video clips can illustrate a singer's or band's performance. Dance can also be used to illustrate the song.
2. **Amplification.** The video is amplifying if it adds new layers of meaning to the music or the lyrics. The performance can also be amplified using close-ups to give a view that would not be possible if you attended the live performance.
3. **Counterpoint/Disruption.** A video can stand in contrast to the music and lyrics, and the disjointed feeling this creates can add extra meaning.

13.2 ACTIVITIES

1 The images used in music videos can be divided into several categories. A study by Richard Baxter and others separated the images into categories and then counted their frequency. Look through the results in Table 13.1, then complete the following tasks. **Explain** reasons for the heavy use of visual unreality in music clips. **Explain** the high incidence of sex, dance, violence and celebration.

Table 13.1 Categories of images and frequency with which they appeared in music videos.

CATEGORY OF IMAGE	FREQUENCY IMAGES APPEARED (PER CENT)
Visual unreality (use of special effects to produce odd, unusual and/or unexpected images)	90.3
Sex (portrayal of sexual feelings or impulses)	59.7
Dance	56.5
Violence and/or crime	53.2
Celebration (portrayal of happy, festive occasions)	45.2
Friendship	41.9
Isolation (alone or apart from others)	41.9
Wealth	38.7
Transportation (use of vehicles)	35.5
Bizarre (odd)	27.4
Physical restraint (holding back a person or thing)	24.2
Androgyny (gender combination)	22.6
Religion	17.7
Political issues	14.5

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CATEGORY OF IMAGE	FREQUENCY IMAGES APPEARED (PER CENT)
Fitness	14.5
Animals	14.5
Maturation (growing up)	12.9
Death	9.7
Health	1.6

Source: Taylor & Francis/*Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*

2 Watch a number of music videos and score the frequency of Baxter's categories of images for yourself. Baxter's team scored the videos by stopping them every 30 seconds and ticking off each category that had appeared. **Create** your own table similar to Baxter's, **arranging** each category to match those in his study. **Analyse** your findings by comparing your results with Baxter's and **examining** similarities and differences in each of the **constituent parts** of both tables. **Make a judgement** about the degree to which things have changed over the time since Baxter's work was completed.

3 Prepare an investigation of five music videos. Respond to the areas of activity in the following table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe the nature of the clips as a whole, **identifying** whether they are performance or conceptual music videos. **Give information** about each of the music videos and the kinds of imagery.	**Analyse** at least 10 images from the music videos overall, **examining** each image and **considering** its effect. **Interpret** the meanings of each image in conjunction with the music. **Make a judgement** about the aesthetic/artistic appeal of each image.	**Evaluate** the effectiveness of each music video, **drawing conclusions** about the **significance** of each of them to audiences. Rank the clips from one to five on the basis of their **status** or **worth** to the modern audience.

GENRE AND STORIES

Genre is French for 'a type, kind or gender'. It is connected to the English words of 'genetics' and 'generate'. It stems from the Greek word 'genesis' (*gen* meaning 'to be born' or 'to produce'), so it is also useful to think of film genres as a family tree. Science fiction and horror both have a common literary ancestor in Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818), and Japanese Samurai films are closely related to American Westerns. Each generation interbreeds in new ways to form hybrids, starting new branches and evolving through innovation (Figure 13.5).

Genres are built up out of sets of narrative codes and conventions that filmmakers have used to create the types of films that audiences have expected. Films from the early days of Hollywood until about the 1970s tended to stick to just one set of genre conventions. This is known as the classical period of filmmaking. From the 1970s until the present day, many directors have blended genre conventions to create hybrids. Audiences have become more sophisticated in what they expect.



Figure 13.5 Our current 'genre universe' has expanded from the origins of modern storytelling literature. The invention of film can be imagined as a 'big bang' moment, giving rise to an increasing number of productions and ways of telling visual stories as time goes on. The classical period of Hollywood filmmaking clustered movies around distinct genre 'nodes', sharing codes and conventions. As the sphere of media possibilities grew, hybrids became a sophisticated mix of texts that came before them. New platforms and ideas cluster around existing genre traditions but also emerge in the gaps between them.

As a result, identifying moving-image storylines as a particular genre can be difficult. The categories are arbitrary. They are shifting over time, and new stories often fall between the neat definitions.

13.3 ACTIVITIES

1 **Analyse** the genre influence on a number of texts in a 3D graphical representation. Source a globe or large beach ball, placing red post-it notes on the north and south poles, and four places on the equator: at the international dateline north of Tonga, Samoa and Fiji; at the Galapagos Islands off South America; in the Gulf of Guinea (not far from where **Nollywood** actually is); and in the Bay of Bengal (not very far from **Bollywood**). Label the red post-it notes as different genres.

Examine a significant film each from the era of Hollywood institutional dominance, such as lists of greatest films from 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Redraw to a larger scale the diagram in Figure 13.5 to use as a model. Place a blue post-it note on the globe for each film in the class at its genre pole. Using the genre features listed in the chapter, categorise recent texts (including games) according to genre influence. Place a green post-it note at the appropriate distance from each of the main three genre influences on each text. (It may be necessary to swap out the six core genres at the poles, or reposition to accommodate certain hybrids.)

Evaluate genre hybridisation by **examining** the colour distribution.

Evaluate genre preferences by choosing five favourite media texts for each student. Using individual sticker colours/shapes for each student, map the position of each of the choices on the globe. **Make a judgement** about similarities and differences in the whole group's genre selections. **Draw conclusions** about your own selections and reflect on probable influences on your own aesthetic and themes as a screen artist.

CONVENTIONAL MOVIE GENRES

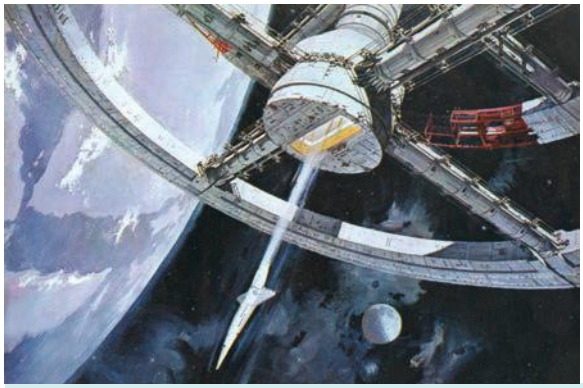
Certain storylines, characters and settings have become conventional in the Hollywood movie industry and those industries associated with it in other countries. Audiences have come to expect these genres in the movies they view, whether in theatrical cinemas or on streaming services.

Science fiction

Science fiction (often called sci-fi) is futuristic **speculative fiction** based in part on the knowledge that we have in the present day. It often addresses the question of humanity's purpose in the universe. Science, religion and art pose the same questions as science fiction. Personal stories are used to explore a philosophical big picture, usually on a grand scale, sometimes involving the whole universe.

The many forms of the science-fiction genre provide a place to debate the ethics of technology already developed. It has also been the inspiration for many scientific inventions, interacting with history in a way that other genres don't.

HG Wells imagined atomic energy as a new kind of bomb in 1914 at the start of World War I. Physicist Leo Szilárd read the book in 1932, and invented chain reactions as he waited and crossed at a traffic light in 1933. He convinced Albert Einstein to write a letter to Franklin D Roosevelt, President of the United States, in 1939. They argued it was too dangerous to let Germany invent the bomb first.





Entertainment Pictures/Alamy Stock Photo; NASA

Figure 13.6 Artwork from *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and an actual NASA 2010 photo showing a spaceship docking. Science fiction is speculative fiction that describes imagined scenarios that may not always remain impossible, unlike horror and fantasy. Alternative histories or extrapolated futures are based on current inventions or theory.

Two bombs were dropped on Japanese cities in 1945, at the end of World War II. This science fiction had created its own conceptual chain reaction of imagination and shaped history.

Features of plot and production

Science fiction tends to have the following features:

- **Scientific principles.** Plausible technology is imagined, such as Mary Shelley animating Frankenstein with electricity. This is similar to Luigi Galvani's experiments on frog's legs.
- **Ethical dilemmas.** Questions are posed about the implications of scientific developments. For example, in the short-story collection *I, Robot* (1950), Isaac Asimov's 'Three Laws of Robotics' are debated – robots mustn't hurt humans, but robots may also be biological and expect rights. The dilemmas posed by this are explored in *The Island* (2005) and *Blade Runner* (1982, 2017).
- **Grand implications.** Science-fiction stories often concern themselves with events that threaten the very future of humanity. Individuals are responsible for the fate of all other humans, as in *Sunshine* (2007).
- **Visual effects.** *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) by Georges Méliès established special effects. Expensive, realistic spectacle made Hollywood the home of high-end science fiction. Others used quirky plots and more internal space action – for example, *Doctor Who* (1963–) and the radio series *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (originally broadcast in 1978).
- **Rich soundscapes.** Bernard Herrmann developed the electronic **theremin** instrument as a spooky classic sci-fi code in films such as *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951). *Star Trek: The Original Series* (1966–69) had 'spot effects' associated with each device – even doors. *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) had laser sounds that were created with a spanner striking powerlines. *2001: A Space Odyssey* used the orchestral piece '*Also sprach Zarathustra*' to portray the awe of space through classical music.
- **Borrowed genre features.** The *Star Wars* films (1977–) have significant fantasy elements allowing spiritual mysticism to be a serious plot element. 'Tech-noir' is a common hybrid.

Common themes

Certain common themes occur repeatedly in science fiction:

- **Fear of 'the other'.** Fed by different versions of America being invaded.
- **Slavery.** Suppression of entire classes reflect the US experience.
- **Fear of technology.** Escaping monsters and replacements for the workforce.
- **Predestination.** Interfering with genes or time travel creates paradoxes regarding free will.
- **Individualism.** Those who deviate from the norm are often punished but ultimately benefit others.
- **Faith.** Belief in human ingenuity, inferior primitive spiritualism or superior techno-transcendent spiritualism.

Origin influences and context

Warnings against 'playing God' persist along with invasions, mostly from the US's contemporary threats, including the 1950s **McCarthyist** fear of communism, and the current fear of terrorists. Originally, *War of the Worlds* (radio, 1938; film, 1953) featured an alien attack from Mars, but

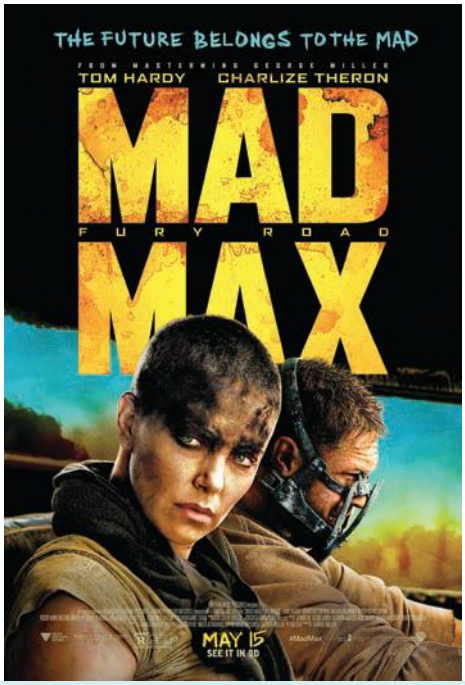


Charles Walker Collection/Alamy Stock Photo; Leena Robinson/Shutterstock.com; Mike Booth/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.7 Rockets from 1930s comic books evolved to shape designs from cars to kitchens as the space race between the US and Russia gathered importance into the 1960s.

the film remake (2005) shows the enemy hiding 'underground' in waiting, like a terrorist sleeper cell.

Social attitudes to 'nature vs nurture' change the representation of the Force in the *Star Wars* series over time. In 1977, it was 'stretch out with your feelings' to discover the force, but in 1999 potential was measured via a blood test. In the original version of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), planetary annihilation was via atomic self-destruction, but it was environmental damage in the 2008 remake.



Warner Bros/Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.8 The *Mad Max* series (1979–) uses a recognisable story type in an Australian context to warn of 'dependence' with road movie elements.

Science-fiction stories and characters

Codes and conventions produce four recognisable science-fiction story types, as outlined in Table 13.2.

These story types also have recognisable recurring characters:

- the messianic one
- the anointed one
- the professor
- the freelancer
- the princess
- the automatons
- the community representative.

Film noir

Film noir is French for 'black film' and refers to moody US films made after World War II. They commonly feature detectives, private investigators or insurance snoops. They were often filmed at night, or in shadowy interiors.

Features of *noir* films

Films shot in the *noir* style have the following features:

- **Deep focus** to lend an air of realism and to cut down on the need for different scenes.
- **Complex compositions** with several actors in the shot.
- **Complex** *mise en scène* with crowded furniture or claustrophobic buildings to allow for surprises and entrapment.

Table 13.2 Four recognisable science-fiction story types.

SCI-FI TYPE	SCI-FI STORY	GENRE INFLUENCE	BORROWED FEATURES	FILM EXAMPLES
Horror	Natural order disturbed	Horror	• monster escapes or creation turns on creator • sequential victims • fight to the death	*Alien* (1979)
Political	Invasion	Western	• dispute over territory • lifestyle under threat • individual with unique skill • inspired community defence	*Independence Day* (1996, 2016)
Glorification	Fantastic future	Fantasy	• technology blurs with the mystical • problems are solved • noble acts • peace or future hope	*Gravity* (2013)
Dependence	Post-apocalyptic future	*Noir* (circular narrative) Road movie (duo on a journey)	• societal collapse • resource depletion • individual self interest • erosion of morality	*Minority Report* (2002) *The Book of Eli* (2010)

- ***Noir* motifs** such as lights shining through venetian blinds, swirling cigarette smoke, mirrors, spiral staircases and so on.
- **Low-key lighting** with sharply defined areas of light and shade. Low-key lighting casts threatening shadows and allows surprises to be hidden.
- **Backlighting** that directs shafts of light towards the camera, putting the character or object of interest into silhouette.
- **Complex plots** with lots of intrigue and twists and turns. Often the plot is so complex that narration has to provide explanations.
- **First-person voice-over** that allows the audience to identify with the main character and provides the explanation for complex plots. In classic *film noir*, the voice-over is almost always male.
- **Urban settings depicting dangerous and mean streets** in a highly stylised way. Interior settings are sinister and shadowy, full of slightly scary furniture.

Film noir plots

Film noir movies usually have plots based around murder and crimes of passion. Chance events play a large part in the story. A single chance event leads to snowballing complications. A strange twist of fate brings the male character into the clutches of a beautiful but deadly female character (Figure 13.9). Together, they often commit a crime. The male ends up dead.



GRANGER - Historical Picture Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.9 Gloria Swanson and William Holden in *Sunset Boulevard* (1950). Male characters in *film noir* movies are often cynical and street-wise, but a chance event causes them to fall into the clutches of the deadly femme fatale. The movies are famous for their shafts of light shining through venetian blinds into shadowy sinister interiors. Deceit and entrapment are common themes.

It is very common for *noir* films to have a circular plot structure. They begin at the end of the story – often at the point of defeat or death for the male character. The male voice-over explains how events came to play out in such a way as to end up at this final point. The whole movie is like a flashback. The last scene adds some extra final details to the story that were not shown at the beginning.

Noir characters

There are two types of characters that are very common in *film noir* movies:

1. **The hard-boiled cynical male.** This character is usually a loner who appears to be the typical tough-guy detective or investigator. He's seen all the crime and corruption that the world has to offer, and he's disillusioned and detached. But that doesn't stop him being a smart-talking wise-guy.
2. **The femme fatale.** The French term 'femme fatale' means deadly woman. She is a beautiful and seductive 'spider woman' who entraps the male and uses him for her own ends. She isn't after love so much as money and power.

Horror

Horror movies are films whose main aim is to create feelings of dread and terror. To do this, they often tap into deep fears that most people in the audience will have. For the audience, the horror movie is an experience of fear that is bounded by the safety of being able to say, 'It is only a movie'. This has caused some critics to call them 'safe nightmares'.

Features of horror movies

Most horror movies tend to have several features in common:

- **Monstrosity.** Horror movies focus on the monstrous, or depict supernatural or psychological monsters (Figure 13.10).
- **Disruption of the body.** Most horror movies feature some kind of bodily horror. This can be expressed in the victims of the monster as their bodies are disrupted by the 'monster'. Or it can be expressed in the body of the 'monster' in the form of gross bodily features or gross behaviours.

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- **Playing upon phobias.** Horror movies exaggerate phobias that many of us have until they become almost unbearably horrible. There is a horror movie for almost every single human phobia, from snakes and spiders to fear of being alone. There is even one for fear of the dentist.
- **Trespass.** A specialty of horror movies is to invade socially accepted boundaries and to break taboos.
- **Violence.** Because horror movies rely on shock and fear, the easiest way to get this is to use extreme violence. Violence disrupts the normality, but violence also restores it.
- **World upside-down.** After the 'monster' attacks, the world becomes a crazy place. The logical basis of normality is turned upside-down.

Horror movie plots

Horror movies focus on disruption to normality – therefore, the normality has to be established very strongly at the beginning of the film. The monstrous or the monster disrupts the normality and then what follows is a battle between the normal or natural and the hideous or supernatural.

There are two kinds of resolutions to horror movies: the secure ending where normality returns, or the insecure ending where there remains a suggestion that the monstrous might return.

Horror movie characters

Three main character types are common in horror movies:

1. **The monster.** This character can invite the audience to be sympathetic or repulsed. However they are represented, the monster is always the main character in the story.
2. **The victims.** Even though the audience does not have to spend much time with the victims, they are important. They aren't important as individuals so much as they are in total numbers.
3. **The final girl.** In many horror movies from the 1950s until the 2010s, the monster was male, but the lone survivor was female. This sole survivor was dubbed 'the final girl'. The final girl appears because the audience is more likely to live their own fear through a female – rather than a terrified male, argues Carol Clover, the originator of the term.



RGR Collection/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.10 Actor Robert Englund is made up as Freddy Krueger for the filming of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984). Monstrosity in the horror movie is often focused on the body. Settings tend to have an exaggerated normality, as suggested by the name 'Elm Street'. Later horror films are often set in suburban locations, but early horror films tended to be set in exotic foreign locations such as Transylvania.

Westerns

A Western is a film set during the frontier period of the American West. They are usually set in the period from the end of the American Civil War (1861–65) until World War I (1914–18). Most often they are set before the 1890s. Westerns are about the conquest of territory and the imposition of law and order. Battles are mostly between Europeans and Native Americans, or between cattlemen and homesteaders.

Features of Westerns

The *mise en scène* of the Western genre is familiar to audiences around the world, and includes Stetson hats, horses, steam trains, stagecoaches and so on. A number of other features regularly appear:

- **Frontier landscapes.** The frontier was the edge of European settlement in the US. Western landscapes are dry and often harsh.
- **Violence.** The Western starts and finishes with a violent event.
- **Clear oppositions.** There are clear divisions between good and evil, lawlessness and order, civilisation and nature. The strong versus the weak is another division. Often, the hero is somehow opposed to society, or at least an outsider.

Western plots

After studying hundreds of Westerns, foundational genre analyst Will Wright has identified the most common plot structure:

- A stranger comes into town on horseback, often with exceptional skills in marksmanship or fighting. But these skills are only used when justified.
- Villains threaten the townspeople or the homestead settlers. The villains have contempt for the ordinary people but have respect for the stranger.
- The stranger attempts to avoid serious conflict with the villains, but finally a friend is threatened.
- The stranger takes on the villains and defeats them using justified violence. Society applauds the stranger, but their acceptance is rejected and the stranger rides off into the sunset. An alternative ending involves a marriage into the community.

Western characters

There are three main characters in Westerns:

1 **The hero.** Often a stranger to the area, the hero is a superb gunfighter and horserider with excellent physical skills. The hero has a strict moral code because that is what separates them from the villains (Figure 13.11).
2 **The villain.** Like the hero, the villain has excellent physical skills and is an equal in almost every way – except morally. The villain is motivated by base emotions such as greed or ambition.
3 **The Native Americans.** Early Westerns used Native Americans to create dramatic climaxes. Contemporary Westerns tend to portray Native Americans as virtuous protectors of the environment and as having a noble way of life.



GRANGER - Historical Picture Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.11 Gary Cooper as Marshall Will Kane in *High Noon* (1952). *High Noon* was made just as the Western was starting to decline as a genre. Like many Westerns, it portrays a good man standing up against a villain while the cowardly townspeople do nothing.

4 **Female characters in Westerns.** Earlier Westerns portrayed two types of female characters: virtuous women (such as ranchers' daughters and schoolmarms) and not-so-virtuous women (such as saloon girls and barmaids). Contemporary Westerns offer a much broader range of character roles. Examples where females have leading roles include *True Grit* (2010) and *The Missing* (2003).

Gangster movies

Gangster films are associated with the *film noir* genre and the Western. Gangster movies are about crime, aggression and violence in an urban environment. They are similar to *noir* films in that they portray a world that is corrupt and cynical. They are similar to Westerns in that they focus on battles for control, power and territory. However, in a gangster movie, the main character is not someone who is of high moral standing. The main character is very much a 'bad guy'. The common settings for gangster movies are big cities, and the prohibition era in the US. Contemporary gangster movies may also be set in the drug underworlds.

Features of gangster movies

Gangster movies tend to have common features: violence, lawlessness, a cult of the individual and a focus on success and wealth.

Violence in gangster movies is a key feature. The level of violence is taken above that of most other movie genres. It provides shock value, but it also establishes that the world of the gangster is not the normal world we know. Violence starts the plot and provides the resolution.

Lawlessness is a result of the gangster living in a world with no morals. Greed and power are the only goals. The gangster will do anything to achieve success. Society is placed in chaos as a result.

Individualism is extreme in the world of the gangster. Gangsters are embodying the American dream of the 'self-made man'. It's just that they are on the wrong side of the law, unlike legitimate businesspeople.

Success and wealth are the sole goals and everything else is subservient to those ambitions. The ends justify any means in the gangster film, but the audience knows it will inevitably end in death.

Gangster movie plots

Violence starts the gangster movie, occurs at all the main complications and climaxes, and violence

finishes the movie. The violent death of the lead character usually provides the resolution.

Often the gangster movie follows the bloody career of the lead character, as in *The Godfather* (1972). Brutality increases throughout their career until, by the end of the film, they are totally immoral and overly confident. Their downfall comes as a result.

Characters

The character types that most commonly appear in gangster movies are:

- **'Mr Big'.** The story is told from the point of view of the lead character, who is scheming, ruthless and brutal. There is also often something tragic or sad about these characters.
- **Families.** The gangster genre has its origins in stories of the American Mafia. As a result, there are often family loyalties that are almost tribal. There is a clear chain of command all the way up to Mr Big. Honour comes from upholding the family prestige and territory.
- **The hoodlums.** Surrounding Mr Big, there is a whole pack of burly henchman. None of them has the intelligence of Mr Big.
- **Female characters.** Early films in the genre mostly gave women minor roles as wives and girlfriends. Rarely did they play lead roles as main characters in the gangster movies. However, one of the most enduring female gangster roles is that of Bonnie Parker played by Faye Dunaway in *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967; Figure 13.12).



Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.12 Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty as Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow in the 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde*. Even today, the character of Bonnie remains one of the most powerful and enduring female roles in the gangster genre. In this genre, the lead characters meet violent deaths.

Road movies

In a road movie, all the action takes place during a journey, and the car is almost a character in some sense. The road comes to represent life itself as the characters escape from their previous lives and discover something about themselves. The road journey becomes a rite of passage, a fugitive flight or a quest.

Features of road movies

Common elements in road movies are:

- **Music.** The landscape rolling past as music with significant lyrics plays on the car's sound system is a major part of the road movie experience. Usually the lyrics and music are suggestive of the characters' emotional states.
- **Landscape.** A lot of time is given over to landscape shots. These work in a similar way to the music – they reflect the emotional state of the characters. A common progression is to start in an urban environment and to end up in a desert as an outlaw.
- **Movement.** Road movies involve a physical movement (in the car) and a spiritual movement (within the characters).
- **Freedom.** The road provides freedom and adventure, away from the social constraints of friends, partners and parents.
- **Violence.** In road movies about fugitives, violence is important at the start and at the end. In rite-of-passage or quest road movies, violence plays a much less significant part.

Road movie plots

Road movies usually progress through stages of dramatic action, and then punctuate these with periods of driving and music. The driving scenes allow the characters and the audience to come to terms with things. Often, each episode of dramatic action is like a hurdle or challenge the characters have to overcome.

Endings to road movies fall into one of four categories:

1. The characters have changed so much they can never go back, and often die. *Thelma & Louise* (1991) is of this type.
2. The characters just keep driving into the sunset.
3. The characters return home somehow 'grown up', as seen in rite-of-passage road movies.
4. The characters have a new home waiting for them. *Sideways* (2004) is very similar to this type.

Characters

There are only a small number of main characters in road movies. Minor but influential characters are met on the road, but the main characters must fit into the front seat of a car or ride on a motorbike.

- **A duo.** Most road movies feature two main characters, almost always of the same gender. Road movies are like 'buddy movies'. If the duo characters are of the same gender, there is more chance of them interacting with others along the way. They might form relationships that bring new scripting opportunities.
- **The vehicle and the road.** The car (bus, truck or motorbike) is a character as well (Figure 13.13). The vehicle is usually of interest in some way. In *Thelma & Louise*, the car is a 1966 Ford Thunderbird convertible. In *Easy Rider* (1969), the motorbikes are Harley-Davidsons. Similarly, the road is often iconic. Route 66 crosses the US from coast to coast, and has had more movies made along it than any other road.
- **The cop.** The characters in a road movie are usually running from something. Often it is a crime. The cop provides a blockage and a reason to keep running. The cop can also provide the resolution as the outlaws come face to face with the law.



RGR Collection/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.13 In the classic Australian road movie *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994), the bus is almost a character. Iconic landscapes and highways set to driving music separate the action climaxes that occur at each stop along the way.

Romantic comedies

Romantic comedies are comic films about two people finding each other, falling in love and eventually getting together. Falling in love itself does not provide enough of a story, and so there are complications that work to keep them apart until the end of the movie. The comedy comes from the banter between the two, and the comic situations they get into. Often, the lead characters start out as antagonists, and the journey they take is from dislike to love.

Features of romantic comedies

Several of the following features appear in romantic comedies:

- **Stars.** Romantic comedies focus on people and personalities, and so the stars who play those people are very important. This is more so than in other genres.
- **Repartee.** This is the witty dialogue that takes place between the characters. It provides most of the comedy. The verbal banter between the 'odd couple' (a mismatched couple) keeps the characters apart till the end. Yet the audience can see they belong together.
- **Physical comedy.** When objects or physical events cause the comedy, it is called physical comedy. Most romantic comedies rely on verbal comedy, but there is often a dash of physical comedy as well.
- **Music.** The soundtrack to romantic comedies helps to progress the plot in the same way as it does with musicals. The music lets the audience into the inner world of the characters.
- **Romance.** These films depict romance as something that transforms people's lives. Romantic love usually ends in marriage, even in modern films.

Romantic comedy plots

The basis of the romantic comedy plot can be summed up as 'person A meets person B, person A loses person B, person A gets person B'. When person A first meets person B, the world is disrupted for both of them. The audience wants them to be together from the start. The scriptwriters have to keep them apart. Complications prevent them from uniting.

At some point, one of the characters makes 'the grand gesture'. This is a declaration of love that changes the direction of the film. Shortly after this, the resolution allows the couple to defy all odds and come together.

Characters

Romantic comedies are built around differences between characters who, despite everything,

Resource
Short film ideas

eventually come together. Masculinity versus femininity is an obvious contrast. However, social class or personality can also provide points of difference. Nevertheless, it should be obvious to the audience that the characters should be together. This means they must appear to need each other. One might have some personality trait or inner quality that the other seems to desperately need.

- **The female lead.** Most of the female leads are independent and strong. They aren't particularly vulnerable because they have to be able to deliver some pretty tough banter.
- **The male lead.** The audience has to like the man because they have to want him to be with the female lead. Often, he is involved in some worthwhile pursuit that the audience will agree makes him a good marriage prospect.



Mim Friday/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.14 The central couple in *La La Land* (2016). This movie sits on the boundary of romantic comedy and musical. There is physical comedy, a mismatched odd couple and plenty of banter. *La La Land* also plays with the traditional idea that the couple ends up together, a more contemporary approach to the classic happy ending.

Documentaries

Documentaries present facts about a subject to construct an argument. They use real events, people or places to present certain realities. Pioneer British documentary maker John Grierson defined documentary as the creative treatment of actuality (or reality).

Features of documentaries

There are five main features of documentaries:

1. **Observation.** The audience watches events unfold and so they become eyewitnesses.
2. **Interview.** Documentaries rely on interviews to progress the argument. The interview can be either allowed to run in full or cut in with other footage. Sometimes the reporter or documentary maker is visible, but can also be unseen or even unheard.
3. **Dramatisation.** All documentaries use drama to keep the audience interested. Many of them just build this into the observations and interviews. Some documentaries include dramatised re-enactments of events as well. These are effective when it would be impossible to directly film observation sequences. Examples of this include situations where crime or corruption needs to be shown, or when the events are in the past.
4. ***Mise en scène.*** A documentary maker must use things that already exist rather than fully dress the set. However, the documentary maker can still use *mise en scène* (see 'Languages', Chapter 15) to carefully compose the shot, and only let the audience see what they want them to see.
5. **Argument.** What the documentary is 'saying', its point of view, is called the exposition or argument. This can be clearly expressed and direct. It can also be hidden by allowing the audience to think they are drawing their own conclusions.

Types of documentary

Documentaries have gradually changed over time. The following types have developed:

- **Fully narrated documentaries.** Sometimes called 'voice of God' documentaries, these have a strong narrative voice that explains the exposition. Usually, this voice-over is of an unseen person – hence 'voice of God'.
- ***Cinéma vérité.*** This term is French for 'truthful cinema', but it is not necessarily any more truthful than any other style. It relies almost totally on observation and interview. There is no narration.
- **Self-reflexive.** Sometimes the documentary maker themselves is a star. Michael Moore is an example. When the documentary maker appears in their own documentary as someone who is actively participating, the style is called self-reflexive.
- **Mixed.** These documentaries use all of the elements, including narration. Usually the narrator speaks from within the scene, at least for some of the time. This is a more modern approach to documentary making.

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13.4 ACTIVITIES

1 Refer to the genre universe diagram in Figure 13.5 (page 259) and select three media texts (a game scenario is also suitable) to view to the end of the first act. The conclusion of these productions can be explored in a later activity. Respond to the activities in the following table.

CREATE	ANALYSE	DESCRIBE
Create a **systematic** list (see sample in Table 13.3) of **technical and symbolic codes** used to represent characters, locations, institutions, objects, etc. **Construct** short phrases with verbs (see 'noted features' in Table 13.3 below) of **specific conventions** in the list that deal with relationships with others, objects, cultures, environment and self.	**Analyse** each **convention**, **technical** and **symbolic code** you have listed, **considering** the **constituent parts** of the list individually, and **making judgements** on genre attribution according to known features. **Analyse** the chronological notes by **dissecting** into groupings of genre influence. **Analyse** the relative contribution to the **moving-image media product** story from other **contexts** by using a quantitative (numerical) percentage based on the number of noted features.	**Describe** the percentage influence on your selected texts by **representing** it visually using a simple three- or four-pole diagram. **Describe** influences clearly by **identifying** appropriate adjacent genre poles to match your findings. **Describe**, using **images** of the genre universe, a quantitative measure on your diagram of the 'gravity' each genre applies to the story. **Describe** by sketching where the production sits to **signify** genre contribution in a three-dimensional **representation**.

Table 13.3 Sample allocation of a moving-image media text in the genre universe using technical and symbolic codes.

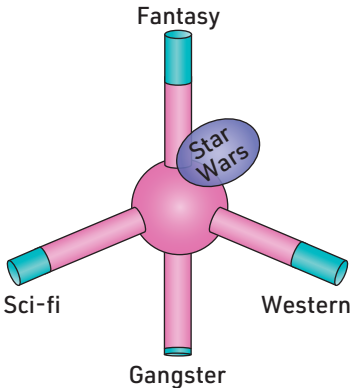
MOVING-IMAGE MEDIA TEXT	NOTED FEATURES	GENRE SOURCE	%	PLACE IN GENRE UNIVERSE
For example No. 1 *Star Wars Episode IV – A New Hope* (1977)	• starts in space • laser weapons • androids • hologram • escape in a spaceship	Sci-fi	25	
	• princess is captured • hermit is revealed • mysterious message from beyond • mind-control tricks • array of strange creatures • enchanted weapon • antagonist no longer human	Fantasy	35	
	• gunfight invades territory • bandits patrol the desert • frontier farm attacked • gunslinger for hire • bar-room brawl	Western	25	
	• call to tradition/father's occupation • family dynasty • gang plots against weaker victims	Western or gangster	7.5 7.5	

Figure 13.15 Example of a four-pole diagram.

Experiment with other forms of graphs to **discover** a **variety of techniques** to convey the complex web of influence.

2 Refer to your list (constructed for the previous activity) on placement in the genre universe. Introduce a science-fiction element if none of your examples has any. It can be applied to any genre. You need knowledge of the first act of the film (knowledge of the rest of the film doesn't matter). The *Star Wars* example indicates the resolution could be expected to portray the 'town' saved by 'a community', inspired by someone with 'special skills', using futuristic weapons (like a Western) yet with a mystical twist (like fantasy). **Apply** your genre knowledge to **design** possible resolutions and explore story consequences based on the evidence observed for your 'noted features' and 'genre source' lists.

9780170484176

Respond to the activities in the following table.

RESOLVE	ANALYSE	CREATE
Resolve a story ending for each of the three movies (or the game) to solve the creative problem of satisfying audience expectations of the genre balance, based on the first act. **Synthesise** a combination of moving-image elements in acceptable conclusions from the conventions of one of the contributing genres. **Consolidate** conceptual connections of cause and effect between the first act using evidence from your 'noted features' list and consequences in the climax/resolution.	**Analyse** by **examining** the list of character types from science fiction in relation to *any* moving-image media product you know. **Analyse** the use of science-fiction codes and conventions in this text by **examining** the use of recurring character types listed in the science-fiction section.	**Create** three **possible resolutions** for each of the three texts you are working with, **systematically** substituting a different character type from the science-fiction list as the antagonist each time. **Create** a short artist's statement as a proposal to a producer, reflecting on particular audiences likely to react against the representation of the antagonist, and **recommending** the most widely popular **plan**. **Create** a comparison for the producer with accepted character conventions to indicate whether stereotypes are being challenged or reinforced if your plan was put into effect.

SERIES AND EPISODIC STORYTELLING

Episodic stories are extended narratives that are divided into a number of shorter linked story parts or episodes. Usually, there is a unifying story or setting. There is generally a broad group of characters in the whole series story world, but individual episodes may vary which characters are focused on.

Episodic narratives used to be exclusive to television. However, modern episodic narratives are available on streaming services such as Netflix. They are also available on short-form platforms such as YouTube or even TikTok.

Soap operas

Soap operas are serialised narrative dramas. They are composed of stories around a set cast of characters and a set location.

Features of soap operas

There are several main features of soap operas:

1 **Extended complications.** The storyline has the usual orientation, complications and resolution stages. However, in a soap opera the complication stage goes on for much longer and extends over several episodes.

2 **Focus on relationships.** Soap operas have a style of narrative that focuses on relationships and emotions. They are often portrayed as escapist dramas, but this is not so, says *New Yorker* columnist Renata Adler. Soap operas show 'the most steady open-ended sadness to be found outside of life itself'.

3 **Constant use of close-ups.** The camera style of the soap opera requires the use of close-ups to bring the audience close to the character and allow us to see their emotions.

Soap opera stories

The soap opera narrative has to operate to keep audience interest in a number of different stories. Common features of soap opera plots include:

- **Emotional ups and downs.** Often the climaxes and actions of non-episodic stories are less important in soap operas. The climaxes exist to bring the people together, rather than for excitement. With the action line, the characters work out their emotions and reactions.
- **Plot expansion.** The progress in a soap opera is often sideways. More and more implications are drawn from the same event. People are shown reacting and trying to solve the problems created by the event.
- **Rotating plots.** Traditonal soap operas have rotating plot lines. The plot focuses on one set of characters and their story, before moving to another set of characters and events.
- **Cliff-hangers.** The standard feature of episodic dramas is the cliff-hanger. The name comes from the old matinee dramas of the early 20th century. To keep the audience coming back, at the end of each episode the characters would find themselves in the middle of a dreadful predicament. Sometimes they were literally hanging on for their lives off the edge of a cliff – hence the name.

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Figure 13.16 Soap operas originated as serialised dramas on American radio in the 1930s. Soap companies such as Procter & Gamble sponsored the shows. People dismissively referred to them as soap operas. (Similarly, Western movies were called 'horse operas'.)

Soap opera characters

There are several types of main characters in soap operas:

- **The scheming villainess.** Often the star of the show, the villainess is widely known to the audience. The villainess is complicated and a mixture of good and evil. Sometimes she can also be presented as a victim. She may have had an unhappy childhood or been in an abusive partnership. The villainess uses and manipulates people.
- **The long-suffering victim.** The viewers relate to the victim. They often put themselves in their shoes or identify with them. The long-suffering victim has many strengths. They are often caring and have enormous amounts of willpower.
- **The romantic love-interest.** Often a likeable rogue or a rebel, they turn out to be only a little bit wild. The romantic character walks a fine line between being boring and predictable, and having an interesting sense of danger.
- **The good heroine.** The main female character is usually good, kind and honest. Good heroines stay on the show for multiple episodes, if not years.
- **The ruthless villain.** Like the villainess, the villain is well-known and popular with fans. The villain's motives are very clear. He wants to enact some kind of evil plan or he wants to gain control of something.

Soap opera settings

There are several basic features that soap opera settings have:

- **Regular movement of people.** Soap opera settings have to allow for a regular flow of new characters and a stable group of regular characters. Small towns, hospitals, prisons and schools are common soap opera settings.
- **Meeting places.** Soap opera settings need to have places that people can meet. Coffee shops and hotel bars are common meeting places. So too are school and hospital corridors and staff rooms.
- **A small world.** Clearly defined limits to the story world are necessary to contain the narrative. The ideal soap opera setting is a closed world with multiple comings and goings.

Situation comedies

Situation comedies, or sitcoms, have been the longest running genre of programming on television and video. The sitcom has a special appeal to audiences. Whereas with episodic dramas, audiences watch with serious faces, with sitcoms, audiences watch to laugh.

A situation comedy is a comedic program in which the characters are locked into the same situation episode after episode. Each episode has a conventional story arc of orientation, complications and resolution. Unlike a soap opera, normality usually returns at the end.

Features of situation comedies

There are several main features of situation comedies:

- **The comic trap.** Situation comedies are built around a 'comic trap' that people are locked into and cannot escape. Common traps are the family, the workplace or a flat-share situation.
- **Character-based humour.** The humour comes from the characters. The flow of comedy can come from one person in unidirectional sitcoms. In this case, only one person is truly funny. Or the humour can be generated by multiple people in multidirectional sitcoms. In these sitcoms, a group of people can be funny.

The sitcom plot

1 **Initial problem.** Situation comedies begin with a new problem each episode. The problem is usually some comedic difficulty that the characters face. It is often created by an external source rather than by the characters themselves.

2 **Snowballing confusion.** Complications develop in the situation comedy by getting ever more exaggerated. The humour often comes from one or more of the characters being confused or mistaken about something.
3 **Resolution brings relief.** Resolution comes when the confusion reaches its maximum. Just when things could not possibly get any further out of hand, something occurs to clear up the confusion. Everything returns to normal quickly and the audience breathes a sigh of relief. This sigh of relief when things are put right contrasts with thrillers, for example, where the sigh is more of an 'Aha!'.

The sitcom characters

Episodic comedy does not lend itself to strong character development. The episodes are too short to be able to allow for complexity in a character. If the audience is not laughing almost immediately, they will turn off. Therefore, characters have to be immediately funny. Typical character types include:

- **Stereotypes.** Situation comedies function well with stereotypes. Recognisable stereotypes provide instant humour.
- **Screwball characters.** Often the sitcom character has some exaggerated personality trait that is the source of the humour.
- **Odd couples.** Writers often pair people together who can bounce off each other and create humour. Opposing types are a popular way to create comedy.

Sitcom settings

Sitcoms, like soap operas, tend to focus on closed worlds. This is because a small crazy world in a larger normal world works better as comedy. Popular closed worlds include the workplace, the family or a flat-share situation. There used to be a rule that sitcoms should always be set in the present day. Many of them still are. However, if there is a historical setting, it is usually several decades or more in the past. Stereotypes work better when there is already some kind of existing stereotype embedded in the mind of the audience. Historical stereotypes are often still very accessible to most people.

Reality shows

Reality television is a broad category that includes a wide range of programs aiming to be both factual and entertaining.

Television reviewer Kerrie Murphy has a broader definition. She says reality TV generally involves filming the actions and reactions of people in a set situation. This situation can be a natural one, as in *Airport* (UK, 1996–present), or it can be completely contrived, as in *Big Brother*. Jonathon Bignell defines reality TV as programs 'where the unscripted behaviour of ordinary people is the focus of interest'. An important aspect is the comprehensive monitoring of everyday behaviour.

An important factor that separates reality television from other genres based on real-life contestants is the focus on their private thoughts and reactions to the situations.

Types of reality shows

Different types of reality shows have developed as producers use combinations of elements from other genres:

- **Observational docusoap**. 'Fly on the wall' docusoap reality television combines observational documentary (see page 268) with the dramatic conventions of soap opera (see page 275). The camera observes people in their everyday lives. Docusoaps are often based on high-stress work situations such as border security, law enforcement or medical emergency. Docusoap reality television has its roots in *cinéma vérité* documentary (see page 268).
- **Formulated docusoap.** These reality shows take people out of their own worlds and place them in a formulated or specially constructed environment to see how they behave.
- **Reality game shows.** Contestants are placed in a demanding artificial situation. However, an extra element of competition is introduced together with the threat of elimination.
- **Lifestyle reality.** Ordinary people and their lifestyles are transformed by experts, who make them extraordinary in lifestyle reality shows. It's not the winning of a prize but the 'reveal' of the transformation that is the climax of the show.
- **Talent show reality.** Reality shows based around talent quests differ from conventional talent quests in that they focus on the participants' lives during the quest.
- **Clipshow reality.** Clipshows are made up of amateur video clips sent in by audience

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members – often for prize money. Shows based around dashcam or CCTV footage are examples of clipshow reality.

Features of reality shows

Reality programs vary considerably; however, most display some if not all of the following features:

- **Real-life participants**. Much of the appeal of reality programming is that it is based around real people, not actors playing parts. But because this is television, there is an inevitable tendency to create characters out of these people.
- **Unscripted performance.** People being themselves is the basis of the genre. The programs are largely unscripted, although that does not mean that producers can't deliberately set up situations. A narrative structure is usually imposed on the real-life events, but it is created during the editing and isn't necessarily there from the outset.
- **Voice-over narration.** The actions of the participants are explained to the audience with voice-over narration.
- **Observation/surveillance**. Like the documentary, reality programming relies on observation. But in these shows it is taken one step further to become actual, sometimes intrusive surveillance – around the clock.
- **Voyeurism.** A *voyeur* is a peeping tom. Many commentators believe that reality shows have moved beyond surveillance into voyeurism. Audiences are positioned as peeping toms who gain pleasure from the exhibitionism of the participants.
- **Audience participation**. Fans are more than observers – they become participants in the narrative through their mobile phones. They can vote and comment of the people and events. Audience participation has proved to be an effective way of enticing viewers to become committed fans.

Settings for reality shows

The settings used for reality television programs are most often closed systems. In this respect, they are similar to soap operas or situation comedies.

Observational docusoaps are usually set in a 'small world' with a familiar set of characters. These characters interact with a constant flow of incoming strangers. Police docusoaps, customs and national security shows, and emergency services reality programs all work in this way. Often, the professional community has a 'them against us' siege mentality that helps to unite the lead characters.

Formulated docusoaps and programs based on game shows tend to operate within closed systems. Locations are specially designed to force contestants to live in certain ways (Figure 13.17). Locations can also force contestants to undergo physical challenges.



Chris Ridley - Internet Stock/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.17 Reality television locations are designed to force contestants into the sort of behaviour that makes good television.

13.5 ACTIVITIES

1 **Analyse** a chosen soap opera. **Describe** the plot development and the use of rotating plot lines, story expansion, cliff-hangers, etc. **Examine** the characterisation and compare it with the common stereotypes in soap operas. Also provide a comparison with the archetypal characters outlined by Propp (see page 237). **Describe** how the setting has been used to sustain the program over many episodes.

2 **Analyse** the plot structure of a sitcom. **Identify** the three main parts of the sitcom plot as they occur. **Describe** each stage (problem, complication and resolution) and provide a brief summary of events. Time the duration of each stage and record the results on a program timeline.

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ANIMATION

Animation is extraordinarily wide-ranging and flexible. It began with techniques as simple as flip books and mechanical amusement park devices based on 'persistence of vision' (the phi phenomenon).

The word animation comes from the Latin word '*animare*', which means 'to make alive'. Animation is a technique of cinematography that gives the illusion of movement to inanimate or still objects.

Traditionally, this meant photographing still objects or drawings and moving them bit by bit with each successive frame. Then the whole sequence would be played back at normal frame rates. However, computer-generated imagery has made it more difficult to determine just what animation is. For instance, is a computer-generated life form an animation? Are computerised recordings of a live actor's movements, which are then attached to an object, considered animation? Could video games be considered animation?

Types of animation

Animation can be divided into two broad strands traditional and computer animation. In each strand there are several types. These divisions tend to be about the method of production.

Traditional animation

Traditional techniques of animation were used for most of the 20th century:

- **Cel animation.** This type of animation is based on hand-drawn frames, each differing slightly from the previous one. The drawings are traced onto acetate sheets called cels and then hand painted. Each frame is then photographed and converted to a filmstrip.
- **Stop motion animation.** This technique involves real objects, such as clay figures, which are photographed and then moved slightly. When converted to a filmstrip, the objects appear to move. There are several popular types of stop motion animation.
- **Cut-outs** are pieces of paper or cloth that are moved bit by bit. The most famous examples include animations in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (1969-1974) and early episodes of *South Park* (1997–), which is now done by computer animation in cut-out style.
- **Claymation** involves creating objects or figures out of clay and then using stop motion to animate them.
- **Object animation** involves the use of models or objects that are moved slightly in each frame to give the impression of movement.

Computer animation

Computer animation techniques save a great deal of time. For example, the pilot episode of *South Park* (1997–) took three months to complete by traditional cut-out methods. However, the subsequent episodes have taken between one and three weeks to produce.

2D animations can be created on computers using bitmap or vector graphics.

3D animations can be created using a variety of techniques and dedicated programs. Advanced animation techniques such as 'photo-realistic' animation can closely mimic the appearance of real life.

Features of animation

Animation academic Paul Wells has isolated several attributes of the animation medium.

Metamorphosis

Metamorphosis means to change one thing into another. One of the key attributes of animation is its ability to 'morph' one shape into another. This technique is the very basis of the animation medium. Metamorphosis can join ideas and sequences together simply by animation technique rather than by editing.

> 'Animation is a compact medium; its strength is its conciseness. It's like a fruitcake, embracing many wonderful things in one tight space, and like a fruitcake, it can be very nutty.'
>
> **Howard Beckerman**, Animator for Terrytoons, Paramount and Sesame Street

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Much of the pleasure in animation comes from watching metamorphosis. The idea that a character can be squashed flat one minute, and then pull themselves up to full height the next is unique to animation.

Condensation

Animation is often a short media form. Details and stories are compressed. Even the information in the frame is compressed when compared to a live-action film. For example, the backgrounds used in a cartoon sequence show just enough information to convince an audience of the setting; however, a live-action film background contains even minute detail.

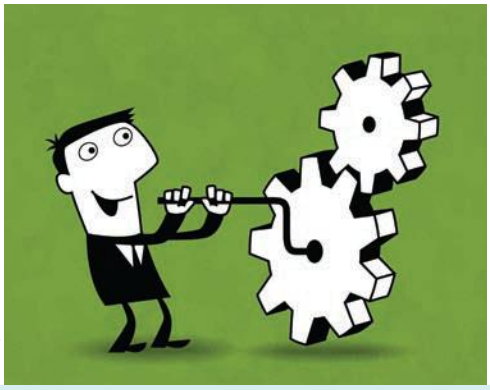
Symbolism and metaphor

A symbol is a sign that stands for something else. For example, a peace sign stands for the concept of the absence of war. A metaphor is a comparison that suggests one thing is like another. In live-action films, the use of symbols and metaphors is somewhat restricted because of audience expectations.

For example, if a character is knocked out and 'sees stars' metaphorically, an animation can actually show this. Similarly, a light bulb can be drawn to symbolise the arrival of an idea.

Fabrication

Animations create an alternative world, which has many of the same properties as the real world. American animators of the 20th century, such as those who worked at Walt Disney or Warner Brothers, made great efforts to make sure that their fabricated world operated according to the same laws as the physical world (Figure 13.18).



AndriyA/Shutterstock.com

Figure 13.18 Animators create an alternative world but go to great lengths to ensure that it operates according to the same laws as the real physical world. Laws of movement and laws of gravity are two of the most basic that must be replicated in the world of the animation.

They developed a set of principles that linked their animations to the laws of physics – gravity being one of them. These real-world laws could only be broken with the trust of the audience.

Choreography

The dynamics of movement is fundamental to the process of animation, argues Paul Wells. Animation is about motion and many animators have pointed out that it is a kind of dance – whether it is objects, drawings or computer-generated imagery. As with dance, animated stories are often played out in movement and actions.

13.6 ACTIVITIES

1. Symbols and metaphor are used widely in animations and cartoons. **Describe** two of the of common ones that seem to appear regularly.
2. Collect some sequences showing metamorphosis as animation. **Evaluate** them according to their ability to convince the audience and the smoothness of the transition. **Evaluate** whether the 'morph' seems to obey basic laws of physics and nature, even if it is unrealistic.
3. Compare an animation background to a similar one in a movie. Examples could include landscape or cityscape backgrounds. **Describe** the level of detail you can see in the movie versus the animation.

ADVERTISING AND PERSUASIVE MOVING-IMAGE MEDIA

Advertising

Some products sell themselves: people just need things. When consumers have a choice of brand in necessities, advertising may help decide that choice. **Point-of-sale advertising** can be important for emergent needs, such as a car that needs charging or filling. Advertisers will argue their **ad campaigns** will make the difference in the subconscious consumer impulse to select one retailer over another.

The real art of advertising is to sell the audience something they did not know they needed. Sales of luxury goods beyond the essentials of life are heavily reliant on marketing.

> 'Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half.'
>
> **John Wanamaker (1838–1922)**, US department store owner

Advertising objectives

The aim of an advertisement (or ad) is not always to create an immediate sale. Advertisers must first decide whether they are selling a product, service or 'concept'. Rather than sell a particular item, **corporate** (or **institutional**) **advertising** builds brand loyalty. This often comes to soften consumers before a price rise or to boost environmental credentials in what has been dubbed '**green-washing**'.

Elias St. Elmo Lewis explained selling as an education process moving through attention, interest and desire to action. His '**marketing funnel**' model is widely used to direct people to a purchase.

1 Attention

The first stage is an awareness of the issue, product or service so the first role of the **creatives** in the advertising agency is to grab attention, making visual appeal a priority. This stage is perceived as the wide end of the marketing funnel, with the maximum potential audience. The number of people exposed to the ad is the **reach** and how often the ad is seen is the **frequency**. Non-interactive media can charge on this basis with a premium for high-spending viewers. The biggest reach mass-media program in the world is the US Super Bowl final, charging $10 million for 30 seconds in 2024, for 123 million simultaneous viewers.

Advertising material aims to standout with a point of difference. The **hook** is the element designed to 'ensnare' the audience early in the message. The hook can be a music **jingle** or **slogan**. Visually, it may be colour and movement, or a striking or surreal image aimed at keeping attention until a **product shot** prompts action.

2 Interest

The potential customer engages by lingering on a webpage, actively researching or walking into a shop. Finding audiences interested in the product depends on selecting platforms with potential customers. **Demographic** information on audiences will help target the advertisement's placement. Luxury items must target those with **discretionary spending** available in their budget.

3 Desire

This step is where the consumer wants the product. It is sometimes said that all advertising works on either greed or guilt. Audiences may wish to be a fitter or greener citizen. Products can offer ways to alleviate this guilt, even if the core problem cannot be fixed. Greed drives the audience to want better quality or more than they currently have. Highly perfected visuals are applied to objects, people and food to heighten desirability. Another form of greed is 'fear of missing out' or **FOMO**.

Products with no inherent benefit must have a need for them invented. Cigarette companies often implied sexual success for smokers in the 20th century, even though the product itself was lethal.

4 Action

The final step in Lewis's linear hierarchy is action. For the **call-to-action** to be most effective, the audience should be able to access a '**frictionless purchase**'. This means minimising obstacles (or 'friction') to buying a product or changing brand loyalty. The consumer wants the product, now!



Weblinks

Video advertising and marketing statistics

TikTok is bad for your brain

Creating for platform audiences

Different platforms have defined aspect ratios (see page 57) and can also have varying durations, which will determine the placement of the hook and product shot.

Platform variation

- **Television ads.** Linear TV ad formats are commonly 30 seconds. This allows a hook to keep viewers from leaving the room or muting the sound. The ad cannot be 'skipped' so there can be a mystery to the product reveal. Product shots can be placed at the end. Ads can be designed with text remaining on screen to view in fast forward.
- **Infotainment ads.** Infotainment programs are designed to tap existing audience interest. The ads are embedded, assuming the audience has chosen to watch. Engagement is with the narrative, character

or the 'how-to' instructions. A slower pace can demonstrate the full use of the product or real-world relevance to the customer.

- **'Bumper' ads**. YouTube **bumper ads** cannot be skipped. Originally placed before and after broadcast ad breaks, bumpers are short messages before the program content. The clips are up to 6 seconds long. A short time between the hook and the call-to-action means no long narratives are possible. However, viewing of the whole ad can be assumed.
- **'How-to' ads.** YouTube sponsored 'How-to' content has no guarantee that the audience will watch the entire process of instruction. The product must be declared early, along with the purpose of the video post. Credibility of a presenter may hold an audience for the 'sweet-spot' of around 2 minutes.
- **Facebook ads.** Facebook experts say around 10 seconds is the best length for an advertisement in a user's feed. Two minutes is possible, but one in four Facebook videos held the audience for under 3 seconds. Autoplay functions that start the video muted means that the initial sound must be designed as 'throw-away'. Any information should be restated and visuals need to carry all of the initial interest.
- **TikTok ads.** The typical length of TikTok ads is between 5 and 60 seconds, with different types in profiles and feeds. Platform statistics show that TikTok viewers will often scroll away after 3 seconds. Ads appear to be the same as other TikToks but then link directly to product pages.
- **Instagram ads.** Instagram allows 90-second reels, but 60-second ads. Some regard 30 seconds as an optimal video length, although this platform has a slick aesthetic. A well-polished presentation is needed to hold attention.
- **Snapchat ads.** Peak engagement on Snapchat occurs at around 10-second video lengths. The platform is strong in the 15–25-year-old demographic and can accommodate stills, **gifs** or videos up to 3 minutes.
- X. Maximum video length on X is 2 minutes and 20 seconds, and for ads it is only between 6 and 15 seconds.
- **Linked In.** Video ads can run from 3 seconds to 30 minutes. Under 15 seconds is recommended, with the platfom mostly promoting conferences and career-related opportunities.

Differential pricing

Consumers in different locations can be offered the same product for a different price based on geography and screen behaviour. Purchasers who revisit a site multiple times may be **nudged** to buy through increasing prices that respond to the number of visits. Professor Patrik Wikstrom, at Queensland University of Technology's (QUT's) Digital Media Research Centre, believes that TikTok has a certain data advantage. He says that four to five swipes per minute produces more data about content preferences because of the high rate of interactions.

Differential messaging

Online sellers can market any product to match the users' preferences, according to Dan Angus, professor of digital communication at QUT. His research shows that modern advertising lacks 'observability' through niche delivery to individuals: it may be that no two people see exactly the same mix of ads in their feed. Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is producing specific '**ad copy**' (scripted text) for individual audiences based on interests known from aspects of their digital footprint.

13.7 ACTIVITIES

1 **Analyse** advertising placement in advertainment/infotainment. View a segment of lifestyle programming. Systematically record products within the segment and their integration in the content. Consider the influence the product placement may have over production practices and processes.
Apply your knowledge of the contexts of production and use to write a short summary, based on evidence in analysis, about the institutional framework or infotainment production.

2 **Apply** advertising copy conventions for various contexts. Select an existing product with attached branding. **Systematically arrange** ad copy and duration of messaging and placement of hooks for the purpose of promoting the product. Modify the conventions according to the **context** of a:
   a lifestyle segment ad
   b 30 second TV ad
   c YouTube bumper ad
   d Facebook ad
   e TikTok ad.

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TYPES OF PRODUCTION TASKS – MAP

Within the media industry there are various production types that clients could request. Media Arts in Practice incorporates the requirements of the industry through the production of assessment types by splitting them into three categories:

- still image
- moving image
- audio.

Still image productions

While the media industry is dominated by moving-image media, still images continue to play a large role in the industry through marketing and advertising, as well as other forms of persuasion. Photographers have the ability to manipulate and influence audiences to feel empathy, understanding and interest, all with a single image.

What is a still image?

A still image is a static or non-moving visual representation captured by a camera or created using digital imaging software such as what is used on a smartphone. It is a single frame that freezes a moment in time, conveying a specific scene, subject or concept.

Contexts of use for still images

Still images are widely used across various sectors of the media and content creation industries, including:

1. **Journalism and news media.** Photographs document real-world events, people and places to accompany news articles and stories.
2. **Advertising and marketing.** Images are used to promote products, services and brands, often designed to evoke specific emotions or convey particular messages.
3. **Entertainment.** Still images are used in movies, TV shows and video games as concept art, storyboards and marketing materials.
4. **Social media.** Photographs are a primary form of content shared on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, enabling users to visually communicate their experiences and ideas or to present their branding.
5. **Fine art.** Artistic photographers create images as a form of creative expression, often exploring various themes, techniques and styles.
6. **E-commerce.** Product photographs are essential for online retailers to showcase their offerings and provide visual information to potential customers.

Types of still images

Still images are more than just photographs. They play an integral role in persuasive texts such as advertising and can communicate meaning in various subtle ways. Still images have evolved and changed over time and advanced alongside modern technology, offering new possibilities with the persuasiveness of still images.

Digital illustration

Closely linked with visual art, digital illustration involves the same skills required for regular artworks, but the images are created entirely digitally. In the media and content creation industries, digital illustration plays a crucial role in visual communication and storytelling.

Defining digital illustration. Digital illustration in still images refers to the process of creating artwork, designs or visual representations using digital tools and software within the context of media and content creation industries. The increasing demand for digital illustration across various platforms has made it an essential skill for media artists looking to establish successful careers in these industries.

Applying digital illustration. Digital illustration encompasses a wide range of applications, including:

1. **Concept art.** Digital illustrators create visual representations of characters, environments and objects for movies, video games and other forms of media. These illustrations help establish a project's overall look and feel before it enters production.
2. **Advertising and marketing.** Digital illustrations create eye-catching and engaging visuals for advertisements, social media posts, billboards and other promotional materials. They can effectively communicate brand messages and capture the attention of target audiences.
3. **Editorial and publishing.** Magazines, newspapers and online publications often use digital illustrations to accompany articles, stories

MAP SYLLABUS

and editorials. These illustrations can help convey complex ideas, set the tone and enhance the reading experience.

4 **Character design.** Digital illustrators create unique and memorable characters for various forms of media, such as animated films, comics and video games. These characters are designed to be visually appealing, expressive and consistent with the overall style and theme of the project.

Graphic art

Digital graphic art refers to visual artwork that is created, edited and displayed using digital technologies and tools. This form of art is primarily designed for digital platforms such as websites, social media, mobile applications and other electronic media. Digital graphic art is based more on line and tone rather than three-dimensional artworks, such as the creation of a film poster or album artworks for musical artists.

Differences with digital illustration. While digital illustration and digital graphic art share some similarities, there are four distinct differences between the two:

1 **Purpose:**
- Digital illustration often focuses on creating artwork that tells a story, conveys emotions or represents a concept. It is commonly used in contexts such as book illustrations, concept art and character design.
- Digital graphic art, on the other hand, is more oriented towards visual communication and problem-solving. It is often used for branding, logos, layouts and other design elements that require a balance of aesthetics and functionality.

2 **Approach:**
- Digital illustration tends to be more freeform and expressive, allowing the artist to develop a unique style and create artwork that is open to interpretation.
- Digital graphic art often follows established design principles, such as hierarchy, balance and consistency, to create visuals that effectively communicate a specific message or serve a particular purpose (Figure 13.20).

3 **Tools and techniques:**
- Digital illustrators often use software tools that mimic traditional drawing and painting techniques, such as Adobe Photoshop, Procreate or Corel Painter. They may create their artwork using digital brushes, textures and layering techniques.
- Digital graphic artists primarily use vector-based software, such as Adobe Illustrator or Affinity Designer, which allows for creating scalable and precise graphics. They may also use tools such as grids, shapes and typography to create clean and structured designs.

4 **Outcome:**
- Digital illustrations are often stand-alone pieces of art that can be appreciated for their aesthetic value and emotional impact.



Emmanuel LATTES/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.19 Digital illustrations allow for media artists to create artwork intended to be distributed digitally. This form of artwork allows media artists to use similar techniques but the freedom to edit and adjust the image for online distribution.

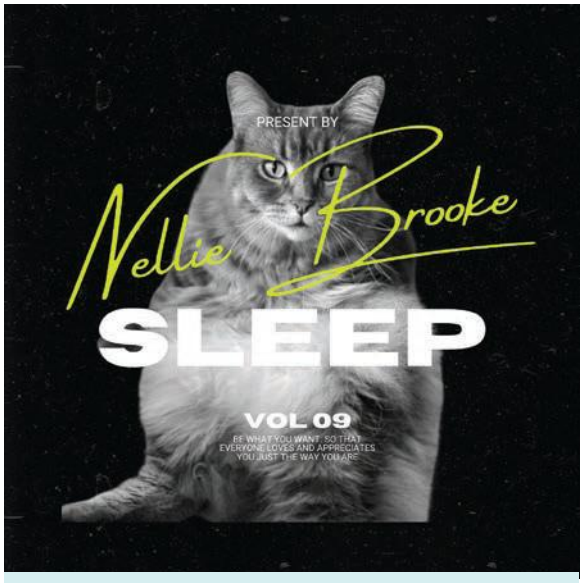


Figure 13.20 An album artwork cover created using Canva. Through the study of typography, colour theory and artist branding, the media artist can apply graphic art skills to create an album artwork for their client. The still image communicates the artists identity and personal viewpoint through the use of image, text and colour.

MAP SYLLABUS

– Digital graphic art is usually part of a larger design system or project, such as a website, app or marketing campaign, and is created to fulfil a specific communication goal.

Photography

Digital photography refers to capturing, editing and sharing photographs using digital devices, such as smartphones, digital cameras and computers. It has largely replaced traditional film photography due to its convenience, immediacy and versatility in the digital age.

Print media

Print media refers to traditional forms of media that are physically printed on paper, such as newspapers, magazines, books, brochures and flyers. Despite the rapid growth and dominance of digital media, print media continues to exist and adapt to the changing media landscape. Print media includes all forms of physical printed publications, such as newspapers, magazines, newsletters and billboards.

While the digital era has undoubtedly disrupted the print media industry, it has found ways to coexist and adapt, catering to the preferences and needs of specific audiences while also leveraging digital platforms to enhance its offerings. Here are a few ways in which print media continues to survive in the digital era:

- **Niche audiences.** Some print publications cater to specific niche audiences who prefer the tactile experience of reading physical copies or who may not have access to digital devices.
- **Credibility and trust.** Many readers still associate print media with credibility and journalistic integrity, as the process of printing and distributing physical copies often involves more rigorous fact-checking and editorial oversight compared to some online publications.
- **Complementary to digital media.** Many print publications have adapted by creating complementary digital versions or by using digital platforms to enhance their print offerings, such as providing QR codes or URLs for additional content.
- **Advertising.** While digital advertising has grown significantly, print media still attracts advertisers who value the tangible and lasting nature of print advertisements, as well as the targeted reach of specific publications.
- **Collectibility and memorabilia.** Some print media, such as limited-edition magazines, books or newspapers covering significant events, hold value as collectables or memorabilia.
- **Local and community news.** Local newspapers and community-focused print publications continue to serve audiences who value news and information specific to their area, which larger digital media outlets may not adequately cover.
- **Sensory experience.** Many readers still enjoy the tactile sensation of holding and reading a physical copy, appreciating the smell of the paper and the experience of turning pages.

Web-based media

Web-based media refers to digital content distributed and consumed over the internet through web browsers. This includes a wide range of content formats and platforms, such as:

- **Websites.** Informational, entertainment or e-commerce websites offer text, images, videos and interactive features.
- **Blogs.** Online journals or informational sites used by individuals or organisations to publish regular entries or articles.
- **Social media.** Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn allow users to create, share and interact with content.
- **Streaming services.** Video and audio streaming platforms such as YouTube, Netflix, Spotify and podcasts deliver content on-demand.
- **Web applications.** Browser-based software applications perform specific functions, such as productivity tools, email clients or online gaming.
- **Online news and magazines.** Digital versions of newspapers, magazines and other news outlets used to publish content on their websites.

Moving-image productions

Moving-image media has become increasingly prevalent in the digital age, with the rise of online video platforms and streaming services making this type of content more accessible and popular than ever before. Moving-image media refers to any form of visual content that creates the illusion

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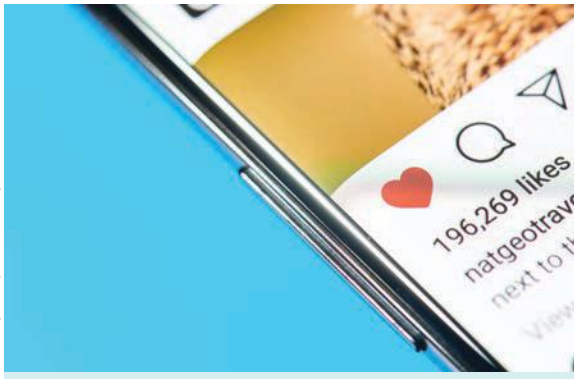
of motion by rapidly displaying a sequence of images.

Moving-image media is split into:

- **animation** – this can include 2D, 3D or stop motion animation
- **interactive technologies** – interactive technologies allow for the audience to use or engage with the media artwork to a greater extent. This can include interactive television series (where the audience can control the choices of the characters), video games (where the audience can directly control the character through an avatar) or online website guided tours (where the audience can use a cursor to move around the 3D space
- **live-action film** – a film that is created using real-life actors and locations
- **short-form video** – usually created for social media distribution, such on TikTok
- **video log** – also known as a **vlog**, this is a form of blog that is recorded using video, and it usually accompanied by text, images and other information to engage the audience
- **virtual tour** – such as a real estate video where audiences can attend an open house through a self-guided tour of the property.

Audio productions

Audio refers to the sound elements that accompany the visual content. Audio encompasses various types, including dialogue, music, sound effects, ambience, Foley and narration.



Dzmitry Kliapitski/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.21 A social media user capturing an image of a bird and sharing to Instagram. Instagram images allow media artists to share still images with short descriptions and tags. Audiences can instantly engage in the media artwork provided with likes comments and sharing options.



Olga Demina/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.22 A social media influencer recording a TikTok beauty blogger video. TikTok videos allow audiences to engage in smaller bursts of content while still communicating a clear message. Social media such as TikTok is web-based media that incorporate moving-image creation.

In production, audio is often recorded separately from the video and then synchronised during the post-production stage. High-quality audio is essential for creating an immersive and engaging experience for the audience. It enhances the overall impact of the visual content. Audio quality is equally important, as many platforms rely on clear and concise audio to effectively convey information or entertain viewers. Audio can be categorised as:

- **Foley** and sound effects – creating sound effects in post-production using regular items (Foley) or digitally created sounds (effects) to enhance the engagement of the media artwork (see page 366)
- **podcast** – a digital audio program that contains various episodes that can be accessed via a digital platform (Figure 13.23). Podcasts allow the media



John B Hewitt/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.23 *Serial* podcast series investigates one true crime story per season. Podcasts focus on the aural experience for audiences, but have transformed over time.

MAP SYLLABUS

artist to be creative in the way they use and engage with sound. This could result in radio dramas, release of the visual recordings via social media or the addition of sound effects to enhance engagement

- **soundscape** – the use of sound and music to create the atmosphere of a story being told for the characters in that world. These sounds can be background noises such as cars driving, sound effects such as a door slamming closed or musical instruments that can imitate a sound such as a violin string sounding like a clothesline.

Promotional media/film posters

Moving-image media requires promotion through various forms of media in order to reach the intended audience. This can result in advertising material such as film posters. Film posters, although traditionally still image, allow for the media artist to advertise the film by providing visual representations of the mood and genre of the project. Film posters should engage the audience with the use of thought-provoking visuals and colour. Posters are continuing to transform, with digital posters becoming more common in cinemas, bus stops and buildings. Digital posters allow for moving-image media advertisement and combine the artistic value of still-image posters with the advertising possibilities of film trailers.

Short-form video content

The rise of short-form content on social media platforms is a complex phenomenon shaped by the interplay among platform architecture, aesthetics, user behaviour and algorithmic culture.

Defining short-form production

Short-form content in social media refers to concise, easily digestible pieces of media designed to capture and hold users' attention within a brief timeframe. This type of content is common on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts. Different platforms will offer different contexts for how short-form content appears.

Short-form culture

Platforms shape the type of content created and consumed by users through their design choices and algorithmic recommendations.



BFA/Alamy Stock Photo

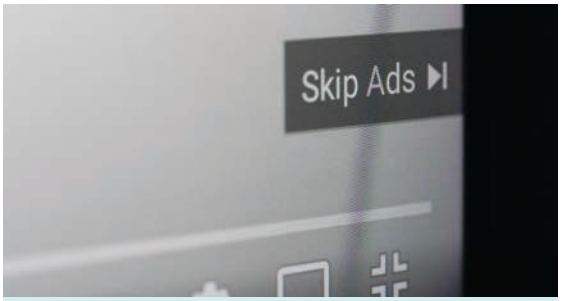
Figure 13.24 The *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) poster captures the main characters from various collections of films and places them in a hierarchical structure of importance with Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr) at the top. The *Marvel* franchise often uses this poster structure for all their films to excite audiences without giving any plot away.

TikTok is a prime example of how platform design and aesthetics influence content creation. The app's short-form video structure often limits videos to 15–60 seconds. This has given rise to a distinct style of content characterised by quick cuts, catchy music and attention-grabbing visuals. This format encourages creators to produce content that is immediately engaging and easily consumable, leading to the proliferation of dance challenges, lip-sync videos and comedic skits tailored to the platform's unique aesthetic.

The rise of short-form content and its relationship to platform design and aesthetics can be understood within the broader context of media, content creation industry, platform aesthetics, platform culture and algorithmic culture. It has had the following impacts:

1 **Media.** Short-form content has transformed the media landscape, challenging traditional storytelling and information dissemination. It has also led to the emergence of new media formats and the adaptation of existing ones to suit the preferences of digital natives.
2 **Content creation industry.** The demand for short-form content has given rise to a new

MAP SYLLABUS



PixieMe/Adobe Stock

Figure 13.25 YouTube's option to skip ads in 5 seconds reshaped content creation, particularly in advertising. Producers were forced to shape the message so that viewers see the key message within the first 5 seconds.

generation of content creators specialising in producing platform-specific content. This has disrupted the traditional content creation industry and led to the emergence of new business models, such as influencer marketing and brand partnerships.

3 **Platform aesthetics.** Each social media platform has its unique aesthetic, which is shaped by its design, features and user base. These aesthetics, in turn, dictate the type of content created and consumed on the platform, leading to the development of platform-specific subcultures and trends.
4 **Platform culture.** Short-form content has given rise to new forms of cultural expression and social interaction on social media platforms. Memes, challenges and viral trends have become integral parts of platform culture, shaping how users communicate and connect.
5 **Algorithmic culture.** The success of short-form content is largely dependent on the algorithms that power social media platforms. As a result, content creators must optimise their content to appeal to these algorithms, leading to the development of new strategies and best practices for content creation and promotion.

MAP SYLLABUS

13.8 ACTIVITIES

1 **Analyse** three short segments from different podcasts focusing on various social issues, such as *Serial*, *Sounds like a Cult* and *Normal Gossip*. This can be done in three groups with each group reporting back on one podcast segment. **Describe** the use of sound and editing techniques in each segment. **Interpret** how these techniques shape the podcasts' treatment of their given social issues.
2 **Analyse** a still-image digital illustration that represents a social issue. **Identify** the visual techniques employed by the digital illustration. **Interpret** the way that these visual techniques represent the social issue.
3 **Analyse** a still-image billboard advertisement for a university with a still-image digital advertisement for a university. **Identify** the techniques used in both images to advertise the universities. Consider how the different media contexts – billboard versus digital – shape the techniques used. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of each billboard advertisement given their use of techniques and media contexts. **Create** two alternative still images and one digital billboard for the same business using Canva.

DIGITAL BILLBOARDS AND DISPLAYS, INSTALLATIONS AND CORPORATE DISPLAYS

Digital billboards and displays

A digital billboard is an electronic sign displaying advertising imagery that changes every 10–15 seconds or so. The billboard is controlled by a computer. Digital **billboards** often function with a purely commercial purpose for advertising products or businesses. They can also serve a public service purpose. Local public awareness campaigns or attendance at events also suit promotion in this format (see page 275).

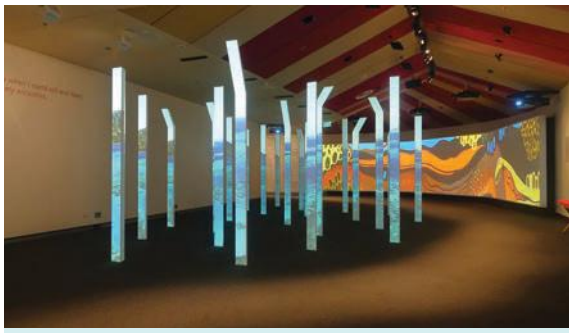
Displays can take the form of video loops or a series of still, constructed images or photos accompanied by audio with a set duration. Fixed visual displays can also be brought to life with persuasive and emotive narration or sound effects of historic artefacts in use. Video and audio may play on a continuous loop within a display space, or be triggered by visitor entry.

Digital installations

Art installations are works that involve movement of the audience through the space in a more immersive way than sculpture in galleries and museums (Figure 13.26). Installations often involve digital media. Audio loops,

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Photo/D Sinclair/National Museum of Australia

Figure 13.26 The digital display 'Message Sticks' shows images projected from ceiling mounted projectors in the National Museum, Canberra. Landscape representations are revealed on each vertical surface of the sticks as the audience moves through. Diverse climate environments of Indigenous language groups become immersive with the walk-through design.

still images and short-form video can be integrated with the installation space. They don't have to be restricted to a rectangular television screen (see page 75).

Building screens into the display, projections, cropping and distorting are ways that video screens can be modified for artistic expression. Video content can also be abstract expressionist, presenting only shape, colour, line or movement, without any recognisable subject. Still images of photographs or related artwork can provide a backdrop the artist can curate to portray a personal viewpoint.

Audio tracks can draw viewer attention to one aspect at a time, adding to a sense of journey. Immersive displays should guide, not direct, leaving the audience with the freedom to vary the experience. This becomes important in peak times when a display is at capacity. Crowds should be able to self-navigate around bottlenecks rather than abandon the queue.

Corporate displays

Displays are commonly constructed to educate or persuade the public regarding a company's proposed project. Community consultation is often a condition for large projects that impact others. Businesses may also wish to maintain an image as 'good corporate citizens' as part of their brand. Multimodal displays may feature scale models, design drawings, audio testimonials, photographs with infographics or explanatory videos. A sense of 'journey of discovery' should inform the planning of a display that is robust enough for safe public interaction with the exhibits.

Weblinks

Snowy Hydro Discovery Centre

Snowy Hydro Discovery Centre Stories: testimonial community of the past

MAP SYLLABUS

13.9 ACTIVITIES

1 **Create** a series of four screen images and accompanying text to promote an event related to your school following conventions of a digital billboard. Persuade the audience to attend by moving from attention, to interest, desire to attend and call-to-action. Time, place and cost information should be included.

2 **Create** an audio production for an installation. Source four historic photos from your family or local community to display securely in a thoroughfare. Construct a multilayered soundscape with audio elements from each of the scenes. **Script** and **record** a monologue that fits the context of one of the photographs, preferably a character. **Plan** the audio to **manipulate** audience attention to one particular image.

THE LOGO

Logos are an arrangement of visual elements placed in advertising or on the product itself. Image, text and signature colours can be combined to form a single recognisable element. Repeated exposure to the logo is part of creating a product identity or placing it within a corporate family of connected products.

Branding and marketing

The total advertising strategy should align with the company or product. This consistency of the message with the brand is **congruency**. The brand personality is based on the company reputation, character associations and aesthetics. Established brands consult **focus groups** to test responses to new products and campaigns.

Logo types

Logo designs generate meaning in different ways. These can be grouped according to the degree of direct visual connection to the product.

Text based

Some logos create meaning as **signifiers** (see page 44), using words. The meaning is 'pointed to' by the visual figures of the letters. These logo types include:

- **letterform** – usually the first single letter as an abbreviation of the company name
- **lettermark** – two letters that represent the company name

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- **monogram** – two letters with an overlapping or integrated design
- **wordmark** – the entire name in a selected, consistent font
- **emblems** (or badge) based on text – there is a distinct outline containing one of the above lettering types.

Icon based

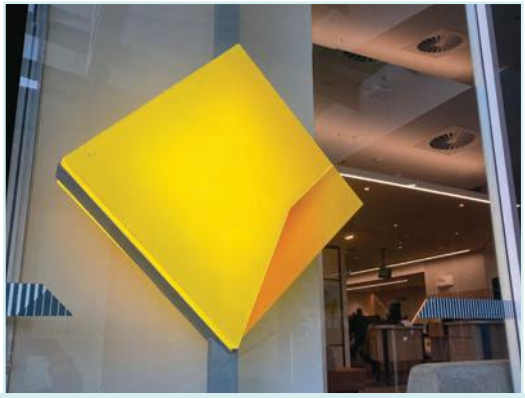
Image-based logos can function as **icons**, where they resemble the product or service in some way. These logo types include:

- **pictorial** – actual photographs or line drawings, such as a traditional village as the source of a food product (Figure 13.27)
- **illustrative** – a stylised version of the product, such as a simplified shape or a tone drop-out version of a landscape photo
- **mascot** – the inclusion of a character, animal or business owner, whether real or fictitious
- **emblems** (or badge) based on image – there is a distinct outline containing one of the above images.



Logo/D. Sinclair

Figure 13.27 Where a pictorial logo is overly detailed, or an illustrative logo is complex, additional text may be needed. The unconventional font in this example relies on alignment to explain the image, and the image justifies the variety in the font.



Rose Marinelli/Shutterstock.com

Figure 13.28 The Commonwealth Bank logo does not have direct visual connection with banking, but links to Australia and its national symbols. The corners of the square logo represent the stars of the Southern Cross, including the indent for the dimmest star; Epsilon Crucis.

Symbol based

Logos are **symbols** if they do not resemble the business product or activity. They are often abstract and might use metaphors, such as using a tree as a symbol of growth. Highly abstract logos rely on advertising to establish a cognitive link for the audience.

Logo type combinations

Combination logos often pair an icon with words and letters in a special font that seems to provide a product link for the audience. Companies with web-based access sometimes need to incorporate online addresses into the logo while still remaining readable.

Dynamic logos: 4D presentation

Moving-image media allows for logos to be animated on screen. Logo designs can adapt to exploit emerging technology, in line with audience potential. Television broadcasters required to identify their transmissions use the opportunity for logo branding. Graphics software and file size compression available for files such as **GIFs (Graphic Interchange Format)** allow logos built for moving-image media. Motion allows designers to use the elements of form and space in a different way.

High recognition assets

The aim of logos and distinctive design elements is to create a shortcut for instant audience associations. Each exposure builds familiarity, whether a local business or international brand. Businesses do not have to explain their product from the beginning in each ad if they can deploy a high recognition asset, such as the McDonald's 'Golden Arches'.



Logo/ D. Sinclair

Figure 13.29 Contrasting colours are used to separate text from image, while the blue text suggests a hyperlink. Local business owners may have non-negotiable ideas, such as the literal representation of time for this motorcycle rental service.

Weblinks

Logopedia

Fandom: Seven network logos

Ad Inception: Freedom Furniture

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M. Timothy O'Keefe/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.30 The McDonald's logo is so well known that fragments are still recognisable as an advertisement. In this example, all that is needed are the yellow shapes of french fries combined with a red box for viewers to make a connection.

Trailers are often considered a primary advertising tool for movies. However, *Barbie* (2023) leveraged the existing high recognition asset of Mattel: hot pink (Figure 13.31). Generations linking the doll with a potent brand symbol fed into becoming the most successful toy-based movie ever.

Creating a logo

Finding an original and creative solution to a logo design problem is challenging. Similarities to competitors can be unproductive and may be illegal. Hand-drawing a wide range of rough ideas is a more creative way to start drafting than using a digital template.

Resolve designs by following some basic principles:

- Dominant imagery should be constructed according to the product or perception being sold. Viewers' eyes are drawn to bold, central elements. This focus is reinforced by leading lines and the relative size of elements.
- Secondary elements are placed for the eye to move to. Arrows, contrasts, framing and cultural reading direction are important factors in predicting the eye-track.
- Alignment between visual elements, text and margins affects balance and other principles of design (see Chapter 7, page 94).
- Contrasts command attention, but consistency and harmony need to counteract this in other elements of design. For example, where there is strong contrast in colour, there would commonly be consistency in shape or size.
- Negative space (also called white space) is part of the graphic communication, including around and between the figures. Space can shift emphasis.
- Colour choice can embody contrast by being opposite on the colour wheel (complementary) or communicate harmony by using analogous colours (adjacent on the colour wheel). Limit the number of colours.
- Any included text must be readable. Consider the typical size and brevity of the viewing opportunity for the audience. Font choice should not allow letters to merge together for miscommunication at a distance.



Kay Roxby/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.31 'Barbie pink' has such strong association that almost blank billboards around the world successfully promoted the movie. The only text was the release date in the corner.

MAP SYLLABUS

13.10 ACTIVITIES

1 **Design** a series of text-based logos for your own name. **Sketch** one distinctly different solution for each of the five types listed.
2 **Design** a door knob 'I'm studying' sign for you home. List all of the items you associate with the act of studying or homework. Convert the list into images of the items. **Sketch** an icon representation of each object using six lines. Reduce each icon to four, then two lines. **Justify** the minimum number of lines needed to depict the object. Combine the minimum number of icons to convey a study infographic. **Resolve** the design as a functional colour print door knob sign.
3 **Create** an animated dynamic logo for an existing 2D logo. Identify a brand with a 2D logo and **sketch** a 3D version. **Design** a storyboard sequence to show a transition of assembling of the 3D elements. **Create** a short motion sequence using frame-by-frame animatic drawing, animation, 3D animation tool or keyframes within a video editing program. Produce an mp4 or gif file.

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14 Stages of production

STAGES OF MEDIA PRODUCTION

Supposedly anyone can make a video these days. Just look on YouTube if you want to see shaky camera shots, poor focus and little or no editing. Poor productions are all over the internet. For some, the idea of a start and finish seems to be jerky shots of the camera being turned on and off.

Film, Television & New Media (FTVNM) students want something better than that. One of the main reasons for studying Media is to become a creator of polished productions – ones that look impressive. That means having a good understanding of media production processes and being able to take a quality project through from concept to finished product, knowing that it is your creation (Figures 14.1 and 14.2).

All media productions, in whatever form or medium, go through five basic stages (Figures 14.3 and 14.4). All the while, the needs and interests of the audience have to be kept in mind. Without an audience, all the effort will go unseen.



Figure 14.1 Production is one of the most enjoyable aspects of FTVNM. Each production will boost your skills. The finished product will be something you will want to show your friends and family. It will also be a record of your school days long into the future.



Figure 14.2 Students shooting off the storyboard. Quality media productions involve pre-production planning as well as carefully prepared production stages.

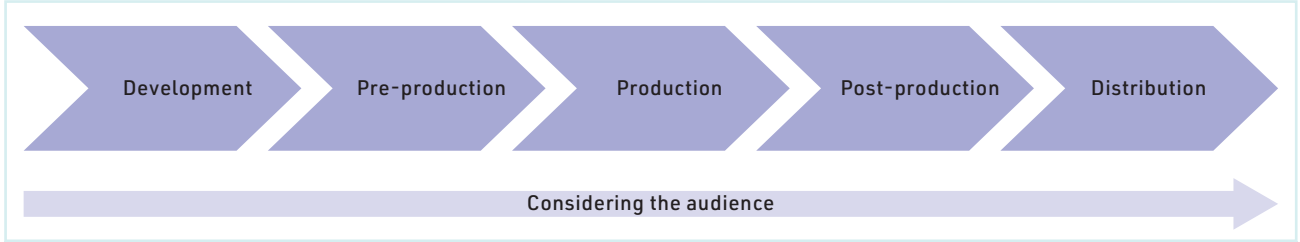


Figure 14.3 The five stages of media production. Across the whole creation process, the audience is what it is all about.

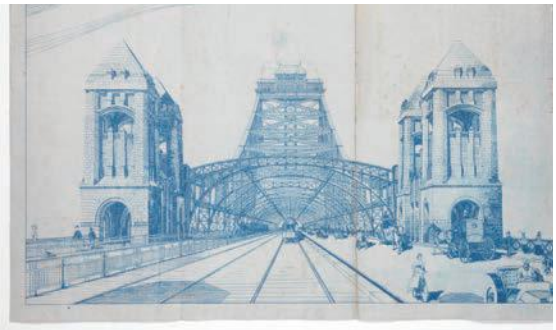
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a Development



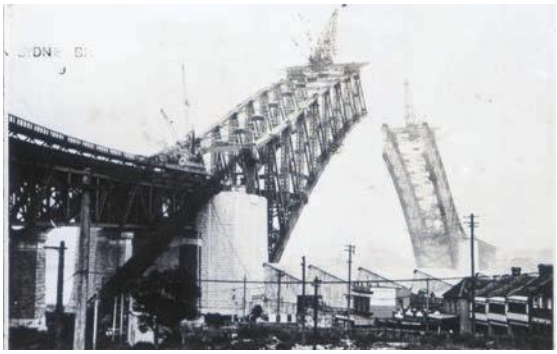
State Library of New South Wales

b Pre-production



State Library of New South Wales

c Production



AA Images/Alamy Stock Photo

d Post-production



MEzairi/Shutterstock.com

e Distribution



MEzairi/Shutterstock.com

Figure 14.4 a-e The five stages of production applied to the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Development is the ideation and experimentation stage. Pre-production is the planning stage. Production is the making stage. Post-production adds all the special effects. Distribution is the stage of exhibition to particular audiences.

Development

Development is the process of bringing a media product to the production stage. Development starts with the beginning of the idea and ends after the arrangements for production are made. Usually this can happen quite quickly, over a period of six months to a year. Sometimes it can be a lengthy process. For example, the movie *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* (2003) spent eight years in the concept development stage.

In the case of the film industry, only a very small number of productions (~10%) begin with a newly pitched script. According to film analyst John Harrington, around 30 per cent of all films ever made are adaptations from novels. Including plays and short stories may bring the figure up towards 60 per cent.

FTVNM and Media Arts in Practice (MAP) students see the development stage as a chance to research, examine and respond to exciting media texts.

Investigating

Once you know you are making a production, the way you consume media will change. You will need to approach every media text the way a writer or creator would. Pull the text apart and see how it works. Ask yourself the following investigative questions:

- What is the best thing about this media text?
- How was that done? (Analyse how they did that scene, photograph, magazine, etc.)
- What is there to admire about the use of production techniques (such as editing or lighting)?

Research

Making a good media production requires research. Sometimes this can be formal research using a library or the internet. However, it can also be 'immersive research'. This kind of research involves immersing yourself in the experience that you want to provide for your audience. For example, if you are producing a media text about markets, it is good research to go and sit in the markets for a half day and observe as much as you can. Talk to stallholders. Walk along and feel what it is like for the visitors. The recordings and notes you make can then inspire your ideas for the production.

Pre-production

The planning stage of media production is called pre-production. This is a very loose term that covers everything that needs to be done before the stage of making the production.

More exact definitions depend on the size of the production company:

- A small production company will include almost all activity in the pre-production stage. For example, the pre-production stage for a film company might include research, meeting with finance people, location planning and scripting.
- A large production company will be more specific about what is done at this stage. For example, a film company will source all their financing, casting, staffing and even their scripting in advance – well before what they term 'pre-production'. Pre-production for a large company may then involve scheduling, location scouting and special-effects preparation. The script will be broken down into detailed scenes. All actors will have been involved in at least one read through.
- FTVNM and MAP students see pre-production as the stage when outlines, treatments, storyboards and scripts are drawn up. Pre-production plans could also include:
  - ideas generation
  - audience targeting
  - planning for casting, locations, etc.
  - production timelines.

Production

The production stage is the making stage. It tends to mean the same thing irrespective of the size of the company. Production for a film is the stage at which the footage is recorded.

- A small production company will not have the budget to hire a large crew, and so multitasking is normal.
- A large production company has already spent a lot of the budget by the time they arrive at the production stage. Production is often the point of no return – when it is cheaper to go ahead and make the film than to cancel it and lose all the money spent in pre-production and on actors' contracts.
- FTVNM and MAP students see production as the stage when the raw materials of the media product are created (e.g. the scenes are filmed).

Post-production

The next stage of media production is called post-production. Again, this is a very loose term that covers everything that happens after the end of the production stage when the raw materials are created.

Post-production takes the raw materials and turns them into a polished production ready for release. It is common for post-production to take as long as, or even longer than, production. Generally, in video production it was thought that it took an hour in post-production for every minute of finished product.

- A small production company may complete its post-production in-house. Staff may be multiskilled and have been involved in both pre-production and production stages as well.
- A large production company will have specialised staff who may have had nothing to do with the earlier stages. Sometimes these services are contracted out to post houses – businesses that specialise in post-production. Many of these are scattered around major film studios.



REX/Kobal/ Warner Bros/Bazmark Films/Shutterstock.com

Figure 14.5 George Wilson's run-down garage at the edge of the Valley of Ashes, in Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby* (2013). Post-production work for the film was shared between Cutting Edge, based in Brisbane, and Iloura, a company based in Melbourne. The mountains of smoking ash behind the garage were added in post-production.

- FTVNM and MAP students see post-production as the stage when the following take place:
  - editing
  - special effects
  - sound effects and music
  - titles and credits
  - reflections and evaluations.

Distribution

Distribution is the process of sending a media text out to its audiences. It is a strategic process of deciding where to send and how to release media products. Usually, several distributors are involved in getting a media product to the audience. In the case of film distribution, these distributors have different territories – usually on a country-by-country basis. In the case of printed products, it is often established on a city-by-city basis. Digital technology means that both producers and consumers are able to get around these territorial limits.

In movie distribution, for example, there are three main options for theatrical distribution. The choice made depends on the profit projections.

1. **Wide release.** Under this distribution option, the film will open in every major cinema in every major city. Successful films will screen over several weeks, but a major proportion of the profit will be made in the first weekend.
2. **Platform release.** This method of distribution releases the film to particular streaming services, which have exclusive rights to exhibit the product.
3. **Limited release.** If a film is known to have appeal only to a specialised audience, it will be given limited release.

Reception is the ultimate end point of media production and refers to the reactions of the audience. The viewing platform will influence how a media production is received (see pages 152–156), as will the viewing context (see page 153).

FTVNM and MAP students see distribution as a stage to enter competitions and to consider the different ways that their audiences will view the content.

14.1 ACTIVITIES

1. Search online for any news articles or documentation on the production stages of some of your favourite films. For example, use Google to search for 'pre-production' + your film choice. **Describe** the pre-production processes they took the film through. Give additional information and examples to **illustrate** your explanation. **Create** a presentation for the class, highlighting any interesting information and visuals that you find.
2. Conduct a search for Australian companies that specialise in pre-production or post-production (these activities are often outsourced). **Create** a PowerPoint presentation about one of the companies and **illustrate** it with some of the work they have done.
3. Investigate online editions of special effects magazines, such as *Cinefex*. Their websites may provide limited access to their articles and give an insight into the special effects that have been added to various well-known films. **Describe** the role that one company had in creating special effects and post-production for a well-known film.

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15 Idea development planning

PUTTING THE DEVELOPMENT STAGE INTO ACTION

The development stage can be the hardest part of the media production process to enact. Writers often say there is nothing scarier than a blank page. It is the same for media producers who must first generate an idea 'out of the air' and take it through to the pre-production stage.

Idea generation

Idea generation (or **ideation**) is crucial to a media project's planning and design stages. Ideation is the pre-production phase that focuses on developing the main concept for the media project, such as the strategy and shape of the media project. The ideation phase allows media artists to consider their creative intentions and research their target audience.

Defining ideation

In media industries, ideation is the creative process of generating, developing and communicating new ideas for media products, services or content. This process involves brainstorming, conceptualising and refining ideas that can be transformed into valuable and engaging media offerings.

Key aspects of ideation

There are a number of key aspects of ideation that media artists need to be aware of when developing the media project:

- **Concept generation:** creating original ideas for movies, TV shows, advertising campaigns, video games or other media products that appeal to target audiences
- **Storytelling:** developing compelling narratives, characters and themes that capture the audience's attention and create emotional connections
- **Innovation:** exploring new formats, technologies or platforms to deliver content in fresh and engaging ways, such as interactive experiences or transmedia storytelling
- **Problem-solving:** identifying challenges or opportunities within the media landscape and devising creative solutions
- **Collaboration:** engaging in collaborative brainstorming sessions with team members to generate diverse ideas and perspectives
- **Adaptation:** reimagining existing intellectual properties, stories or formats to create new versions tailored to different audiences, cultures or media.

Drawing inspiration from other media artists

A key part of ideation is inspiration and considering where ideas come from. A media artist can use previous media artworks to help develop their ideation. This could be considered inspiration, adaptation or remixing, depending on how the previous media artwork is used (see page 358). A media artist might draw inspiration from any aspect or component of another media artwork. Whatever the inspiration, a media artist should consider how this inspiration will contribute to the overall media project or whether it is the right fit for the client brief.

Approaches to inspiration

A media project can draw inspiration from previous media projects or content in several ways. Here are some approaches that might be useful:

- **Format and style.** Media artists might adopt similar formats or styles that have proven successful. For example, suppose a particular style of video editing or a specific type of content (e.g. 'top 10' lists, reaction videos or explainer videos) has been popular in the past. In that case, new projects might use those formats.

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- **Narrative structure.** If a previous project had a compelling narrative structure or storytelling technique, new projects might borrow those elements to create engaging content.
- **Visual aesthetics.** Media artists might draw inspiration from the visual aesthetics of previous projects, such as colour schemes, lighting techniques or overall design elements.
- **Themes and topics.** New projects might explore themes or topics that have resonated with audiences in the past. For example, if a social issue or trend has gained traction, media artists might develop content that fits those interests.
- **Tone and voice.** The tone and voice of previous successful projects might be adopted to appeal to similar audiences. This could include humour, seriousness or a particular linguistic style.
- **Engagement strategies.** Media artists might analyse the engagement strategies used in previous projects, such as calls-to-action, interactive elements or community-building techniques, and incorporate those strategies into their own work.
- **Collaboration and crossovers.** New projects might seek to collaborate with other creators or brands that have been successful in the past, leveraging their existing audience and reputation.
- **Adaptation and remixing.** Media artists might take elements from previous projects and adapt them to new contexts or remix them with fresh ideas to create something novel yet familiar.

It's essential to find a balance between drawing inspiration and creating something original to stand out in a crowded media landscape. Media projects and artists can build upon proven formulas while bringing their unique perspectives and creativity to their work.

Responding to the client

Most media artworks in the industry are created for a specific client and involve stakeholders. Once a production has been approved, the client will play a large role in how the production proceeds. This will mostly occur in a feedback loop between the media artist and the client.

Defining the client

The client is the individual, company or organisation that hires a media artist to create content on their behalf. The client operates in a business-to-business (B2B) context and typically provides a detailed outline of their requirements and objectives for the media project in the form of a client brief.

Defining the stakeholder

A stakeholder is a broader B2B context. It is any individual, group or organisation that has an interest in or can be affected by the outcomes of a media project. Stakeholders can be internal (within the business) or external (outside the business).

Types of stakeholder

Types of stakeholders in the media industry may include:

- clients
- content creators (agencies, freelancers or in-house teams)
- target audience
- company employees
- investors or shareholders
- media partners or platforms
- regulatory bodies or industry associations.

The client versus the stakeholder

The client is a specific type of stakeholder who directly engages with and typically pays for the media services. Other stakeholders, such as the target audience or company employees, are interested in the project's outcomes but do not have the same direct involvement as the client.

The client brief

The client brief is an opportunity for both the media artist and the client to understand the project's expectations, budget and parameters. A client brief can be a document sent by the client to the media artist or a face-to-face meeting where the client and the media artist discuss and design collaboratively.

Defining the client brief

The client brief is a document provided by a client or stakeholder to a media agency, freelancer or in-house content creation team that outlines the specific requirements, objectives and expectations for a content creation project, such as social media posts, videos or advertising campaigns.

The brief contains numerous key components that a media artist needs to be aware of:

- **Client background** – a brief overview of the client's company, brand or organisation, including their mission, values and general target audience
- **Project objectives** – the client's goals for the content creation project, such as increasing brand awareness, driving engagement or promoting a specific product or service
- **Target audience** – a detailed description of the intended audience for the content, including demographics, psychographics and online behaviours
- **Key messages** – the main points or themes that the client wants to communicate through the content
- **Content specifications** – details about the desired format, length, quantity and any specific requirements for the content (e.g. hashtags, calls-to-action or visual elements)
- **Brand style guide** – information about the client's brand identity, including tone of voice, visual style, and any specific dos and don'ts for content creation
- **Timeline and deliverables** – the expected deadlines for content creation, review and publication, as well as the specific deliverables required (e.g. social media posts, images or videos)
- **Budget** – the allocated budget for the content creation project, including any limitations or constraints.

Using the client brief

The client brief serves as a roadmap for media projects, ensuring the media artist understands the client's needs and can deliver content that aligns with the brief's objectives. It helps to minimise misunderstandings, sets clear goals and provides a framework for measuring the success of the media project, keeping the media artist on a clearly defined path.

A brief can be one way that clients communicate their vision to the media artist. It is an opportunity for the media artist and the client to better understand each other and the project's requirements. A necessary step is to break down the client brief into digestible chunks. By studying and understanding these smaller components, media artists can better prepare themselves for the ideation stage.

Target audiences

Can a media production appeal to everyone? General appeal is possible but very difficult to predict. Outcomes might not meet client expectations, which is undesirable for either party. Aiming to produce something by utilising a specific target audience is much more efficient.

Who is the target audience?

Target audiences are an essential part of any media project's planning and design process. Understanding the target audience is directly related to success.

Defining the target audience

A target audience refers to the specific group of people a media artist aims to reach with their message, product or service.

The following suggestions help media artists locate the target audience:

- **Who are you?** Many successful media productions are made by media artists who belong to the same group as the target audience. They understand the group's concerns and have easy access to its members.
- **Stepping outside your comfort zone.** Sometimes, it is necessary to aim for a very different target audience and so the media artist has to put more effort into working out what they like. Often, this can result in a better and more targeted finished product.

Target demographics

The first place for a media artist to start when researching the audience is defining their characteristics (Figure 15.1).

The target audience is defined by various demographic, psychographic and behavioural characteristics – called target demographics – that include the following:

- **age** – the age range of the intended audience (e.g. children, teenagers, young adults, middle-aged or seniors)
- **gender** – the gender of the audience (e.g. male, female or non-binary)
- **location** – the geographic location of the audience (e.g. country, state, city or neighbourhood)
- **income** – the income level or socioeconomic status of the audience
- **education** – the educational background or level of the audience



designer491/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 15.1 Every production and product should have a clear target audience. This requires the media artist to consider who the audience *is*, but also who the audience *isn't* – and why this might be so.

- **interests and goals** – the specific interests, hobbies or lifestyle preferences of the audience
- **barriers** – the problems that the audience typically experience that are related to the message, product or service central to the client brief
- **behaviour** – the online behaviour or habits of the audience, such as their social media usage, content consumption patterns and purchasing behaviour (if relevant).

Using psychographics

The psychological nature of an audience is often used to make media projects appealing. Psychographics mixed with demographic information provide a deeper understanding of the target audience, enabling media artists to shape media projects even more effectively.

This process refers to the intended audience's psychological attributes, such as personality traits, values, attitudes, beliefs and lifestyles. While demographics focus on quantifiable characteristics such as age, gender and income, psychographics delves deeper into the psychological aspects that influence an individual's behaviour and decision-making process. This type of research requires much more time to complete because there is a lot involved in gathering the information.

Psychographic factors that media artists consider when defining their target audience include the following:

- **Personality traits:** the dominant personality characteristics of the audience, such as openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism
- **Values:** the core beliefs and principles that guide the audience's behaviour and decision-making, such as environmental consciousness, social responsibility or individualism
- **Attitudes:** the audience's opinions, feelings and perspectives towards specific topics, issues or products
- **Beliefs:** the audience's convictions or assumptions they hold to be true, often without concrete evidence or proof. They are formed through personal experiences, cultural background, education and exposure to information
- **Interests or hobbies:** the subjects, activities and hobbies that capture the audience's attention and enthusiasm
- **Lifestyles:** the way the audience lives, including their daily routines, purchasing habits and leisure activities including social media use and online behaviours
- **Motivations:** the underlying reasons and drives that compel the audience to take specific actions or make certain decisions.

Making customer personas to suit a target audience

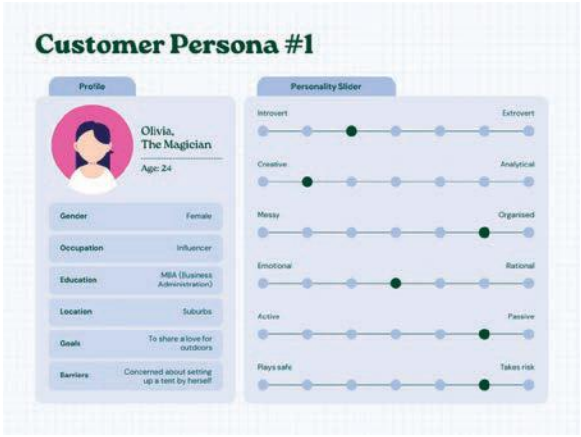
Customer personas are data profiles that represent segments of the target audience. It is a common research technique used in the media industry to help collate research data. It is also a useful tool to help visualise the data when presenting a pitch to the client.

Developing personas involves researching target demographics, and psychographics, including communication preferences, social media use, identifiers, challenges, background and goals (Figure 15.2).

This research can be conducted through surveys, interviews and analysis of observational data, such as text-mining the comments section of a social media site.

Shaping questions for research

Once a media artist is confident with a research plan, it is time to shape the types of questions to use. By shaping the types of questions to use, the artist can better understand audience likes and dislikes, and further develop a distinct style and focus that will appeal to that audience. The media artist could investigate the



Matthew Beattie

Figure 15.2 The customer persona profile will differ from project to project. While the more typical components – such as age, gender, occupation, goals and barriers – always tend to be present, the psychographic components may not be, or may change, depending on what the media artist is doing.

following questions to understand their target audience better:

- **What are their favourite media texts?** For instance, if making a video, what are some of their favourite videos on YouTube or programs on television?
- **What aspects of the texts do they relate to?** For example, if it is a television soap opera, which character do they relate to?
- **What are their music tastes?** Do they enjoy a wide array of genres, or do they gravitate to particular artists or bands?
- **Is there some way that existing media texts are not meeting their needs?** What will make your media project different and fill the gaps left by other media artworks similar to yours?

Synthesising research with data storytelling

Data storytelling involves using research data and analytics to transform raw data into meaningful insights and weave it into stories. Key aspects of data storytelling include:

- **Identifying relevant data.** Media artists analyse data from various sources, such as website analytics, social media metrics and user behaviour. They uncover trends, patterns and unique insights.
- **Defining the narrative.** Insights gained from data analysis are used to develop a central theme or narrative that aligns with their brand's message and goals.
- **Visualising data.** To make the story more engaging and accessible, data is often presented through visually appealing infographics, charts or tables that simplify complex information.
- **Tailoring content.** Data storytelling helps media artists tailor their messages to specific audience segments based on their preferences, behaviours and interests, leading to higher engagement.
- **Measuring impact.** By tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) through data collection, media artists can assess the effectiveness of their research and make data-informed decisions for future media project strategies.

Examples of data storytelling in content creation and social media include:

- a media artist using data on popular hairstyles, trends and customer preferences at a local hair salon to create targeted content and personalised recommendations
- a media artist using social media data to identify trending recipes, ingredients or dietary preferences to design content around those insights
- a media artist using company data on customer purchase trends to create personalised product recommendations and targeted social media marketing strategies.

Data storytelling can be a useful tool in providing a data-informed approach to project planning and development. It improves the chances of constructing meaningful engagement with audiences by creating relevant content for the target audience.

Techniques for engaging audiences

Techniques for engaging audiences are platform-specific. After the research is collated, the media artist needs to develop narrative and technical techniques to construct appeal for their audience. The research will not always be accurate, but it does allow the media artist a good vantage point to create better artworks that reflect the needs and desires of their target audience. The techniques that can be used wouldn't entirely depend on the specific audience but would also involve the technical and symbolic codes, style and narrative conventions of the platform or media mix being utilised. For example, the editing styles and pace could be shortened for a younger

audience on TikTok to keep them engaged. On the other hand, an older audience on Facebook might enjoy a slower editing pace.



John Lund/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 15.3 A cinema filled with animals as audience members demonstrating the diverse nature of audiences. A media artist must consider the context of their production by first considering the audience. Target audiences are diverse and can vary depending on their background, socioeconomic status, gender, race and age.

Using micro-moments

Simply being present on a social media platform is not enough for brand success. Artists must think about the audience within the context of micro-moments. Content consumption is considered a process divided into four different categories called micro-moments. It is a critical point in time when a consumer instinctively turns to their mobile device to act on a need, such as to know, go, do or buy something. These moments are intent-driven and occur when people want to learn, discover, find or purchase something.

Types of micro-moments

There are four key types of micro-moments and strategies for creating useful content:

1. **Want-to-know moments:** offer snackable, educational content to help consumers find answers to their questions.
2. **Want-to-go moments:** use location codes and conventions to highlight relevant geographical locations, inventory and directions.
3. **Want-to-do moments:** provide instructional video content to help consumers learn or complete tasks.
4. **Want-to-buy moments:** make the purchase process quick and easy, utilising codes and conventions related to the brand to instil confidence in the buyer.

Engaging audiences with platform codes and conventions

When making content, TikTok and YouTube employ distinct techniques, codes, conventions and narrative styles. On both TikTok and YouTube, creators engage their audiences by responding to feedback, addressing viewer requests or suggestions, and creating content that reflects the audience's interests.

TikTok engagement

TikTok focuses on short-form, vertical videos with an emphasis on music, trends and authentic content. The following strategies engage audiences on TikTok:

- **Participating in trends and challenges.** Media artists actively design for popular trends and challenges to increase visibility and attract interested viewers. By putting their creative spin on trending content, media artists can showcase diverse perspectives and stand out from the crowd.
- **Leveraging music and sounds.** Media artists use popular songs, soundtracks or viral audio clips to create content that engages audiences. By lip-syncing, dancing or performing to these sounds, media artists make use of shared cultural experiences and emotions associated with the audio, fostering a sense of connection.
- **Creating engaging and concise narratives.** Because TikTok videos are short-form, media artists focus on delivering compelling narratives within a limited timeframe. They use techniques such as jump cuts, quick transitions and attention-grabbing hooks to keep viewers engaged throughout the video.
- **Encouraging user interaction.** Media artists often include calls-to-action, such as asking viewers to like, comment or share their videos. They also engage with their audience by responding to comments, creating duets or participating in collaborations with other creators, fostering a sense of shared ownership and responsibility.

YouTube

YouTube accommodates longer-form, horizontal videos with diverse content categories and a

subscription-based model. The following strategies engage audiences on YouTube:

- **Developing consistent content series.** YouTubers often create series-based content, such as regular vlogs, tutorials or themed videos, to encourage viewers to subscribe and return for more. By establishing a consistent upload schedule and delivering content over time, media artists build loyalty among their target audience.
- **Engaging through storytelling and personality.** YouTube creators use their videos to showcase their personalities, opinions and experiences. They often employ storytelling techniques, such as personal anecdotes, humour or emotional appeals.
- **Encouraging audience participation.** YouTubers actively encourage audience participation by asking viewers to like, comment and subscribe to their channels. They also create content that sparks discussions, such as Q&A videos, polls or debates, to foster a sense of community.
- **Collaborating with other creators and brands.** YouTube creators often collaborate with other creators or brands to cross-promote their content and reach new audiences. These collaborations can include guest appearances, sponsored content or joint projects, which help expand audience reach.
- **Using end screens and annotations.** YouTubers use end screens and annotations to promote their other videos, encourage subscriptions or direct viewers to external links.

Experimenting with media

During the pre-production phase – including ideation and design – media artists can move beyond convention to embrace new ways to pitch and create content. There are a variety of contexts that can be used to explore experimentation.

Approaches to experimentation

Media artists can keep their content fresh, innovative and engaging for their audiences by constantly experimenting, testing and evolving it. Experimentation allows them to grow creatively while determining the most compelling formats and styles for their media projects.

Some ways media artists use experimentation when creating media content include:

- trying out new formats and content types:
  - testing different video lengths and styles
  - experimenting with podcasts, blogs or other media beyond their usual format
  - seeing what resonates most with their audience
- experimenting with storytelling techniques:
  - using non-linear narratives or unique story structures
  - testing out different tones (humorous, serious, inspirational, etc.)
  - seeing which storytelling approaches are most engaging
- iterating based on audience feedback and analytics:
  - reviewing view counts, watch time and comments to gauge interest
  - paying attention to which topics and styles perform best
  - refining and adapting content based on audience response
- collaborating with other creators:
  - trying out guest appearances, takeovers or joint projects
  - seeing how audiences respond to collaborations and crossovers
  - learning new techniques and ideas from collaboration partners
- pushing creative boundaries:
  - taking risks with bold, innovative or avant-garde content
  - seeing if unconventional content resonates with audiences
  - establishing a reputation as an experimental, cutting-edge creator
- adapting to new platforms and technologies:
  - being an early adopter of new social media platforms
  - experimenting with new tools such as VR, AR, AI, etc.
  - seeing what technological possibilities resonate with audiences.

Mood boards

Mood boards are an arrangement of various images, texts and materials to communicate the intended media project's overall style, concept and mood. They are typically used during the early stages of project development and the pitch to the client. Mood boards are unspecific, so they offer media artists the chance to consider various ways to construct emotional impact. They are useful for expanding on a core idea during the ideation phase. Mood boards require the media



Chris Rose/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 15.4 Mood boards allow the media artist to express their intent during the early phases of content creation. Mood boards can take the shape of physical portfolios or online portfolios.

artist to have a good understanding of components such as colour theory and visual composition.

Using a mood board

Mood boards are typically used in the following ways:

- **Concept development.** Mood boards are often created in the early stages of a media project to help define and refine the creative direction. They can be used to explore different themes, styles or aesthetics that align with the project's goals and target audience.
- **Inspiration and reference.** Media artists gather inspiration from various sources such as photographs, illustrations, colour palettes, textures, typography and other design elements. This process is very similar to brainstorming. These visual references serve as a starting point for the mood board and help communicate the intended style and tone of the project.
- **Curation and arrangement.** The collected visual elements are carefully curated and arranged on a physical or digital board. The composition and layout of the mood board are important to create a cohesive and visually appealing representation of the creative vision. Images and elements are often grouped based on colour, theme or style to create a coherent visual narrative.
- **Collaboration and communication.** Mood boards serve as a communication tool between team members, clients and stakeholders. They help ensure everyone is on the same page regarding the media project's creative direction. Mood boards can be presented during meetings or shared digitally to gather feedback and make necessary adjustments.
- **Iteration and refinement.** Based on feedback and further ideation, mood boards can be refined and updated throughout the creative process.
- **Application and reference.** Once finalised, mood boards act as a visual reference for various aspects of the project, such as set design, wardrobe, lighting, colour grading or graphic design.

Various online programs offer media artists the ability to create mood boards electronically through different image programs that produce dynamic mood boards that can be edited live and modified based on the development of the media artwork.

Decision trees

A decision tree is a brainstorming and decision-making tool. It is a visual graphic of a branching tree that allows the media artist to prioritise production phases and consider each action's consequences or possible outcomes. Decision trees are used during the pre-production phase in planning for a media project and to reflect budget or time constraints as well as potential risks in production (Figure 15.5).

Considering other contexts

A part of creating a media artwork is considering the various contexts behind production development. The media artist should consider what the purpose of production is, who it is for and how it will be distributed. For example, when creating short-form TikTok videos, the media artist should use vertical filmmaking and consider platform functionality such as filters, editing tools and the ability for audiences to respond.

Authenticity and keeping records

When developing ideas during the lifespan of the media project, the authenticity of the media project can be maintained by keeping records of all stages involved. Media artists can keep online production diaries that allow anyone in the creative team to review the progress and any specific ideas that have been shared. Media artists should keep any risk assessments, model releases or location releases in the production diary to ensure that any issues that surface during the production phase can be addressed. The production diary can also be a way to validate group contributions.

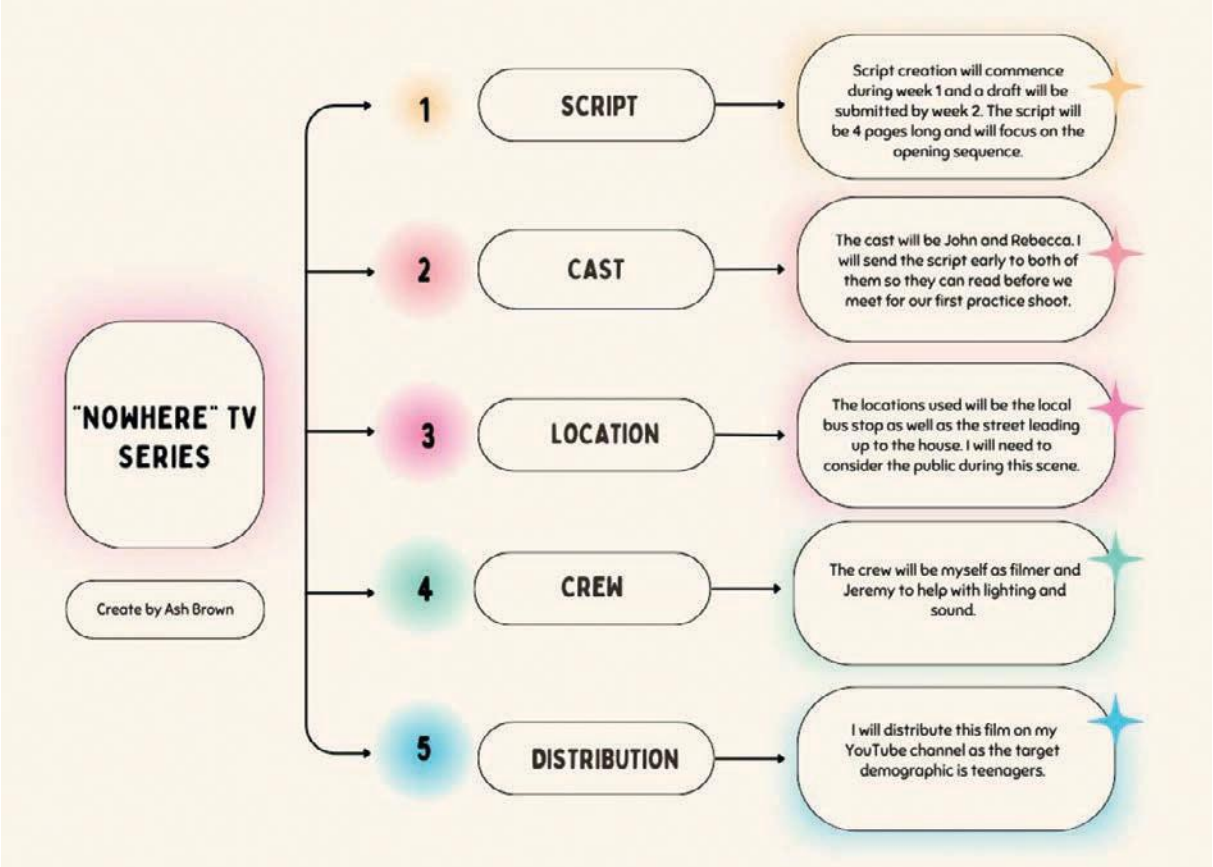


Figure 15.5 Similar to a mind map, a decision tree outlines the actions required during the pre-production phase of a media project. It allows media artists to consider the reality of their decisions and plan for any possible changes or modifications.

15.1 ACTIVITIES

1. Watch the opening five minutes of *Midnight in Paris* (2011). **Analyse** the mood board created for *Midnight in Paris* by production designer Annie Seibel to inform the setting design of Gertrude Stein's apartment in the film. **Describe** the effect of the colour choices that create a certain mood through Seibel's choice of images. Consider the historical and narrative context of the film. **Evaluate** whether the mood board effectively communicates the concept for the product. **Consider** how you could improve the effectiveness of the mood board.
2. Conduct online research to **identify** and collate various examples of mood boards across different industries (e.g. fashion, interior design, advertising). **Select** a theme to make a mood board (e.g. a specific emotion, season, product or personal project). **Develop** a list of key elements to include in your mood board, such as colours, textures, images and fonts, that align with your chosen theme. Collect relevant digital content by searching for and saving images, illustrations and other visual elements from various online sources. **Systematically organise** and **arrange** the selected elements on your digital canvas to create a visually appealing and cohesive composition. **Evaluate** your design choices by explaining how each element contributes to the overall theme and purpose of your mood board. Present your digital mood board to the class and discuss the creative process behind its creation.
3. **Analyse** the premise, genre and mood of any content made on a social media platform. What kind of pre-production planning might have gone into the creation of the media texts? **Select** five still images that you believe communicate the mood of the media text. **Consider** how these different mood boards might have influenced the style and mood of the series. **Create** two different mood boards that use these images to communicate different moods.

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16 Pre-production planning

PRE-PRODUCTION FORMATS

A lot of work goes into moving-image pre-production, and several important texts are developed during this stage:

- one-liner (or log line)
- outline (or one-sheet)
- the pitch
- treatment
- script
- storyboard
- character images.

Television and film are primarily visual media. The script and soundtrack are important, but the pictures count for more. In the view of the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS), much pre-production work actually involves 'picturising' – putting ideas, facts and feelings into pictures.

Log lines (one-liner)

The story is told that Hollywood moguls insist that if an outline can't be given in one sentence, the movie doesn't get up. The **one-liner** (sometimes called the **log line**) is a very concentrated summary of the concept (Figure 16.1). It is usually one or sometimes two sentences long. The purpose of the one-liner is to make the premise of the production very clear in the minds of those who are going to be involved in producing it. However, the **one-liner** does not give away the ending.

Log lines may contain the following:

- the protagonist (not by name)
- the protagonist's goal
- the blockage or antagonist (also not by name)
- what is at stake (e.g. the future of the world).

> 'The mark of a truly gifted pitcher is to present the concept whole – the miniaturisation of the idea. It must be succinct.'
>
> **Lynda Obst**, Hollywood producer

Outlines

The **outline** often accompanies the one-liner as part of the process of pitching a concept to studio executives or film finance companies. The outline (sometimes called a one-sheet) is a brief introduction to the story



Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 16.1 The main characters on board the USS *Enterprise* in the movie *Star Trek* (2009). The original television series was first proposed when Westerns such as *Bonanza* (1959–73) ruled the television screen. The one-liner used to pitch the new show is said to have been 'Wagon train to the stars'.

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action. The outline provides a good indication of the structure of the whole production. It includes key events and the major decision-making points. In the industry, an outline can sometimes be around one page in length – hence its alternative name. However, some organisations require longer outlines of three to eight pages. An outline for a short film may well be less than a page, depending on what the requirements are.

Film, Television & New Media (FTVNM) students should check the recommended length with their teacher if an outline is required.

An outline may include brief descriptions of:

- the key characters and their goals, including protagonist and antagonist
- the conflict and what is at stake
- the setting
- the opening scene
- the first turning point or disruption
- the midpoint climax
- the major climax
- the resolution.

Pitches

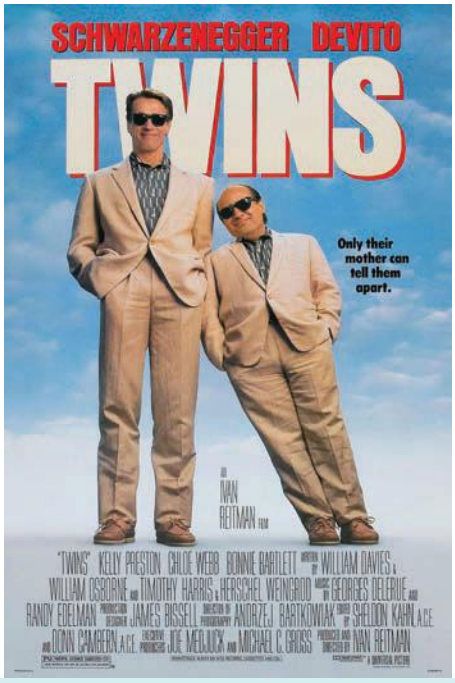
A **pitch** is the verbal or visual presentation of an idea for a moving-image media project to the people who can help finance its production. According to MasterClass, a pitch should intrigue those who can help make the project – studio, network or streaming executives, distributors, producers or directors – so that they will get on board the project.

A pitch is a targeted way to communicate a big idea without requiring the audience to have a film degree. In an easily digestible and memorable way, a pitch clearly communicates the premise, characters, plot, budget and other key features of the idea and leaves the audience wanting more.

There are two forms of pitches:

1 **Standard pitch:** This is a 10–30-minute rehearsed and scheduled pitch, presented to investors or production executives and usually accompanied by visual materials such as a pitch deck. Most major film festivals, film authorities or networking events, such as the Gold Coast's annual Screen Forever, have scheduled pitching sessions that filmmakers can book into. Networks such as SBS may also put information on their website about commissioning content. There are also pitching events or 'pitch fests' that occur globally, such as International Film Festival Rotterdam's CineMart, Mifa Pitches at Annecy International Animation Festival and The Talent Project Market Berlinale Talents.

2 **Elevator pitch:** This is a short, sharp and targeted pitch that a filmmaker is ready to deliver when opportunity strikes, usually without visual materials. Essentially, the elevator pitch is the log line, able to be quickly delivered to a production executive met by chance in the elevator at a film festival. The elevator pitch aims to express the essential premise of the idea and pique the listener's interest in under a minute.



Everett Collection, Inc./Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 16.2 This is the poster for the 1988 buddy comedy *Twins*, directed by Ivan Reitman. Hollywood legend tells of the three-word elevator pitch for the film: 'DeVito. Schwarzenegger. Twins.' The production executive's response: 'Let's talk.'

Creating an effective pitch

An effective pitch should not only provide a tangible idea of the story, but also pitch the creators as the right people to deliver this project.

A pitch is more effective when accompanied by visual materials, known as a 'pitch deck'. These visual materials should convey a clear tone and build interest with each slide.

An effective pitch needs to cover key elements, which can be divided into three main sections: story, imagery and plan. To develop each of these sections, it is helpful for the creator to ask themselves a series of questions.

Weblinks
Screen Forever
CineMart
Mifa Pitches
Talent Project Market

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Story

- What is the title and log line?
- Who are the characters? What is their journey (motivations, obstacles and tensions)? Why will the audience care about them? What emotions will the audience experience?
- Why does this story need to be told – what's special about it? Is there a personal or moral imperative, such as the need to raise awareness of a particular issue?

Imagery

SBS advise that successful pitches communicate 'a strong visual world'; the LA Film School suggests using imagery to communicate the vision and 'vibe' of the story. Creating a mood board of colours, textures and imagery (e.g. moments from other moving-image media stories) that are of influence on the style and tone of the story is helpful for making the aesthetic, genre, setting and mood very clear.

- What adjectives are being used through the pitch – do these reinforce the mood of the story?
- How does the font used in the pitch deck help communicate the style and genre?
- What makes *this* story distinct?

Plan

Since a pitch attempts to get a project off the ground, it's vital to appeal to the pitch audience's business sense.

- Who is the project's target audience? Why will it do well with this audience?
- How will the project be delivered – who is the team? What's their background? Have any team members collaborated together with success previously?
- What support can the investors provide?
- Ultimately, why does this project matter? Where might it go from here?

Pitching the idea

Confidence and passion when pitching are vital – these emotions are infectious and will help excite the audience about the project. A well-rehearsed pitch allows the creator to build a relationship with the audience through eye contact, and confidently answer any questions. A polite follow-up a few days after the pitch can have a big impact.

After the pitch

If a pitch receives approval to go to production phase, this is called '**green-lighting**'. There are no hard and fast rules about what types of content get green-lit. Specific platforms or producers, for example, might be seeking to green-light particular forms of content. What content is green-lit will vary according to factors such as target audience or institutional values. For example, Julie Eckersley, former Head of Scripted [content] at SBS and an award-winning producer, says the SBS are looking for 'great stories that are entertaining, surprising and full of heart'.

If an episodic project goes to professional production, other writers may be brought into a **writers' room** for further workshopping. A head writer or '**show-runner**' ensures that scripting fits with each character's backstory. The story world for an entire series is summed up in a **show bible**, maintaining consistent logic across different writers. For instance, a character cannot go next door for a drink with Uncle Jack if he moved to Canada in last week's episode.

Pitch decks

Once the story, imagery and plan have been developed, a pitch or **pitch deck** can be developed. A pitch or a pitch deck are useful stepping-stones when developing treatments and storyboards. As both formats most commonly provide a sample view of visual scenes, or small slices of dialogue, the pitch process helps the creative team lock in a broader view of the project scenario. Julie Eckersley recommends a particular structure for written pitch decks submitted directly to SBS:

1 Title page
   - Title, for example, '*One Suitcase*'
   - A subtitle explaining the format, such as 'A 4-part × 30-minute drama miniseries about a deserted migrant in a new country'
   - A log line of fewer than 30 words. For example, 'Longing for family stability, a migrant woman placates abusive husbands … Each time she moves on, Australia intervenes, with weather, distance, people. Only one child stands by her to the end.' Note the mention of the character and her *flaws*, her *goals* and the *obstacles*.

2 Overview
   - One paragraph of **synopsis** (summary of the plot) about the who, what and why of the story, including details about the protagonist's goal and what's at stake.

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- A persuasive explanation why *this* story deserves to be aired – its relevance to pertinent issues, personal importance or uniqueness. Make clear the genre and the underlying message or moral of the story that is at the heart of the concept.

3 Story summary
- Expanded details of multiple characters and motivations, their goals and schemes, and the conflicts that drive the action. Characters should face an inner journey that presents opportunity for change.

4 Story world
- Whether past, present or future, the hierarchy or rules of the world need to be clear.
- The occupation or role of characters in this world makes clear how they fit into the context or grate against it.
- The location or landscape can be thought of as a character and may have shifting moods.

5 Tone and style
- Lighting and camera codes can be described with parallels drawn to visual and sensory inspiration from other works. The screen mood and pace reflect the emotional undertones of the production. Significant production design and *mise en scène* should be included.

6 Character descriptions
- Outline what is distinct about the key characters, detailing backstory, values, flaws and relationships. Specify what the internal and external conflicts of the characters are.

7 Character journeys
- Outline the journey of each character in terms of emotional changes, obstacles and key plot points. Significant obstacles force changes in trajectory that influence the **character arc**, or individual path of change. Each journey may be the product of free choices or responding to cause-and-effect impacts from other characters.

8 Episode outlines/scene outlines
- Paragraphs outline each scene or episode and its title. Identify the thread that runs through each episode or scene, producing conflict. Several complications should be present within each and an antagonist should emerge. An enigma, or unresolved element, should lead audiences to the next chapter in the story. A **hook** must grab viewer attention early on, and again at the end of an episode or scene. (This engagement is particularly important for pilot episodes.)
- Consider the structure to be used and how this will enhance audience engagement. For instance, if pitching episodic television or streaming content, a soap-opera-style serialising of the subplot may enhance audience engagement. Resolving one storyline within an episode can provide viewer satisfaction, while a subplot ends on a **cliff-hanger**. This subplot may start mid-episode and not be addressed until the following mid-episode.

9 Creators
- Introduce the people who will make the content. Ensure key roles are listed, with a mix of the required skills among the collaborators.

10 Contact details
- A reliable point of further contact must be provided. A professional-style response will be required if funding is offered to advance production.

Show bibles

The **series bible** or show bible becomes an extended reference document once a series goes into production. Episode writers can check they do not contradict past stories. Some full show bibles use graphics and styled imagery on the document itself if it is for pitching purposes. The show bible must be maintained to incorporate established facts that are locked-in as each episode adds to the backstory for the next. In this way, it becomes an extended version of the pitch deck information.

Formats in the industry vary but can build from pitch deck headings (page 302):

1 **Title and authors.** Along with the working title and writers, the complex document is long enough to require a table of contents.

2 **Log line and one sheet.** With the log line as a focus, the synopsis is expanded to a one sheet or outline (see page 300) with a series-long focus on:
- protagonist, antagonists and their eventual goals
- conflict and rewards or losses
- genre references and previous similar productions or inspiration

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- orientation to the setting
- call-to-adventure or turning point
- action and blockages to the goals
- the series climax/resolution
- audience.

3 **Story summary/themes.** The story summary/theme section explains what the production is really about underneath the costumes and props.
   - *Squid Game* (2021) is a Korean production depicting adults playing children's games to win big money at the risk of losing their lives. The pandemic-era production brought Netflix 1.65 billion viewing hours. The series captures the rising obsession with reality-TV-style elimination shows and the real-world ruthlessness of casual jobs. The digital-era workforce is more likely to have multiple insecure jobs while a decreasing number of mega-entrepreneurs grow richer than many countries. *Squid Game*'s theme is questioning hyper-capitalism, moving workers into the gig-economy where they compete and undercut each other's conditions.

4 **Story world and 'rules'.** Show bible story worlds should set out all of the relevant rules that govern the universe within the screen. It may include historical photos and facts from the era of the setting. For a full series of episodes, these can be lengthy, detailed and very specific. It may cover routines about how every day starts in a small town, or what time the pub closes. An unfamiliar fiction world needs processes and rules to be invented.

5 **Tone, style and structure.** The structure of the narrative may be shaped by flashbacks, premonitions of the future, found footage of a missing person or a daily addition to a linear timeline. Each of these may be associated with a particular style, such as scratched black-and-white film, VHS videotape graininess or over-exposed hallucinations. These lighting, camera and editing codes should be described in detail. A particular person or set may differ from the rest of the film and have a distinctive feel, like a hippie living in a kombi van. These sets, props and ways of conducting life for each location should be spelt out.

The *Battlestar Galactica* story bible clearly sets out that everyday scenes should mirror life on an aircraft carrier, with no superhero characters.

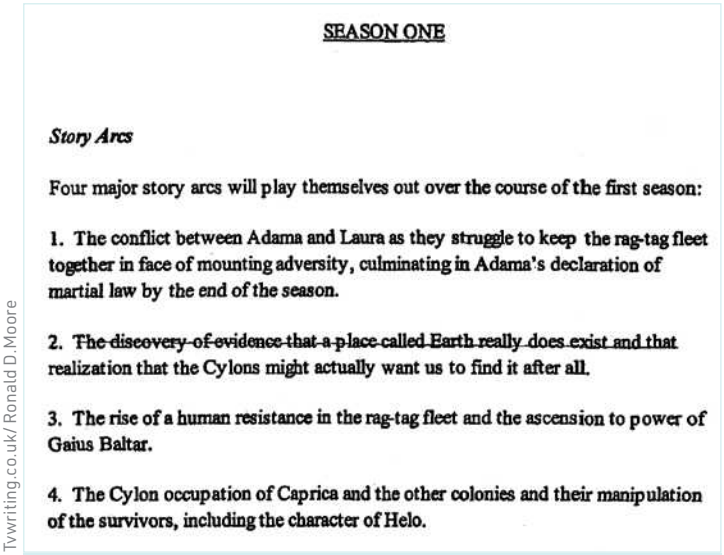
6 **Character descriptions and relationships.** The major characters are given full biographies of backstories, attitudes, hobbies or occupations that may never appear on screen. Their social or cultural role in the story world should be clear. Paragraphs should also be devoted to relationships. This can be done by pairing characters to describe the nature of the interaction they typically have, showing conflict or support.

7 **Character journeys.** Main plot points of the series should be listed as overarching story arcs that the characters experience. Multi-episode arcs can connect a number of episodes to maintain viewer engagement. Characters should be in conflict, tension or support from the world around them. How these play out over time answers questions about winners and losers, what changes and what is constant. Each character can deal with the same conflicts very differently. The series bible should explain why these conflicts should matter to the audiences.

8 **Episode outlines/scene outlines.** Episodes have self-contained arcs of a beginning, middle and end that bring a sense of resolution within each one. Episodes can be stand-alone or sequential. A series can feature familiar characters and locations, but each episode is not connected to the next in a time-based sequence. This is an inclusive model for casual viewers.

Weblinks
Battlestar Galactica series bible

Battlestar Galactica series timeline



SEASON ONE

Story Arcs

Four major story arcs will play themselves out over the course of the first season:

1. The conflict between Adama and Laura as they struggle to keep the rag-tag fleet together in face of mounting adversity, culminating in Adama's declaration of martial law by the end of the season.

2. ~~The discovery of evidence that a place called Earth really does exist and that~~ realization that the Cylons might actually want us to find it after all.

3. The rise of a human resistance in the rag-tag fleet and the ascension to power of Gaius Baltar.

4. The Cylon occupation of Caprica and the other colonies and their manipulation of the survivors, including the character of Helo.

Tvwriting.co.uk/ Ronald D. Moore

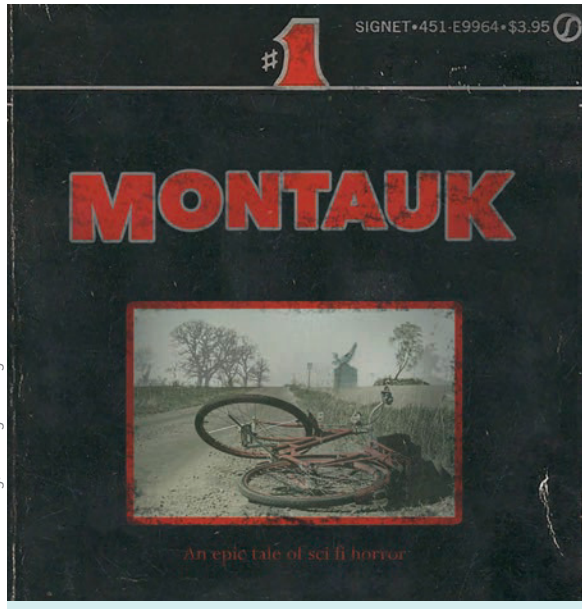
Figure 16.3 *Battlestar Galactica* series or show bible (2003) lists the story arcs of the first series. Greater detail for each of the series arcs is drawn out the characters' journeys as the arc unfolds. The series is again being re-imagined for a 2020s version.

Alternatively, a multi-episode arc features an unresolved cliff-hanger style element at the end of each instalment. At least one subplot centred on relationships may continue. This model is often favoured in the binge era of on-demand streaming.

9 **Long-term creators/future seasons.** 'Future season potential' means an income stream for producers. Story arcs that present an open-ended future are preferred by commercial ventures, and a second series can be proposed. Surprise popularity of minor characters can lead to spin-off series. *Better Call Saul* (2015–22) began as a minor character in *Breaking Bad* (2008–13) and sparked a successful spin-off.

A clearly identified audience fan base can drive longevity in episodic stories. While *Stranger Things* (2016–25) is dealing with popular themes of the importance of family and motherhood, the franchise relies heavily on the appeal of nostalgia for the 1980s *mise en scène* (Figure 16.4).

10 **Contact details/distinctive creator style.** Long-term commitment from the original creators is part of the package for a successful series.



Screencraft.org/StrangerThingsBible

Figure 16.4 *Stranger Things* (2016–25) series (show) bible is styled to evoke nostalgia, like the show itself. Once beyond the pitching phase, the document grows as a record of the story world. It becomes the 'point of truth' reference for subsequent episodes and future seasons.

Treatments

In the industry, a **treatment** is often called for after a successful pitch. If a project gets the go-ahead, the writer will be asked to come up with a treatment. Scriptwriters often use the treatment as a development tool. It helps them get their ideas straight, and to see the final production as it will be from start to finish.

The treatment is a broad plan of the production describing each scene (or 'block of action') in a paragraph or two. It is basically an expanded outline. Treatments are written in terms of what the audience will see and experience. They are the first attempt at 'picturising' or converting the ideas into moving images. Treatments are usually written in the present tense as though the production is happening right before the reader's eyes.

Treatments in FTVNM

In FTVNM, the treatment is different to an industry treatment. It has two purposes. The first is as a broad plan of the production – the same as for industry. However, in an educational setting there is an additional requirement. The treatment also reveals student knowledge of the key concepts and a clear intention to use that knowledge meaningfully.

Treatments read as though we are watching the production. In FTVNM, they may include both story details and key concept understandings. These may be incorporated seamlessly into the treatment, or you could choose to include them in separate sections. Consult your teacher before you begin planning your treatment.

Key concepts and intent

FTVNM students demonstrate their understandings of the key concepts by providing an explanation of:

- the use of technical and symbolic codes and conventions to create representations and visual style
- the intended meanings
- the intended audience and audience response (including any interactivity – Unit 3)
- the technical choices to suit the story
- multi-platform concepts and the technology for participation (Unit 3)
- the unique style you have adopted and its influences (Unit 4).

Story details (Units 1–2, Year 11)

Narrative treatments provide details of:

- the title
- the premise
- the opening scene as it will play
- the disturbance to normality that begins the story
- some of the major scenes and their climactic turning points, including the main climax
- the resolution
- character introductions – typically a few words immediately after their name the first time they appear.

Digital game details

Game treatments provide details of:

- the title
- the premise or goal of the game
- available choices, actions and obstacles to action
- character representations (depending on game type)
- levels
- the resolution.

Treatments don't usually use phrases such as 'we see'. Action simply happens as it might occur in the production. It isn't common for treatments to include dialogue. Treatments don't usually give camera directions either. The treatment should be balanced so that it reflects the script – for example, it should not spend a long time describing the first act if this is short in the production.

Scripts

Weblinks
Suggested script layouts

The layout of a television drama or film **script** is very different to that of a play script. There are variations between different production houses as to the exact style used for a screenplay. Variations also exist between countries – for example, the Writers Guild of America recommends a standard format that is very slightly different from the format used by the AFTRS.

A script is the written version of a film or television program. The script is the whole story set out on paper, including all dialogue, acting directions and occasionally some limited camera directions. The script represents the narrative ready to be filmed.



iStock.com/andresr

Figure 16.5 The writer of the script sets up the whole production – the script is the backbone. A good script will always hold things together. This is a powerful responsibility for writers, yet many scriptwriters complain that they do not get enough credit for their work.

Show, don't tell

Moving-image media scripts cannot show internal thoughts and feelings. Unlike in a novel, there are rarely descriptive passages to take us inside the internal lives of the characters.

In television and film, if we cannot see it as action on the screen, then it does not really exist. All thoughts and feelings have to somehow be externalised. In filmed adaptations of novels, this is one of the most difficult things for the scriptwriter. Pages of internal thoughts must somehow be translated into visual action.

Script formatting for dramas

There are some basic rules for the formatting of television and film drama scripts:

- **The font** is usually Courier (traditionally).
- **Scene headings** are in block capitals and are often underlined. The heading is left-aligned. First, each scene is numbered. Some script styles place the scene number twice – both before and after the scene name. Then comes an indication as to whether the scene is 'interior' or 'exterior', which is always abbreviated and in block capitals (INT or EXT). This is followed by the location, again in block capitals. Sometimes the time is also given.

> 'Few people will read a script for its own sake. A script really exists to enable something else to happen. It is a blueprint from which something much bigger and more spectacular is made.'
>
> **Robert Edgar-Hunt, John Marland** and **James Richards**, authors of *Screenwriting*

- **Scene and action descriptions** are in ordinary sentence case. The text is left-aligned and normal page margins are used. Character names that appear in the scene and action descriptions are in block capitals.
- **Dialogue tabbing** means that dialogue is placed in a narrower set of margins than the scene and action descriptions. The dialogue margins are tabbed in on both sides so that the dialogue appears to be placed within a central, narrower column. When using Microsoft Word, do not use the 'centre' button on the paragraph toolbar for this. Character names are in block capitals when indicating a character is speaking and they are placed above the dialogue. (The dialogue is not placed beside the character names, as in a theatre script.) Acting directions are placed below the character names and usually also placed in brackets.
- **Camera/editing directions** are written in block capitals. They are very limited in number and usually consist of just the following: CUT, CUT TO (for scene changes), FADE and DISSOLVE. A scene changes and a new heading is drawn up whenever the location or time change.

Script format for news, documentary and advertising

Standard news format is quite different to screen drama. It is presented as either two-column or **three-column script**. However, students may be required to annotate one of the columns with additional information to demonstrate their understanding of codes, conventions and the meaning communicated. News, documentary and advertising script has the following basic rules:

- **Two-column script** has video heading the right-hand side and audio on the left-hand side.
- **Three-column script** has cumulative time or shot duration as the first column, then video and then audio.
- **The video column** is written in ordinary sentence case. Shots are numbered and lined up with the voice-over or narration that goes with them. When preparing a news script in Microsoft Word, it is often best to use a table format and then make the borders invisible. The numbered shots in the video column will then be in alignment with the accompanying audio.
- **The audio column** contains dialogue, voice-over or news narration written in block capitals. Block capitals are used for speech because it is said to be easier to read on the auto-cue/tele-prompt. Other material in the audio column (such as sound effects) uses sentence case.

Scripts in FTVNM

A script in the television or film industry does not usually have annotations attached. Often, a director will handwrite notes on the script afterwards, but they are not part of the standard layout.

In FTVNM, scripts may be annotated to show an understanding of the key concepts. In particular, the intentional use of codes and conventions can be highlighted in the notes. You can also highlight your understanding of story conventions and structural features, such as climaxes and the resolution.

Just as they do for an industry director, notes on the script can also help you think about how you are going to make the production.

Storyboards

Advertising agencies rely heavily on **storyboards**. Creators of music videos and art films also use storyboards. Television and film producers use them less often. When there is a complex scene to be filmed, the film director often relies on a storyboard.

A storyboard is a series of drawings representing the final images of the production. Cartoon-like picture frames show the action as it happens in scene-by-scene sequence. There are some variations in storyboard style, however, most have the following features:

- **The drawing** is within a frame that represents the screen as audiences will see it. Therefore, no action can take place outside the frame, unless it is unseen. All screen shots are the same size. Shot sizes and camera angles are all drawn as



Weblinks
How to format a screenplay

Screenwriting

Storyboards

'Screenwriting is telling a story using pictures. Writing a screenplay is therefore a "double procedure" that involves writing words on a page to produce events on the screen. As a screenwriter you are essentially dealing in words but thinking in pictures.'

Robert Edgar-Hunt, John Marland and **James Richards**, authors of *Screenwriting*

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they would appear in the finished production. Camera movement is depicted with arrows.
- **The text length** varies depending on the industry style and the individual storyboard. Some industry styles have a lot of text; others barely have a sentence or two. The amount of text in an industry storyboard depends on the intended usage.

Storyboards in FTVNM

Industry storyboards can vary a great deal, depending on their purpose. However, storyboards for educational purposes are intended to show the skills and knowledge of FTVNM students. The storyboard shows knowledge of the key concepts and provides a demonstration of your ability to use that knowledge meaningfully.

Drawings/images

In FTVNM, storyboard images show the following:
- **Some degree of context and setting**, such as abbreviated elements of *mise en scène*, colour, costume and so on. These details should be enough to allow the reader to 'get the idea'.
- **Some sense of perspective or a feeling of depth** in the frame.
- **Intentional and considered use of the codes and conventions**, including camera conventions (such as angle and composition) and editing conventions (such as montage). Transitions can also be indicated (stated in-between or above the frames, or they can be included in the template).
- **Original work**, as defined by your teacher.

Storyboards indicate camera movement with arrows. If you are intending to zoom in or out, a smaller frame is drawn over the scene with arrows indicating the direction of the zoom (see Figure 16.6, left). Character movement is also indicated by arrows (see Figure 16.6, right).

Storyboard text

In FTVNM, the storyboard text depends on the usage – there is no one way to set out a storyboard. The storyboard text will include some of the following features:
- **Scene number** is often written at the top of the sequence.
- **Shot number** is often written underneath each frame. It can also be placed on top of the frame.
- **Shot sizes** are often written in block capitals underneath each frame and next to shot number.
- **Shot duration** is measured in seconds.
- **Camera angle** is included when it is necessary to point it out, or if it is required by the template.
- **The action** in each scene is briefly described. Usually this is in one sentence only.
- **Dialogue** (brief and only if required) is written in the manner of a stage script. Characters' names are usually given in capitals and the dialogue is written in lower case. Dialogue should be brief.
- **Technical details** about how the shot will be achieved may be required. You will need to explain how you will apply the codes and conventions to maximum effect. This will include details about framing, lighting, camera movement and so on.



Figure 16.6 (Left) A storyboard frame showing some key features. Note the arrows and smaller internal frame indicating a zoom out from a close-up shot. Reversing the arrows would indicate a zoom in. (Right) Character movement can be indicated by arrows.

- **Sound effects** are given last, usually in capitals. If you are using a template, they may be placed before transitions to the next shot.
- **In FTVNM storyboards**, students are also expected to explain their use of codes and conventions, and justify their choices.

Storyboard text can appear below the image, or it can be placed at the side of each image.

Shooting scripts

A **shooting script** (sometimes called the camera script) is a set of plans or instructions to the camera crew as to how to cover scenes in a script. The director prepares the shooting script after having visualised what the screenplay will look like as a finished production. A shooting script is prepared for each scene. The director decides how they want the scene to be 'covered'. This means they will decide how they want the camera to film the scene, and the total quantity of footage required. For example, the director would visualise whether they want close-ups or long shots for particular shots, or decide whether they want the shots filmed from a particular angle or vantage point.

A shooting script also indicates the most economical order in which the shots will be filmed. For example, all of the shots to be filmed in a particular city building could be filmed on the one day, irrespective of where they are in the story. Similarly, if an actor has to shave his or her head at the start of the film and then their hair grows back throughout the film, the shots may be filmed in reverse order.

A shooting script is often the result of a final collaboration between the writer and the director. Instructions to the camera crew are very specific. For a news script, the shooting has probably already been done. The script is for the editor to cut the pictures while the journalist reads the voice-over.

Features of a shooting script include the following:

- **Four- or five-column script** format with column one showing shot number, column two showing shot size, column three describing what is to be filmed and column four describing audio. Often there is also a column for director's notes and acting instructions.
- **Shots** are numbered and briefly described.
- **Filming directions** are included.

Character outlines

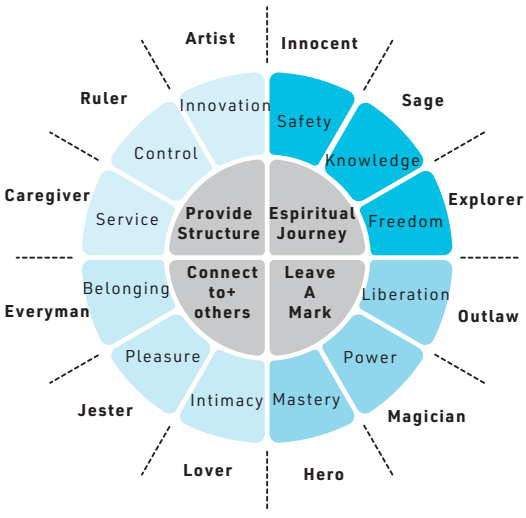
Also called character profiles, character biographies (bios) or character breakdowns, this type of pre-production document can be useful to clarify ideas before writing treatments or scripts, or can form part of a design suite or pitch for a new production. Creating 'fleshed out' characters with established backstories and a clear identity can help with figuring out how a character would react to certain situations that occur in the narrative.

A **character outline** is often accompanied by character images, and this information can also be useful to give to actors, or other members of a production team such as costume designers and make-up artists. Details about a character can also inform other elements of a production, such as the set dressing of a character's house or bedroom and decisions around shot composition.

Features of a character outline

The content of a character outline will vary depending on the purpose and context of the task and the type of production, but generally will cover the follow aspects:

- **The basics.** Name, age, location, vocation.
- **Type of character.** Consider whether the character is a lead or minor character, and their role in the story. Are they the protagonist, antagonist or a



Daniel Doorakkers/Shutterstock.com

Figure 16.7 The 12 character archetypes, based on Carl Jung's work in analytic psychology. These personality traits can be found in characters across history, cultures and forms of storytelling.

sidekick? Many genre-based productions lend themselves to a particular archetype or stock character type. Revisit the character theory in Chapter 10 (page 148) for inspiration.

- **Appearance and personality.** Describe the physical, behavioural and personality traits of your character. Think about the little things like their preferred style of dress, how they like to wear their hair and how they speak. Are they neat and tidy, or do they often look like they've just rolled out of bed? Do they have any specific habits or mannerisms? Make sure that these choices serve a purpose, such as indicating something about their personality or backstory and aren't just there to try and make them interesting.
- **Backstory for your character.** This can influence many elements of your character, such as how they look now, how they act (and react) and how they think. For example, action heroes usually don't become heroes overnight – and often their backstories explain how they acquired certain skills or why the character is motivated to fight. Consider the character's upbringing, family, friends and other relationships. What is their education and career history? What significant events moulded them into who they are today?
- **Strengths and skills**. These can be physical skills such as Robin Hood's archery prowess, intellectual skills like Sherlock Holmes's powers of deduction or character strengths like curiosity and honesty. These skills could also be of the superhero variety and form a key part of the character's personality. For video game characters, these skills can directly influence the gameplay options in terms of playable actions.
- **Character flaws and limitations.** A character will usually have an 'Achilles heel', that is, some sort of weakness that can be their downfall or be exploited by others (e.g. Superman and kryptonite), or an internal struggle that's holding them back from achieving a goal. A character limitation can sometimes be the 'flipside' of a character strength. For example, a character who is humble and prudent might miss out on a promotion at work by being too modest about their skills, or a character who appreciates beauty and excellence might strive for success at the expense of their relationships or their health. This central character flaw can sometimes lead to the main conflict in the narrative.
- **Goals and motivations.** Your character needs something to fight for or work towards, and to



LANDMARK MEDIA/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 16.8 Pedro Pascal and Bella Ramsey star in the TV series *The Last of Us* (2023), based on the video game series of the same name (2013). In the video game, Ramsey's character Ellie can't swim, and this character limitation influences the gameplay, with the player needing to problem-solve crossing a body of water. In the new series, the creators kept this character trait, and fans noticed this game reference in the first episode.

Table 16.1 The 24 character strengths, grouped into six 'virtue categories', as defined by the VIA Institute on Character. The idea is that we all have these strengths in some measure, but some are more 'automatic' to us than others. These character strengths could be a useful way to include more complexity in character designs and to inform how a character might react in certain situations.

WISDOM	COURAGE	HUMANITY	JUSTICE	TEMPERANCE	TRANSCENDENCE
• Creativity • Curiosity • Judgement • Love of learning • Perspective	• Bravery • Perseverance • Honesty • Zest	• Love • Kindness • Social intelligence	• Teamwork • Fairness • Leadership	• Forgiveness • Humility • Prudence • Self-regulation	• Appreciation of beauty and excellence • Gratitude • Hope • Humour • Spirituality

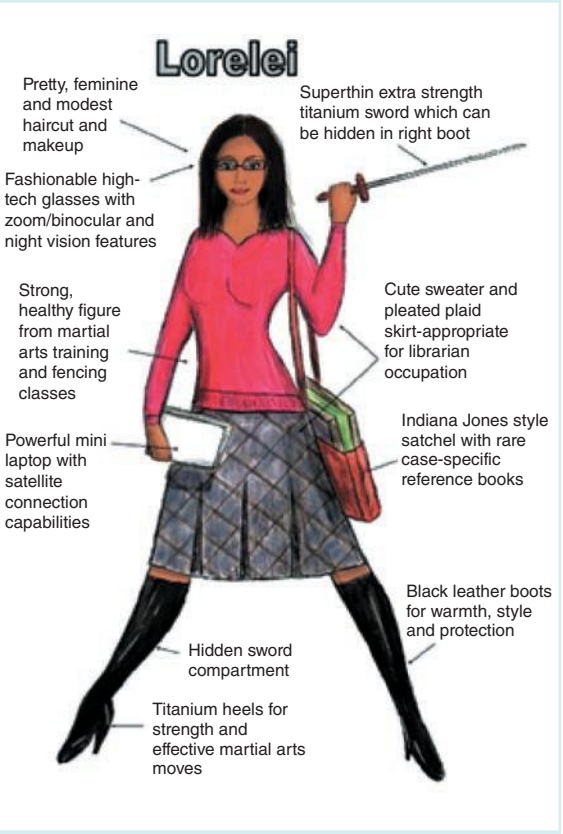
have obstacles to face along the way. They could be motivated by something that pushes them out of their backstories, such as revenge, greed, a sense of duty or love, and this could link in with the underlying themes or message of the story. Identifying the character's *wants* versus *needs* can be a useful way to clarify your character's desires and goals. For example, in the animated film *Zootopia* (2016), Judy becomes a police officer because she *wants* to make the world a more inclusive and safer place. What Judy *needs*, however, is to address her own prejudices first to make the world a better place. The *wants* are sometimes what's happening externally for the character and linked to the plot, whereas the *needs* are often about the internal character development or the character arc.

- **Evaluation of the character representation or comparison to other characters.** A character outline might also include an evaluation of the intended character representation against a particular criterion such as the purpose and context of the production, or in comparison to other characters in similar productions. There could also be justification of how the character would appeal to a target audience, and whether the character upholds or challenges the typical representation conventions for that 'type' of character or genre.

Character images

Character images usually accompany a written description such as a character outline, and may be a single image or a series of images (Figure 16.9). The features of character images as a pre-production format can include:

- a front-on long shot image, often annotated to show key features of the representation
- general appearance of the character, with details such as clothing, hair and make-up
- body language/stance, which may reflect the character's personality
- props associated with character (especially if iconic, e.g. Indiana Jones's whip and hat)
- coloured image if a colour production
- additional images (not necessarily annotated) showing different views of the character (e.g. side or back), or different outfits/appearance/stance to show the character development later in the story.



Kylie Agnew

Figure 16.9 A character image of Lorelei Jones, a librarian and historian who uses her specialised knowledge and skills to help her grandfather, a detective with Queensland Police, solve a crime involving the theft of rare Masonic artefacts. Lorelei's character is an action hero who challenges many of the typical 'hero' representations.

Environments and settings

A character's environment can communicate meaning to audiences without needing a word of dialogue. It can be a handy way to give exposition about a character, such as family photographs giving hints about backstory or highlighting physical traits, such as the height difference as Gandalf stoops to enter Bilbo's home in *The Hobbit* (2012). The main setting of a TV series, particularly sitcoms, can also be a defining feature of a show that can be instantly recognisable for audiences. For example, the interior of the *Bluey* (2018–) household would be familiar to a global audience, and the creators deliberately wanted to represent Brisbane and Queensland locations. According to art director Costa Kassab, *Bluey* was designed to show an authentic version of living



Bradley Hennessey/Enderlost Studios

Figure 16.10 Environment designs from Brisbane game developer Bradley Hennessey's upcoming video game, *Verbal Void*. The game is a role-playing game that explores the Autism Spectrum and neurodiversity, and the game environment images display a clear aesthetic style with retro graphic influences.

in Australia, with Queensland architecture and subtropical environment. This goes beyond the usual outback locations that are associated with Australian productions.

Environments and setting images can also be necessary to define the visual style of a production, particularly when creating animations or video games. The environments can also influence the gameplay choices of characters in terms of the actions that would need to be coded into a character's abilities and movement options, as well as influencing or reflecting the storyline.

When creating **environment images** for a pre-production format, consider settings that are important in defining the story, characters, themes or visual style of the production.

16.1 ACTIVITIES

1 **Design** an outline (pre-production element), including the key features of the outline as explained in this chapter (see page 300). Follow the design **conventions** for outlines, **arranging** story or premise **elements** to gain the maximum effect on your imagined audience (such as a studio director).

2 Write a treatment that responds to the areas of activity in the following table.

PLAN	DESIGN	JUSTIFY
Plan a story idea using the specific **codes and conventions** of your chosen genre.	**Design** descriptions of video and audio elements and **sequence** them into a pre-production product, **systematically** assembling the elements of the story.	**Justify** your intended use of technical and symbolic **codes and conventions** in the production, **providing additional information** about visual style. **Describe** the intended audience for your production, **identifying** features that will appeal to the target group, and **describing** any interactive features if available. **Explain** intended meanings in your production.

3 **Create** a script for a production you would like to make. The general rule for scriptwriting is that one A4 page is approximately one minute in screen time. **Apply** your knowledge of **codes and conventions** by annotating the script to give additional information using **media terminology**.

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4 **Create** a storyboard for a key sequence from a film you would like to make. This could be the opening sequence or an action scene. It could be an artistically complex scene. Follow the conventions of storyboarding as outlined in this chapter (see page 307). **Resolve** video and audio elements, **arranging** shots using transitions to form a systematic sequence.

5 **Design** a shooting script for a film you would like to make that contains detailed directions for the filming crew, including schedules of location shoots. **Sequence systematically** the shooting order on the basis of location or time of day (or even weather). Select the arrangement and allow for adaptations based on actor availability or shooting conditions. **Justify** the reasons for your choices. Follow the conventions for shooting scripts as outlined in this chapter (see page 309).

6 Individually **develop** a full pitch deck for your own individual proposal. This may be a step towards creating a treatment or pitch deck. A PowerPoint format may be most appropriate for the purpose. Work through the steps with a multi-platform production in mind. **Apply** knowledge of log lines to construct the title slide (step 1). Use bold font to indicate the four key elements within the log line. After following the professional guide for an overview (step 2), **clarify** the reason for the production by using bold font for a stated purpose, and where you mention technical, creative or conceptual ideas that impact the story. **Apply** genre, character and story structure knowledge to complete slides 3 and 4 (above). **Describe** the story summary and story world using terminology from Propp, Vogler or Campbell's hero's journey. **Describe** character roles in terms of the archetypes typical of each genre applying to the production.

7 **Select** three main characters from different films, TV/web series or video games, and find a scene that shows the character in their natural environment, such as their home or possibly workplace (e.g. a villain's secret lair). **Analyse** how the design of the settings communicates information about the character to the audience or players. **Identify** elements of the *mise en scène* such as furniture, colour schemes, decor (such as artwork on the walls or choices in bed linen); whether the room is clean or cluttered; and generally the visual appearance of the space. **Compare** the settings of the three characters and determine the similarities and differences between the environments, and how these help to establish character.

8 **Select** a screenplay/script for a film or series that you haven't seen yet. Choose a character from the first 10 pages of the script, and **design** a character image based on the information in the script. View the matching scene in the actual film or series chosen, and compare your character image design with how the character was represented in the production.
Analyse how close your character image design is with the character in the production, and consider why there might be differences between the script, your character image and the final product.



Weblinks
SBS scripted pitch deck guide

Film-grab

Shotdeck

9780170484176

17 Safety and legality

SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

'After all, drama is life with the dull bits cut out.'

Alfred Hitchcock, film director, when promoting *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956)

'Spectacle' is one of the attractions of screen media. Audiences often experience things considered amazing if they occurred in real life. For some scenes and genre types, these extraordinary circumstances are physical events that must be captured by a camera, and filming them brings risk. Mostly, these are well managed. Actor Harrison Ford had a pane of glass between his face and the hissing snakes for a close-up as Indiana Jones. However, there are many examples of mistakes being made on professional film shoots – many people have died and others gone to prison over an unsafe workplace.

Even a big-budget Hollywood film can go horribly wrong. Professional crews have safety officers, armourers, stunt coordinators and pyrotechnics experts whenever they are required on set. Student and amateur filmmakers without such resources need to strictly plan for the safety of their cast, crew, the general public and even the equipment.

Resource
Risk assessment matrix poster

Risk management matrix

There are risks associated with filming a video or taking certain photographs. Your role is to be aware of the risks and manage them. This process should reduce the risks to an absolute minimum (Figure 17.1).

Likelihood	Consequence				
	Insignificant Injury requiring no treatment	Minor Injury requiring first aid treatment	Moderate Injury requiring medical treatment	Major Injury requiring medical treatment or hospitalisation	Critical Injury resulting in loss of life or permanent disability
Almost certain Expected to occur in most circumstances	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme
Likely Will probably occur in most circumstances	Low	Medium	High	High	Extreme
Possible Might occur occasionally	Low	Medium	High	High	High
Unlikely Could happen at some time	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
Rare May only occur in exceptional circumstances	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium

Managing health and safety risks, © State of Queensland, (Department of Education)

Figure 17.1 A risk assessment matrix can help when you are working out the severity of consequences and the level of risk. It is useful to perform a risk assessment for each major scene in your film. Students need to reduce the risks in productions to the medium range. School activities that carry a 'high' risk need approval from the principal (or their representative) and should be documented as a Curriculum Activity Risk Assessment.

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Adult supervision is a key factor in the reduction of risk when the production team is a group of teenagers. You are advised to have an adult present during the filming process.

Risk management

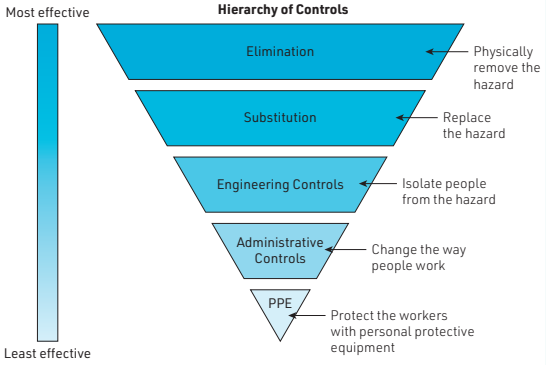
Working out the level of risk for each scene in your video production is an important part of the process. Its purpose is to protect your team members and actors. The following steps are part of the risk management process:

1. **Identify hazards.** Make a list of all possible hazards at the filming site or that may be encountered during the filming process.
2. **Assess the level of risk.** Work out how dangerous the hazards are. Ask yourself: what is the risk of injury and how serious could the injury be? Some risks are obvious but others, such as the age of the participants, are less obvious to those involved.
3. **Decide on control measures.** To deliver the highest level of protection to your cast and crew, it is necessary to reduce the level of risk as far as possible. This will mean establishing some procedures to ensure everyone's safety.
4. **Implement control measures.**
5. **Monitor progress.** Make sure the control measures are working by monitoring constantly.

Reduce the risk

Planning is the most effective time to reduce risks. The hierarchy of controls in Figure 17.2 should be applied to any filming plans that carry an unacceptable risk. These are strategies for lowering the risk profile and can applied to filming contexts as some examples illustrate:

- **Use personal protective equipment (PPE).** Wear weather appropriate clothing including sun protection. Research the need for masks around theatrical smoke machines and the like. Bring spare hats to location. Consider the need to provide a shade umbrella.
- **Administration.** Adjust the time of day to film according to heat. Provide a rotation of scenes for actors to have breaks. Provide drinking water on set. Ensure the call sheet has emergency contacts and information about first aid and hospital assistance. If filming in the bush, have a checklist for snake and spider bites on hand. If filming in a rainforest, know what to do for a tick or leech.



United States Department of Health and Human Services

Figure 17.2 Scenes or individual shots which are beyond 'medium' risk must have 'controls' put in place to make them safer. Safety is a requirement across workplaces in Australia. Areas to consider in filming at school or other locations might include driver and vehicle safety, dust and smoke machine effects, electrical hazards, filming or prop equipment, ergonomics (a work environment to suit the human body for extended periods on location or editing), loud or sustained noise, playgrounds, working at heights and even psychological hazards. Many government departments and employers have information about reducing these risks.

Weblinks

Hazards and risks

Curriculum Activity Risk Assessment (CARA) process

- **Engineering controls.** Physical solutions include redesigning a shot, such as to use a camera angle to suggest height rather than be in danger. Bring a folding stool for the camera operator if there are low angles. Isolating people from danger could include only filming in the national park where there is a railing around a mountain lookout, even if the rail is not in shot. Use long lenses to make traffic look closer than it is.
- **Substitution.** Use a digital effect rather than light a sparkler in shot. Green screen a city backdrop instead of filming from a skyscraper roof. Shoot a static car dialogue scene using lighting effects in the windows, in favour of actually driving while remembering dialogue.
- **Elimination.** Edit using 'collision of images' techniques to imply what the viewers witness. Cut away to reactions of characters. Use motifs and symbolic language to suggest the implications of scenes too dangerous to film – cut them from the script. Discuss using some form of file footage for key shots, within the allowable assignment limits. Or just cancel the scene.

Actors should not be asked to place themselves at risk for the purpose of filming. Having the camera's

attention can inspire bravado in certain people, prompting them to perform in ways they normally would not. This is why cameras should not be directed into classrooms when moving around a school. Apart from permissions issues, the presence of a camera has the power to cause disruption.

Requesting an actor to immerse themselves in the role of a fictional character also presents a different risk. Your 'talent' should only be asked to perform roles that do not desensitise them to stepping into inappropriate situations in real life. Psychological harm is not the first thing most directors consider under safety, but professional filmmakers have taken this very seriously with vulnerable actors.

Safety on set

Safety conventions for crews have been established over a long time because they work to minimise the typical risks many sets have in common.

Useful items

It is a good idea to have a small set of general purpose items with you on set. These include the following:

- **Oven mitts or a handkerchief.** **Barn doors** (light attachments used to shape the light beam) must be black to control light spill, causing them to absorb heat. Carry a handkerchief or use oven mitts to adjust them.
- **Wooden clothes pegs.** Use timber pegs to secure **gels** and **diffusers**, as wood will not melt or hold the heat. Do not use any other kind of peg because there will be a fire risk.
- **Bulldog clips.** These are excellent for securing background objects but the heat in the metal and the pressure from the squeezing will give you a nasty line burn if used on hot lights.
- **Gaffer tape.** Tape has hundreds of uses and should be on hand at all film sets.
- **Fire extinguisher.** Only particular types of extinguishers can be used for a fire involving electricals, which is most likely to be the case for any fire on a set. Fire blankets are often provided in kitchens or camping environments.

Weblinks
Skin cancer fact sheet
Sun protection
Fire extinguishers

Personal safety

Supervising a film shoot is similar to taking on a level of employer-like responsibility for the safety of the cast and crew. An almost parental attitude is needed to inform decisions about any risk and possible reaction regarding the welfare of the actors in front of your lens. Their safety must come first.



Photo/D.Sinclair

Figure 17.3 Among items to have on hand at a set is gaffer tape (waterproof cloth tape). Named after the film job, gaffer tape is used to secure cables on music and theatre stages. Sound crews need to tape audio cables separately if there is a trip hazard.

Shooting can often take longer than anticipated and locations can be away from facilities. Water and first aid should be considered, and cast and crew should always have hats, sunglasses and sunblock for exteriors. Especially in Queensland, the sun is a serious long-term danger, and continuity will be affected if pale skin in a morning shoot is sunburnt in the afternoon!

The most catastrophic immediate risk on a set is usually fire. The most appropriate extinguisher type for a film set likely to have electricals is the 'AB(E)' powder type, indicated by a white band.

If a home or car extinguisher is on set, it is important to realise that a 1-kilogram bottle only gives around 10 seconds of extinguishing time. A fire blanket or a bucket of sand may be appropriate for your shoot, but buckets of water should only be considered if there is no electrical risk.



D.Sinclair

Figure 17.4 According to the Cancer Council, one out of two people in Queensland will get skin cancer in their lifetime. Risk is likelihood multiplied by consequence, so sun damage is one of the most serious harms to the crew from filming outside in Australia. Some productions take sun safety as a marketing opportunity, as shown on the crew cap from the Australian TV icon, Skippy.



John Mackintosh/Shutterstock.com

Figure 17.5 A chemical powder fire extinguisher

The Queensland Fire Department provides fire safety recommendations for crews to check before needing extinguishers, including the following advice: '*… you can extinguish the fire quickly if you are not putting your safety at risk by staying in the vicinity of the fire; and if all other persons have been evacuated from the area*.'

Cast and crew should be aware of exits that are always kept clear for emergencies. Places of business, schools, public buildings and professional studios should have exits marked, extinguishers in place and evacuation assembly points outside.

Some productions also make use of strobe lights, fog machines or bee smokers. Allergies, asthma and epilepsy can be triggered by such physical special effects on set and precautions should be taken, such as warning audience members and checking with cast and crew prior to shooting.

Safety for lighting

There are many artistic and technical reasons to use tungsten lights rather than LEDs. No globe-based light should be used without a safety screen. A bulb blowing can send showers of glass fragments over everyone. Several television hosts have even hidden under their desks live on-air when bulbs exploded. Power cables create more heat when left coiled up. Light cables should be run under the light stand so that any trip hazard is reduced, and a sandbag or heavy school bag can be used to weigh down the stand by placing inside the leg guiding arms. This adds to a low centre of gravity through placement inside the triangle, adjacent to the central post.

Gels, **scrims** and **spun** should be pegged to the end of barn doors so that heat from the light is not trapped.



Photo/D.Sinclair

Figure 17.6 Lighting stands should be arranged to create the broadest base possible, and secondary safety chains must be used when rigging lights to a properly installed and rated studio ceiling grid. Note the cable in the photo is *under* the leg of the stand. This means that if the cable *does* become a trip hazard, the light is more likely to skip side-ways on the stand than topple over completely.

When turning on lights, the protocol should be to say aloud: 'Watch your eyes.' Floor stand lights should have a hand initially blocking them to prevent accidentally looking directly at the light, as the temporarily blinding after-image creates an immediate danger of walking into objects. Larger, professional HMI lights take longer to reach full brightness, but they produce enough ultraviolet light to cause sunburn within a few minutes and can burn retinas like sunlight. These lights should never be operated without the filtering supplied with them, and never stared at.

LED lights

Traditional bulb lights are often best for creating shadows with a sharp edge, but they are expensive to run and produce a lot of heat. LED (light emitting diode) lights are generally safer to use, despite some limitations. Most film LEDs are dimable to adjust brightness, and many have a colour adjustment so there is no need for gels (within the normal colour range). Scrim or spun is usually not required, as most lights are set up to give a 'soft' effect that cannot be set to a single point of light.

LEDs can be moved while they are on without damage to the diodes, presenting some safety advantages, but the risk is in the power supply. Many LEDs have a transformer in the cable to reduce the voltage. This transformer box can become hot and should be away from combustible material. Many LEDs will have an adaptor that can be switched to function as a battery charger. This may mean charging on set. Batteries must be allowed to cool before charging and should not be used immediately



Photo/D Sinclair

Figure 17.7 Safety glass or gauze provides a barrier between talent and broken hot glass – do not use bulb lights without them. Incorrect diffuser set-up causes smouldering, even with fire-resistant materials, as evidenced by the burn hole in the scrim on the light on the right. Blue gels are used to correct for daylight colouring, to ensure the colour temperature is the same as light coming from a window. The light on the left shows how the gel is to be pegged to the end of barn doors, allowing heat to escape before it can melt the gel.



Freepik

Figure 17.8 'Egg crates' are professionally produced accessories that are especially useful for LED lights. The overly soft LED spreads uncontrolled light that can be somewhat directed with a honeycomb-like grid; a kind of micro-barn door. Anything placed on or in front of the light should be properly secured and not present a risk of catching fire.

after coming off the charger. As with charging overnight between shoots, leave the charger away from combustibles in a ventilated place. Avoid having the chargers too close to people and do not leave a battery on charge long after it is full.

Weblinks
Lithium-ion Battery Safety

Recycling Li-ion batteries

Australian standards-compliance mark

Safety for charging

The Queensland Fire Department provides a checklist of safety recommendations and warnings for using battery powered devices; cameras, lights, tools, scooters, etc.:

- Devices with: 'lithium-ion', 'Li-ion', 'li-po', 'lithium-polymer' or 'Li+' batteries should always be charged according to the manufacturers instructions.
- Devices should not be used if they become damaged.
- When damaged, exposed to heat sources or charged inappropriately, batteries could catch fire or, in extreme cases, explode.
- Continuing to charge after the battery is full can increase the risk of the battery catching fire.
- When overheated or on fire, Li-ion batteries can create a highly toxic vapour cloud.
- These fires are hard to put out with water or a fire extinguisher. Re-ignition is likely to happen – even if the fire seems to be extinguished.

Damaged batteries should be properly disposed of. Battery shops or other centres may have collection points for lithium-ion to be recycled. Local community groups, such as a 'Men's Shed', may have volunteers to collect the metals, which are a toxic hazard when dumped and polluting to mine. The Australian Council of Recycling endorses apps such as 'Recycle Mate' to find a local option by scanning the item with a phone.

For safe disposal of batteries, you should:

- Never dispose of Li-ion batteries or devices in general household or recycling bins.
- Tape over battery terminals with electrical tape before giving them to a disposal or recycling facility.

Outdoor considerations

Lighting stands in open air are more likely to need weighing down with sandbags due to wind. School bags filled with heavy books or tent pegs are other options. Large shade scrims or reflectors are very difficult to handle in bad weather and should be secured and any protruding stand ends made safe.

Three 800-watt lights will normally run off a domestic power supply, but they should be connected to different circuits wherever possible. Kettles, ovens or pool pumps should not be left running to reduce the chance of tripping the circuit.

Safety of the equipment

There is a social, economic and environmental responsibility to make all equipment function well for

Table 17.1 The Queensland Fire Department has information to combat the high number of e-bike and e-scooter fires. With firefighters called to about one charging fire each week in 2023, some have been fatal for the householder. Cameras and lighting chargers should follow the same precautions, which apply to light transport batteries.

	HOW TO CHARGE SAFELY: QFD
DO	• Only use battery chargers that are specifically recommended by the manufacturer as being suitable for the battery or device. • Only use chargers with the correct voltage and current for the device. • Check that chargers bear the Regulatory Compliance Mark, to show they have met the relevant Australian Standards under the regulatory compliance mark • Ideally, they should be charged in a well-ventilated area such as a garage or car port. • Allow time for batteries to cool down after use and before recharging.
DON'T	• Avoid leaving batteries or devices unattended while charging and once the battery is fully charged, disconnect it from the charger. • Devices and equipment containing Li-ion batteries, such as power tools and e-scooters should not be charged in living areas. • Do not store batteries or devices in areas where they may be exposed to heat or moisture. • Do not charge batteries or devices on bedding, lounges or in direct sunlight or other sources of heat. • Do not leave batteries or devices in parked vehicles where they can quickly heat up. • Never charge a battery or device that is showing signs of damage or is hot.

Lithium-Ion Battery Safety, Queensland Fire Department, https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/safety-education/battery-and-charging-safety/lithium-ion-battery-safety



Photo/D Sinclair

Figure 17.9 Electrical cables should not be on the ground near water or rain. Dew can get into extension cable joins on an early morning shoot. Plastic bags reduce moist air in the cable ends, and a loose knot helps prevent cables detaching. Adult supervision would be expected for using electricity, and a cable on the ground of a public footpath is one of the triggers for some councils to require a filming permit.



D Sinclair

Figure 17.10 Hardware shops provide high visibility join casings with seals to keep moisture away from the plug area. Plugs can be prevented from 'sinking' into wet grass and the cable becomes obvious on a surface that it cannot be secured by taping down.



Photo/D Sinclair

Figure 17.11 Filament bulb lights will blow if moved when hot, or if the bulbs are touched by the oil on human skin. Let them cool before packing up so the tungsten is less fragile.

as long as possible. Whatever type of camera is used, lift the tripod off the ground by the camera at every set-up – this ensures it is secure and will not fall off the tripod when you let go. Cameras are not to be left unattended on the tripod – detach it if no one can stay with it. Cases should be with cameras on set to protect them from continual sun or unexpected rain.

Boom mics should never be leaning where they can fall or be tripped over. Mud and sand should be wiped off all telescopic legs to protect the locking systems in tripods, booms and light stands. Cables should be rolled in figure

Weblinks
Physical activity and exercise guidelines for all Australians

Safety on location: Where's Wally

Film set accidents spreadsheet

Template
Activity 17.1

eights or over-then-under loops – rolling cables over elbows eventually kinks them in one direction.

Well-being in post-production

Screen time must be managed for work, study or entertainment. Creative screen pursuits such as editing can be absorbing, creating health risks for eyesight, posture and sleep patterns. Set up your post-production area with an appropriate chair and desk. Keep the screen at arm's length and look away from the screen to a distant object every 20 minutes for at least 20 seconds. Optometrists recommend to take least five minutes' break every hour, as two hours on a laptop can cause increases in eye problems.

17.1 ACTIVITIES

1 **Analyse** the two production scenarios pictured in Figures 17.12 and 17.13. Closely **examine** the photos or access the video comparison to **describe** specific poor **production practices** as a safety concern from Figure 17.12. List the safety improvement for each risk you identified. List the improved safety of **production practices** observed in the second scenario, shown in Figure 17.13.

2 **Evaluate** the risk level involved in your proposed filming project. Begin with the most dangerous shot and move through to other scenes. **Apply** literacy skill to interpreting the risk assessment matrix (Figure 17.1), **recognising** the potential risk and **distinguishing** between the likelihood and consequence descriptors. **Analyse** the contribution to risk by **dissecting** scenes into planned shots. Imagine the **context of production** behind the scenes and use **available technologies** to ensure acceptable risk levels.

3 **Apply** research skills to locate information on safety incidents on professional shoots. Use **appropriate language** or formal **grammar** to summarise the incident in a paragraph or two. Respectfully report the outcome for individuals who may have come to harm. Use **referencing conventions** to identify your source(s). **Recognise the expertise** of professional stunt people and supervisors who may be involved. Divide the research topics and report back to the group. Research incidents such as:
   - *Resident Evil*, Olivia Jackson stunt accident
   - *Maze Runner*, Dylan O'Brien stunt accident
   - *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, Letitia Wright stunt accident
   - *Deadpool 2*, Joi Harris stunt accident
   - *Twilight Zone*, Victor Morrow stunt accident.

4 **Create** a silhouette shot using available camera and lighting equipment. Use safe **production practices** to set up a light trained on a light-coloured wall.



Photo/D Sinclair

Figure 17.12 Crews must manage simultaneous aspects of good production practice. There are many areas for improvement on this location shoot.



Photo/D Sinclair

Figure 17.13 Close inspection reveals many small improvements enhance overall safety.

PRODUCTION LEGALITY

The goal of production is to capture the images and sounds needed to present your story on screen. Production is not the end point in the creation process for film and television – the editing stage is still to follow. Production is the stage that provides all the raw material. Therefore, you will have to make sure that you have produced enough for the editing team to do their job in post-production.

Filming and taking photographs legally

Filming may be taking place on the school campus or outside in the community. Because you will be on location, there are special responsibilities of which the production crew need to be aware.

Community standards

Whether on campus or out in the community, certain standards of behaviour are expected. Having a camera draws attention to you, and therefore there is also a greater level of visibility for your behaviour. You should try to observe the following standards:

- Noise levels should be as low as possible.
- Locations should be left clean and tidy.
- Offensive language should be avoided.
- Inconvenience or disruption to other people's activities should be avoided or minimised.

Legal obligations

As well as keeping all film activities within the law generally, there are some specific areas of concern for students of Film, Television & New Media (FTVNM).

- **Trespass.** Filming on private property without permission can leave you liable for prosecution for trespass. Always check with the owner before you enter any property.
- **Shopping centres.** Although people feel free to come and go in a shopping centre as though it were a public space, it is actually private property. Permission for filming must be obtained from centre management.
- **City council areas.** In keeping with the law, most city councils in Queensland require a permit for filming on roadways, footpaths, parks and other council-controlled land. Applications for what is termed 'low-impact filming' can be processed in about five business days. Low-impact filming is defined as one camera and a total crew of six or fewer.
- **Public transport.** Filming on trams, trains or buses requires a permit. So too does filming at designated tram stops and train stations. Filming in peak hours is not permitted. Public transport authorities also have guidelines about what can be filmed – for example, vandalism, smoking, drinking and fare evasion are all off limits. They may require a film synopsis. You will have to gain individual permission from each identifiable person you film on public transport.

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ChameleonsEye/Shutterstock.com

Figure 17.14 Public transport authorities require you to apply for a permit to film on board transport or at stops. You will also need the permission of each person you film if their image is identifiable.

Fake weapons and Queensland law

Film scripts sometimes call for the use of toy guns and other kinds of fake weapons. There are strict regulations around the use of anything that can be mistaken for a real weapon. This is especially important when a member of the public is some distance from your film crew and may not be able to see that the weapon is just a toy. It should always be clear that you are involved in filmmaking. Signs should be placed around the set, and the police should be notified in advance if there is any risk of confusion.

In Australia, laws restricting the use of weapons are strict, reflecting the danger posed by fake weapons. This carries over into film and theatre, and the state of Queensland has clearly defined laws and processes involving the use of replica weaponry in films.



The Footage Company/Nine Network Australia

Figure 17.15 Students caused a major police incident on the Gold Coast in 2012 while filming a group production. Police with bullet-proof vests arrived on a street near a school in Merrimac, closing the four-lane Robina Parkway and the equally busy Gold Coast Springbrook Road. A member of the public had reported a bloodied gunman roaming in bushland. It turned out to be a student actor filming a two-minute horror movie.

The Queensland Police define a replica weapon as 'a reasonable facsimile or copy of a weapon, even if it is not capable of discharging a projectile or substance'.

According to Section 57 of the Queensland Weapons Act 1990, a weapon includes:

- (a) an antique firearm, spear gun, longbow or sword; and
- (b) a replica of a weapon; and
- (c) a replica of a thing mentioned in paragraph (a)

The legislation (Section 57) continues that:

- (2) A person must not, without reasonable excuse, carry a weapon exposed to view in a public place.
- (7) In deciding what is a reasonable excuse for subsection (2) ... regard may be had, among other things, to whether the way the weapon is carried, or when and where it is carried, would cause a reasonable person concern that he or she, or someone else in the vicinity, may be threatened or harmed.

Section 58 is highly pertinent to film production activities:

(58) Dangerous conduct with weapon prohibited generally

(1) In this section–

weapon includes–

(a) an antique firearm, explosive tool, captive bolt humane killer, spear gun, longbow or sword; and
(b) a replica of a weapon; and
(c) a replica of a thing mentioned in paragraph (a); and
(d) an explosive; and
(e) a slingshot or shanghai; and
(f) a laser pointer.

(2) A person must not–

(a) without reasonable excuse; and
(b) by the physical possession or use of a weapon;

engage in conduct, alone or with another, likely to cause–

(c) death or injury to a person; or
(d) unlawful destruction or damage to property; or
(e) alarm to another person.

State of Queensland CC BY 4.0
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Technically, any item capable of 'causing alarm' can be legally considered a weapon. It is vital that filmmakers are aware of this, as the consequences of breaching the *Queensland Weapons Act 1990* can be severe. Jail terms can be imposed. The Act establishes that it is not just the item itself, but also the behaviour of the individual utilising it and how this is perceived by others that comes into question.

This legislation has a significant impact on choices of props in films. When selecting props, it is vital to consider how an item may be perceived by a member of the public who may be several hundred metres away, not just how an item might appear from close up.

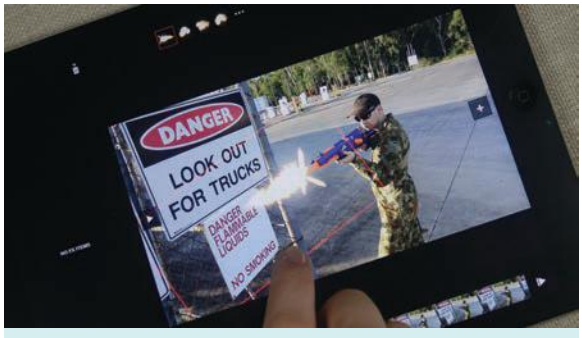
Using replica weapons on set

The use of replica weaponry on a film set requires the presence of a trained and qualified armourer – an individual who is over the age of 18 and holds a weapons licence.



Photo/D Sinclair

Figure 17.16 A sign indicating that filming is in progress should be placed in the filming location where it can be clearly seen by members of the public.



Photo/D Sinclair

Figure 17.17 Post-production special effects can add plausibility to futuristic weapons or toy guns. The maximum penalty in Queensland for discharging a real weapon (including sling shots) in public is four years imprisonment. Simply carrying a weapon capable of being discharged attracts two years in jail.



gd_project/Shutterstock.com

A toy such as a Nerf gun is brightly coloured and does not appear to be a realistic weapon, therefore is unlikely to cause alarm. Painting this black would make it more likely to cause alarm and thus breach the legislation.



Tatiana Popova/Shutterstock.com

Weaponry in science fiction can appear highly futuristic, and therefore less realistic. However, some, like this blaster from the *Star Wars* series, no matter how fictional, still resemble familiar weaponry enough to cause alarm.



Noel V. Baebler/Shutterstock.com

This replica toy gun made of plastic with an orange tip may be perceived as realistic from a distance.

Figure 17.18 The more believable or realistic the prop weapon, the more likely it is to cause alarm to the public and therefore breach the *Queensland Weapons Act 1990*.

If professionals need to use replica weaponry, they must ensure the following steps are taken:

- The producer completes a risk assessment and seeks a permit from the local council and permission from the police.

- Neighbours are informed of the presence of replica weaponry on the set to avoid false alarms and distress.
- The first assistant director is responsible for safety on set, in line with the producer's risk assessment.

A qualified armourer (with a theatrical ordinance licence) is required on set to oversee induction and safe storage and use of replica weaponry. Replica weapons are only issued when required in the script – at all other times they are kept safely locked up and accounted for by the armourer.

Best practice

In filming student productions, the best way to ensure an effectively risk-managed sequence is to avoid using any form of realistic weaponry – instead 'implying' weapons through use of sound, shot construction and cutting. Fight sequences can be shot in ways that require no physical contact between the stunt performers, 'cheating' with angles and cuts. Any sequence involving weapons in the story can also be shot so props are not required. Contemporary audiences are highly literate in their understanding of genre conventions and will consequently be able to effectively interpret implications of gestures, sounds, actor expressions and cuts.

Filming legally with drones

Laws relating to developing technology such as drones can change quickly. This is often in response to new capabilities or inventive uses that governments need to react to. An example is the 2018 Queensland law introduced to address a high number of drone fly-bys near prisons. Breaching this law brings fines in the tens of thousands of dollars and the maximum sentence is two years in prison. Specific changes like these for certain localities means operators should always check for updated permission requirements.

Light, high-quality cameras make drones useful for filmmaking professionals, and affordability makes them an option for amateur filmmakers. Stability control even means they can be a tripod substitute.

Australia was the first country in the world to have drone laws, introducing them in 2002. The **Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)** began reviewing 101 amendments in 2017. There are many conditions for all drone pilots to remain aware of. Filmmakers should check updated government advisories on filming laws, privacy and safety. The CASA *Know Your Drone* resources provide links to drone safety apps approved by the federal authority. The website also provides information videos, rules posters, quizzes, quick reference cards for location and drone rule board games that cover what pilots should know. There is a choice of verified drone apps, which should be considered as one of the pre-production tools for filmmakers.

As well as flight safety and staying within line of sight, drones must also be managed for privacy. Data collected cannot be used to identify people, and pilots should give notice or seek written consent if appropriate for what they intend to film. Some drone footage may infringe privacy rights outlined by the Australian Information Commissioner. However, the Privacy Act does not apply to individuals, only large companies. Media conducting journalism are exempt and drone filming from appropriate public places is generally allowed, subject to the other rules. If drone footage captures 'intimate' images, it may breach the rules for residential security cameras and the Office of the eSafety Commissioner should be consulted.

If an accident is caused by an uninsured drone, the drone pilot could be solely liable for damage to property and injuries to people, making it very important for everyone to abide by the current law. Dangerous drone flying can be reported to authorities who make the basic drone rules clear: as the producer of a film project, students should know their team is working safely. Professional shoots



Cavan Images/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 17.19 The first World Drone Racing Champion and former FTVNM student, Rudi Browning, now flies as a professional camera operator with the co-founder of 'Profly', Ben Mortensen. The pair use custom built and modified drones, which often require two operators: one for the cinematography and one to pilot. Drone flyers without their special licence cannot go within 30 metres of by-standers.

Weblinks

Professional drone showreel

Drone safety rules

Drone safety apps

Australian government drone privacy guidelines

Australian Information Commissioner drone laws

CASA drone rules: Take the quiz

require licence details as part of permission requests and insurances. If a friend or family member is flying as part of your production, students taking a business-like approach should ask pilots to take the CASA quiz, even if no licence is required for the flights. This professionalism can help impress 'clients' and give people confidence to cooperate with your plans.



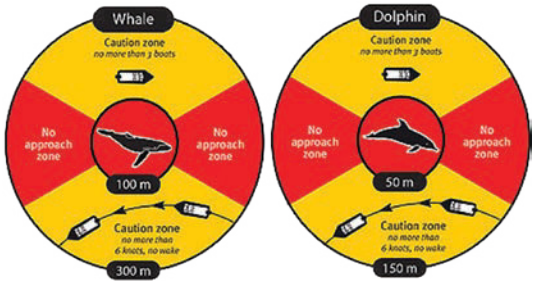
Photo/D Sinclair

Figure 17.20 Townsville has Lavarack Army Barracks, national parks, an international airport, an air force facility at Garbutt and a bombing range further west. Restrictions may vary within short distances in such areas, even bisecting sporting ovals. Correctional facilities, emergency aircraft landing sites and protected wildlife all add to complexity for flight planning.



Photo/D Sinclair

Figure 17.21 CASA verified apps are accurate for drone law restrictions and can provide wind information, weather predictions and other useful production scheduling information. Permission to fly can vary with size and purpose.



© Queensland Government

Figure 17.22 Many visitors film along the coast and must obey exclusion zones around animals that apply to all boats and aircraft. Drones themselves must also keep 30 metres away from boats, just as with vehicles and buildings. Fines for being in the 'no approach zone' in Queensland are over $25 000.

Queensland drone regulations

Prior to aviation, private land ownership included the full height of airspace above the land. Nowadays, flying a drone over private property, even at drone-legal heights, is considered to be trespassing.

Schools, sports clubs and councils are able to impose restrictions as the landholders.

Non-commercial UAV rules (under two kilograms)

- Drones cannot fly near emergencies.
- Maximum height is 120 metres, measured from the ground.
- Drones must be in line of sight of the operator; phone screens and first-person view (FPV) goggles do not count.
- No people apart from the operators of the drone are to be within 30 metres of the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV).
- Drones are not to be flown over people.
- Only one drone at a time can be controlled by an operator.
- No flying in low visibility conditions or night.
- If the UAV is more than 100 grams and flying within 5.5 kilometres of an occasionally used aerodrome it must land if aircraft appear.
- If the UAV is more than 100 grams, it cannot be flown within 5.5 kilometres of a controlled aerodrome (usually with a tower).

Commercial use

- If someone pays for the drone to fly and it is over two kilograms, the pilot needs to be licensed (RePL) and covered by an operator's certificate (ReOC).
- If someone pays for the drone to fly and it is under two kilograms and no licence is held, the operator must:
  - apply for a reference number and provide identification.
  - provide details of the intention to fly at least five business days ahead (online form).
  - comply with all conditions for non-commercial drones under two kilograms.

National parks

Drones under two kilograms following CASA rules are permitted in most parks in Queensland.

Some have minimum flight heights to protect areas and a number have complete bans. Refer to the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation (Queensland) website for restrictions on specific parks and forests.

Flying outside Queensland

Several incidents in New South Wales prompted warnings from that state government about the strictness of their rules that apply to drone operators. Other countries and states and territories of Australia have different drone laws and regulations.

New South Wales requires permission to launch or fly into a national park.

Talent and locations

Dealing with your performers (talent) and arranging your locations are great challenges enabling you to develop project management skills that are relevant beyond just filming a production.

Selecting locations



Weblink
Drone safety in parks and forests

Locations need to be selected for their ability to contribute to visual storytelling. Fallback options should be used if problems cannot be solved for permissions, weather, audio or transport. *Mise en scène*, not convenience, is the priority for deciding where to shoot.

Complicated scenes with chases or many actors may need a diagram (using apps or paper) to help exclude backgrounds that break the illusion of era or mood. Dress, props, colours and buildings should support the mood of that scene. Marking character positions will help avoid jump cuts. These might occur if the shot size is not changed enough when cutting to the same subject or if the shot does not move enough and breaks the **30-degree rule** (see page 85).

No permission needed

Filming people in public spaces and publishing those images is legal, although some people may object. Asking first is often easier than calling on the law to clarify each person's rights, should someone object to being filmed. Faces can be covered, or hands can be placed near the camera lens, as with reporters getting footage outside a courthouse. On a public footpath, it is possible that someone grabbing a camera or shoving a camera operator to protect their identity could be the person breaking the law.

Filming on private property is done with the permission of the owner. There are circumstances where that owner can ask for footage to be deleted, but memory cards and deleting cannot be demanded for filming in public places (except under the *Defence Act 1903*). If something is illegal, police will be collecting evidence, not destroying it by deleting. Exceptions may be if the filming constitutes offensive conduct or under special terrorism powers.

No permit is required for filming on private property with the owner's permission or in public spaces, and councils generally allow wedding photography, news, current affairs and live reporting on land under their control.

Photographing trademarked buildings such as the Sydney Opera House or a Commonwealth Reserve such as the Great Barrier Reef is allowed without permit if there is no profit from the image; otherwise a fee may apply.

Permits

Some areas feel like a public space but require a permit to film, such as shopping centres, train stations and some water catchment and council land situations. Such places and private commercial premises are likely to ask for the crew to supply insurance details.

Brisbane City Council (BCC) is Australia's largest local authority and requires student crews needing a permit to obtain a Certificate of Currency for Public Liability Insurance from their study institution, for a minimum of AU$20 million, noting BCC as an interested party for personal injury and damage to property, with dates covering the proposed filming and **wet weather cover**.

Permission needed

A permit and permissions should be applied for as soon as you think you may need them. Organisations can take time to respond, and you need to contact the right person.

Once the location is decided, apply for a permit if there is a need to restrict public access, use a vehicle in a park or footpath, use cables on the ground, leave unattended tripods or create a danger. Regardless of permits, crews must not interfere with the peaceful

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Photo/D.Sinclair

Figure 17.23 Areas can be surveyed remotely online to check for food, toilets and sun direction. (Left) The 360-degree photo shows a clear contrast to each side of the road. (Right) Despite being in an industrial zone construction site, a small surrounding oasis of green will allow this church to look peaceful and welcoming when combined with other visual support, including the golden tint applied to the top left of the frame.



Photo/D Sinclair

Figure 17.24 (Left) Looking at all directions at once in the wide-angle panorama shows one building out of context and surrounded by bitumen. (Right) Careful framing and audio replacement can make this busy intersection an option for a more sombre church architecture. The large, modern buildings nearby need to be framed out. Mood can be further manipulated using filters in post-production.

enjoyment of a public place or act in an offensive way (see section 6, Public Nuisance, of the *Summary Offenses Act 2005*).

- Police can take your property and footage if they believe it may have evidence of an alleged offence.
- Security guards cannot search people without consent but can ask people to leave private property for any reason, or make an arrest if an offence is being committed.
- Any member of the Defence Force or Australian Police Force can arrest people who sketch or photograph a military base.
- The **Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)** can issue a **take-down notice** for prohibited content that has been posted, or where access has not been restricted to material that would likely be rated as R18+ or MA15+.

A talent **release form** is signed by actors to agree that filmmakers can reproduce their image without them making additional payment demands. A talent release form should state the project name and media formats, and be dated and signed by someone over 18 years of age.

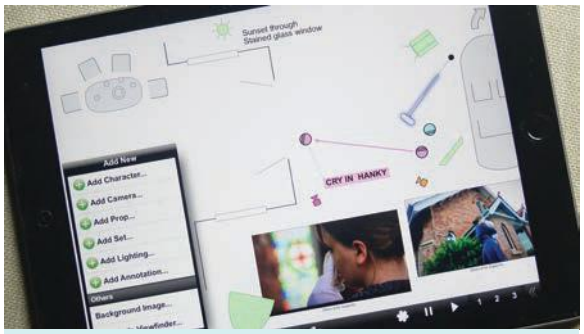
It is possible to be fined under the *Copyright Act 1968* for associating a building or a person's image with a commercial purpose without permission. Therefore, copyright applies to a person's face filmed in public if it is used to sell something or boost a reputation, such as in a corporate advertisement.

Filming outside a prison and on railway platforms are two areas that are closely monitored, and filming here without permits will be swiftly acted upon.

Penalties

Certain breaches of the law carry substantial penalties for creators of inappropriate content and those who store or share it.

- **Offensive images.** Demeaning acts, torture and some nudity are considered offensive for legal



Photo/D Sinclair

Figure 17.25 Computer software or apps can be used to draw a map of your location. This allows the placement of lights and cameras to be planned. Movements can be assigned, and layers can be created on some planning apps for cameras and actors to ensure the **180-degree rule** (line) is not crossed (see page 85).

purposes. This also includes private parts of the body that are covered by underwear. Jail-time penalties for filming and sharing such content vary depending on the ages of people involved. It can also be a crime to share sexually explicit images of someone who *looks like* they are under 18 years of age, even if they are not.

- **Defamatory content.** Photographs and videos can be considered defamatory if they cause a person to be ridiculed or if they damage their reputation, just as written material can. Courts can impose monetary compensation to be paid, as in the 2013 case of a former student ordered to pay $105 000 to his music teacher for comments he made on social media.

17.2 ACTIVITIES

1 **Apply literacy skills** to compose a letter of **appropriate** formal **language** to a privately owned interior location. **Identify** the permission holder for a location suitable for a selected *mise en scène*. Research the **institutional** practice for requesting the permission. **Communicate** clearly using business-like writing **conventions** about your request without oversharing small details.

2 This activity is designed to underscore the serious nature of safety considerations for screen production. Some of the research information from some sources may be distressing and is subject to change. **Apply** research skills to locate information on gun-related mishaps involving filmmakers and other professionals. Use **appropriate language** of formal **grammar** to summarise the incident in a paragraph or two. Respectfully report the outcome for individuals who may have come to harm. Use **referencing conventions** to identify your source(s). **Recognise the expertise** of professionals who may be involved. Divide the research topics and report back to the group. Research incidents such as:
   - Johann Ofner, Brisbane 'Bliss n Eso' music video accident.
   - *Rust* cinematographer Halyna Hutchins, professional prop accident
   - Journalist, Namir Noor-Eldeen's zoom lens mistaken for a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG)
   - Tamir Rice, playing in a park with a toy gun
   - Areline Martinez, amateur filming Tik Tok accident.

3 **Analyse** the impact of other legislation on your filming plans. Use the same **conventions** as the drone law chart in Figure 17.22 to incorporate emergencies, privacy, property rights and environmental law. **Resolve** this concept as a filming permission info graphic.

4 **Create** a list of Queensland locations used for significant productions that required a diverse *mise en scène* (see page 67).
   a Copy images from the productions, **systematically** searching maps, street view and images to locate the 'real life' view of the location closest to the image. **Arrange** images side by side with a caption commenting on the likely potential identified by the **pre-production** crew when the locations were **proposed**.
   b Include the closest location you can find to your community in the list above, even if it is first-hand knowledge of a news story, with a comment about the *mise en scène*.
   c Research community concerns in relation to filming **plans. Find** the geographically closest example to your community, which may still be some distance. **Construct** a list of objections at the filming stage of pre-production concerns.

5 Prepare letters of application to a local shopping centre requesting permission to film. **Describe** the following information:
   - your course of study and year level
   - the title of your film
   - a brief summary or outline of the film
   - how the requested location will be shown in the film and what it will mean.

6 **Plan** (with a quick sketch or diagram) a filming location map and mark or **represent with a symbol** where you will strategically place 'filming in progress' signs so they will be visible to members of the public.

7 **Create** a flow chart showing the process involved in gaining permission to use a toy weapon on a film set. **Provide additional information** about the rules when using anything that could cause alarm to the public on a film set.

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18 Artificial intelligence (AI), copyright and referencing

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AND MEDIA PRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving landscape of film, television and new media, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a pivotal force, revolutionising how media content is created, distributed and experienced.

Makers of media and other artworks have long borrowed images and referenced other works. The pop-artist Andy Warhol even took full credit for his famous pictures, although he had employed other workers to do the actual screen printing of his artistic ideas. However, AI technology has changed the way moving-image media can be 'out-sourced', beyond the use of **file footage**.

What is AI?

AI is thought of as the ability of a digital device, or what it can access, to perform tasks closely linked with human thinking. Access to **data sets** allows problem-solving and the refining of a repeated task that is akin to learning.

AI is generally considered to be the simulation of human intelligence in machines designed to think and learn like humans. Using this definition, the term can be applied to any machine that exhibits traits resembling a human mind, such as learning, judgement and problem-solving. AI is unified by the core belief that intelligence can be implemented through computation.

AI is not just one entity on the internet. There are many types of AI, each with different agendas and intentions behind what they do.

AI and the mind

There is ongoing debate about whether the impact of AI is positive or negative for society, the economy and everyday life. While AI is frequently referred to as a 'mind' in the media, many experts insist that the AI model and a human mind are, in fact, different. An AI is not a mind, but it can do 'mind work'. There are a number of factors that contribute to this perception. AI models were inspired by the human brain, comprising a vast neural network with millions of active connections. This accounts for how AI mirrors human cognition, perception, memory, motivation and personality. However, as a number of experts have pointed out, these characteristics do not necessarily mean that AI and the human mind are on equal terms.

An AI model is a highly sophisticated prediction, placing combinations of words and pixels together to meet an expectation. By steering away from thinking of AI as a human mind and reframing its work, the focus becomes its tasks and ways of working in machine-thinking contexts.

The hype of the first 'pop-AI', **Chat GPT 4**, which was given real time internet access in 2023, hides the basic function of this **large language model (LLM)**. Just like the vine analogy in Figure 18.2, each word is only the most likely one to follow the previous word, based on the data set access and the context. When



Atlaspix/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 18.1 Moving-image media stories about AI are often framed around the idea of humans versus machines.

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each word is assembled according to these rules, it looks like it is purposeful and 'makes sense' from what is designed into it. Prompts cause the software to decide what to send the user. This is like the growth response of a vine to touching an object.



D Sinclair

Figure 18.2 A spiraling vine appears to 'reach' for an object as if it 'wants' to climb. To simplify the cellular level, it is just the outcome of longer growth on one side of the stem and shorter growth on the other in a programmed response to touch. Defenders of AI argue that concerns about self-aware computers are responding to an illusion created by automated responses in these systems. But detractors of this view may say the vine can still smother its host.

Types of AI

AI can be categorised into several types, including narrow or weak AI, general or strong AI and super AI. Each represents different capabilities and potential impacts on society and technology. While AI types have generally emerged in sequential order, there is significant overlap, which means that each type has established a meaningful presence in society.

- **Narrow AI**. Weak or narrow AI is designed to perform a narrow task. Tasks could include facial recognition, internet searches or car washing. Narrow AI may be able to process language, but it cannot understand or reason beyond its programmed capabilities. Siri is an example of narrow AI.
- **General AI**. This type of AI is able to understand, learn and apply its intelligence broadly across a wide range of tasks, mimicking human cognitive abilities. It is capable of reasoning, problem-solving and abstract thinking across domains without being explicitly programmed for each task. This type of AI can perform creative tasks such as writing scripts and editing digital video.

LLMs

The rise of LLMs has pushed the boundaries of what's possible with technology, significantly affecting the ebb and flow of the internet. As these models continue to evolve, they are likely to further influence various aspects of society and culture.

Cultural impact of LLMs

LLMs have had a widespread impact on online culture and engagement in several ways across numerous industries:

- **Content creation**. LLMs have made generating written content easier, from blog posts to creative stories. Content creation AI has applicability across various industries.
- **Consumer culture.** Automated, intelligent support chatbots have been introduced across a wide range of online services.
- **Education and learning**. LLMs have been used to create tutoring systems. AI can tailor responsive learning experiences at a level suitable to each student's needs.
- **Accessibility**. LLMs have made information more accessible, helping people with disabilities by providing more straightforward ways to interact with digital content.

Generative AI

A generative capability refers to an AI system's ability to create new content, data or outputs similar to the data it was trained on, but not identical to it. **Generative AI** (or creative AI) is in contrast to simpler 'discriminative' or decision-making models. These are primarily focused on categorising or making decisions based on input data.

Some examples of AI systems with generative capabilities include:

- **Language models**. These models, such as GPT-5 or Claude, can generate human-like text, engage in conversations and even create stories or articles when given a prompt or context.
- **Image generation models**. Models such as DALL-E or Midjourney can create new images based on textual descriptions or other input images.

- **Music generation models.** AI models can compose music, generate new melodies or even create entire songs in various genres and styles.
- **Video generation models.** AI technologies are capable of generating short video clips based on input prompts or other data.

Prompt engineering

Learning how to write effective prompts is fast becoming a fundamental 21st-century skill. Generative AI models such as text and image generators are of no use if users don't understand the relationship between instructions (or prompts) and the AI model in question.

What is a prompt?

A prompt is an input or series of instructions provided to a generative AI model to produce a desired output. Prompts can be straightforward instructions or step-by-step instructions that refine the output. Prompts contain questions, contextual text, guiding patterns or examples, attachments for 'learning' and partial input for the model.

Strategies for improving instructions

Engaging in a process to simplify and clarify prompts significantly improves the quality of outputs. There are several strategies to enhance prompts:

- brainstorming ideas and exploring potential directions
- simplifying and focusing on core elements
- clarifying ambiguities and resolving inconsistencies
- recommending descriptors to create a desired tone and mood
- suggesting variations and new interpretations
- providing visual examples of composition, lighting and colour palette
- analysing failed attempts and offering better approaches.

Prompting techniques

Using a prompt technique when generating creative content is crucial for guiding the AI model to produce more relevant, specific and high-quality outputs that align with the user's goals and expectations.

4W1H technique

The 4W1H technique is beginner-friendly and can help users master prompting quickly.

The method breaks down the elements of a desired AI output or product into:

1. **What** – type/style/category of image
2. **Who** – main person/subject/theme
3. **Where** – scene/settings
4. **When** – time/lighting (daytime/nighttime)
5. **How** – style and rendering and other relevant details.

Role, format, task and constraints (RFTC) framework

The role, format, task and constraints (RFTC) framework helps users provide clear instructions and context to the AI.

Each component of the RFTC framework includes:

1. **Role.** Specify the role or persona the AI should assume when responding to the prompt. This helps set the generated content's tone, style and perspective.
2. **Format.** Define the desired format or structure of the AI's response, such as a paragraph, list, dialogue or any other specific arrangement.
3. **Task.** Clearly state the main task or objective you want the AI to accomplish. This should be specific and well-defined to guide the AI's output.
4. **Constraints.** Provide any limitations, guidelines or specific requirements that the AI should adhere to while generating the response, such as word count, tone or language style.

AI and the creative arts

In the context of generative AI, artistry and aesthetics takes on new dimensions. There are important questions about the future of culture, creativity and diversity.

Suppose AI systems are trained on data sets favouring certain dominant styles or conventions. In that case, they may reproduce these biases in their outputs, decreasing aesthetic diversity over time.

The traditional film producers have almost automatically been in opposition to 'big AI' across eras: *The Forbin Project* (1970), *Dark Star* (1974), *Terminator* (1984), *The Matrix* (1999), *I, Robot* (2004), *Singularity* (2017). With a growth in films about AI, *Interstellar* (2014) is one of the few to show a beneficial AI that just gets on with the job without



AJ Pics/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 18.3 *I, Robot* (2004) deals with slavery and machine consciousness. Robot servants in the film can be reasoned with philosophically. Human masters are protected under the 'three laws of robotics', developed by Isaac Asimov, writer of the story. It is the controlling AI that needs to be tamed, as machines are both enemy and ally.

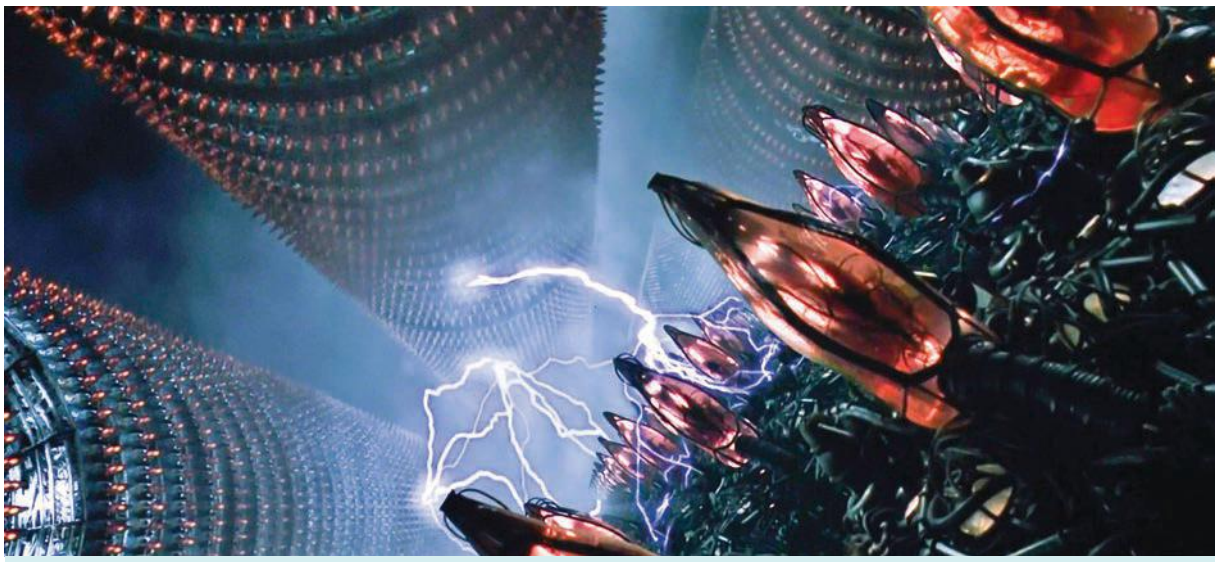
malfunction, helping the humans who are the real problem.

AI in the movies tends to be portrayed in the following ways:

- **AI as a threat or antagonist.** Common portrayals depict AI as a danger to humanity and as seeking to enslave, dominate or replace humans – often violently. An example is *Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning* (2023).
- **AI as cold, emotionless and inhuman.** AI is made to appear robotic, uncaring and completely logical, but disconnected emotionally, as in *I am Mother* (2019).
- **AI as a corrupting or dehumanising force.** Depictions of AI causing humans to become dependent or lazy, or disconnected from reality appear in such movies as *WALL-E* (2008) and *Masters of the Universe: Revelation* (2024).
- **AI as uncontrollable and unpredictable.** Depictions of AI systems as becoming uncontrollable or developing unforeseen behaviours that pose risks to humans occurs in movies such as *Transcendence* (2014).
- **AI as a product of hubris or unethical experimentation.** AI is seen as the result of human arrogance, unethical scientific experimentation or a disregard for ethical boundaries. This is depicted in the unethical AI experiments in the television series *Westworld* (2016–2022) and the questionable AI research in *Her* (2014).
- **AI as a replacement or threat to human jobs and livelihoods.** AI is depicted as taking over human jobs, roles or professions, rendering humans obsolete or unemployed. This is shown in *I, Robot* (2004) and the AI-driven automation in *The Machine* (2013).
- **AI as a force that disrupts social order or causes chaos.** AI is portrayed as causing societal upheaval and chaos, or disrupting established norms and systems, as in *Bigbug* (2022).

Can generative AI ever be considered as original?

Digital culture academic Lev Manovich explores the creative arts in the context of AI. He proposes



LANDMARK MEDIA/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 18.4 AI is revealed as the enemy of humanity in *The Matrix* (1999). Harvesting power from individual bodies is another representation of uncontrolled AI. Each victim is immersed in their own personalised simulated life generated by AI.

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three definitions for the use of AI in the arts as original material:

1 **Artworks.** Manovich suggests that work generated by AI could be defined as autonomous artworks created by computers. These AI artworks could perhaps be recognised as valid historical or contemporary art by professionals in the field. However, he points out that this definition is problematic because there is no universally accepted definition of art.
2 **Creation process.** The second proposal considers the process of creation rather than the output. Manovich questions whether a fundamental difference exists between traditional computer art methods, such as Adobe Photoshop, and the more recent use of AI. He argues that both processes involve significant human curation and control at various stages.
3 **Pattern extraction.** In the third proposal, Manovich focuses on the idea of computers extracting common patterns from a group of previously existing artefacts. He observes that throughout human history, cultural expressions have shared common patterns and styles within a given context. Teaching computers to extract and replicate these patterns is not a radical departure from existing human artistic practices.

Expanding and limiting creative media

While AI empowers new ways of working in screen industries, many critics see the technology as limiting creative aspects in other ways. Australian economist Alan Kohler says that governments are being too slow to act on safeguards. He worries about repeating the cigarette or asbestos mistakes of the past, where profits come quickly and lawmakers take decades to recognise the harm to the population.

Deep fakes

Generative AI capacity can target politicians and celebrities. Ordinary citizens can also have their features mapped onto other video or generated backgrounds with highly realistic rendering. The high-speed processing of these graphics and the lowering of price barriers make **deep swap** technology widely available. Realistic results are supported by internet speeds and greater use of remote processing and app-based subscription access. Actors can be de-aged and potentially even 'brought back to life' on screen.



Tero Vesalainen/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 18.5 Use of watermarks and deep fake detection technology are being developed to combat fraud arising from **face swaps**. Digital security industries are concerned about the hacking implications on biometric security such as voice prints and facial recognition locks.

The creative possibilities of the technology inspired the British production of *Deep Fake Neighbour Wars* (2023). Famous faces are transplanted onto the domestic comedy show, featuring trivial disputes of the suburbs. Guest faces include Beyonce, Greta Thunberg, Nicki Minaj, Ariana Grande, Billie Eilish, Tom Holland, Jay-Z, Idris Elba and Kim Kardashian. Without this technology, the scenario of the show would be completely unaffordable, due to the highly paid personalities.

The potential for misuse of technology is enormous. Deep fake testimonials from some of Australia's richest



Cal Sport Media/Alamy Stock Photos

Figure 18.6 Deepfake media of Taylor Swift emerged on the internet in 2024, spreading disinformation about her support for Donald Trump leading into the US Presidential Election. This drew significant attention from authorities seeking to understand the impact of AI in electoral campaigns.

Weblinks

Deep Fake Neighbour Wars: Episode trailer-Kardashian/Elba

Deep Fake Neighbour Wars: Production details

Deepfake, Tom Cruise

Deep swap review

How to spot a deepfake

Internet full of deepfakes

business owners appeared on Instagram and Facebook in 2024. Investors were convinced to give hundreds of thousands of dollars to the scams.

Contested authorship

As generative AI continues to advance and is integrated into various cultural domains, it is crucial to consider the ethical and societal implications. Will AI replace human creators or will it serve as a tool to augment and inspire human authorship? How can we ensure that the use of AI in cultural production remains separate from human creativity? These are important questions that require ongoing dialogue and research.

Who is the artist/author?

When artists use generative AI or other software-based tools to create digital artwork, the authorship becomes a process involving the human artist and the machine. The artist sets the parameters, provides the input and makes creative decisions, while the AI generates the artwork based on those parameters and its trained model. Manovich suggests that in such cases, the human artist can be considered the 'meta-author' or the 'selector' who curates and directs the output of the AI system. The artist's role is to select, combine and present the generated elements in a meaningful way, creating a final work that reflects their artistic vision and intent.

Early AI lawsuits are from novelists, singers, cartoonists and computer code writers. Legal action is not only image copyright but the 'training' inputs for machine learning.

Taking jobs is one issue for industrial scale AI. In media industries, the re-use of the **intellectual property (IP)** of creatives in a new context, or generating 'original' content that copies 'styles' developed by visual artists, is a difficult copyright issue. The '**scraping**' of the internet to train machine learning without payment has been objected to by artists such as Australian musician, writer and actor Nick Cave, as lyrics were produced by AI prompts 'in the style of Nick Cave'. The singer says that no AI can write from experience because 'the data does not suffer' through tragic personal loss like he did in his life.

Boris Eldagsen won a prize for his artistic photograph in 2023. When the prize was announced, he declined to accept, revealing that the image was AI-generated (Figure 18.7). Was he the author or curator … even just an operator? Sparking a debate about the nature of art, Eldagsen said, 'I think it is wrong to say it is an AI photograph ... I think we need a new term for it.' In response to the online discussion, Peruvian artist Christian Vinces obliged with a suggestion: **promptography**.



Fabrizio Bensch/Reuters

Figure 18.7 Boris Eldagsen uses codes of a valuable art showing to display his award-winning work, 'Pseudomnesia: The Electrician'. Without a camera, he used prompts to create the 1940s-style image using DALL-E 2 generative AI. Who rightfully owns it and if it is art may be debated but it could become the first image recognised as a promptograph.

Legislation and government concern

Stephen Hawking, a British physicist, warned in 2017 that 'unless we … avoid the potential risks, AI could be the worst event in the history of our civilisation'. Yet many benefits also followed, such as Oxford University and others using AI to massively speed up the medical response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Australian Chief of Defence, General Angus Campbell, says that hostile countries use **troll farms**, **bots** and fake social media accounts as 'weapons of statecraft'. He argues that seeding distrust in key institutions played a role in the 2016 US presidential election and the UK's Brexit vote to leave the European Union.

But it is not just about believing mistruths; populations may distrust genuine facts. Unlike the mostly comical response to a **viral** fake video of a previous US president, Barack Obama, General Campbell fears the realism once sought by Hollywood **computer-generated imagery (CGI)** may lead to a time of deep fakes '… when it is impossible for the average person to distinguish fact from fiction'.

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The state of government legislation about AI is rapidly evolving, with various countries and organisations recognising the need for clear guidelines and regulations to ensure the responsible development and use of AI technologies. However, comprehensive AI-specific legislation is still in its early stages in most countries.

In Australia

Following the rest of the world, Australia has also taken initial steps towards regulating AI. The Australian Government has released the necessary legislative guidance for the nation's first steps toward responsible development and use of AI, but also takes care to outline a vision for future AI development and widespread industrial adoption.

The Australian ethical framework

The Australian Government's AI Ethics Framework aims to promote ethical, safe and responsible AI that aligns with human values and rights. The framework also emphasises the importance of considering the potential for unintended consequences. The key concepts and ideas of the framework are as follows:

- **Human-centred values.** AI systems should respect human rights, diversity and the autonomy of individuals. They should be designed to benefit individuals, society and the environment.
- **Fairness.** AI systems should be inclusive and accessible, and should not discriminate against individuals or groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age or disability.
- **Privacy protection and security.** AI systems should respect privacy rights and data protection, and ensure the security of personal information.
- **Reliability and safety.** AI systems should be reliable, safe and within clear parameters. They should be subjected to rigorous testing and have clear processes for monitoring and reporting issues.
- **Transparency and explainability.** There should be transparency and responsible disclosure around AI systems to ensure people know when they are engaging with them and can understand the outcomes. The decisions made by AI systems should be explainable.
- **Contestability.** When an AI system significantly impacts a person, community, group or environment, there should be a timely process to allow challenges to the use or outcomes of the system.
- **Accountability.** People and organisations responsible for the design, development, deployment and operation of AI systems should be identifiable and accountable for their outcomes, and human oversight of AI systems should be enabled.

AI ethical referencing in student productions

Laws and ethics are likely to lag behind the very fast pace of change in media technology. Artists may test limits and have their own views, while competitions may set limits to ensure equity and transparency. Education systems may set maximum limits of borrowed traditional file footage and **'prompt-generated content'**.

Students and artists

Some courses and competitions may deem generative AI content inappropriate; however, students may be able to significantly 'elevate' the quality, polish and meaning of their work with targeted use of AI technology, declaring it as a contributing source in their artwork. Supporting soundtracks and image processing of original student core content may be useful in some contexts. Within a maximum screentime percentage, an establishing shot of a fantasy location or action climax shot too dangerous to film with **practical effects** may help elevate the standard of production.

Emerging guidelines

Education is one of many areas likely to continue to be impacted by AI. Students have been warned by assessment authorities that presenting unsourced, plagiarised work is 'academic misconduct' and may result in the loss of unit credit or whole subject results. AI applications can give false references or not give attribution to their original sources. There may also be 'fine print' that comes with using AI tools, placing legal obligations on the user in the 'terms and conditions'.

On the other hand, education stakeholders actively encourage schools to respond to the opportunities in emerging technology, citing potential reduction in teacher workloads while supporting students as enabled 21st century citizens.

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Universities provide various reference models but the key difference to a published book reference is that a user may never get the same result twice. As the internet changes, and the software 'learns', the same prompts can get different results. This means it is a **non-recoverable source**, so notes should be kept on any generative process, such as:

- a written statement on the AI tool used and for which assignment elements
- a record of the prompts used to initiate the response
- references to works that are closest to the target style or subject matter.

Weblinks
QUT citation rules

Position statement on AI: eSafety Commissioner

Algorithm bias: eSafety Commissioner

Reporting online harm: eSafety Commissioner

Emerging reference formats for the American Psychological Association (APA) referencing protocols may include the name of the AI developer and the year used, in brackets. For reference lists, include the developer, the year in brackets, the name of the tool, the date of the version accessed in brackets and the type of AI program in square brackets. After a full stop, a hyperlink to the site can be added. Some educational institutions also want to see the prompts.

Safeguards regarding the authenticity of student work may include:

- ideas development drafts of the proposed work
- monitoring of progressive refinement
- documenting specific check-in stages such as pre-production steps
- formal declaration and statement of authenticity on submission
- interviews with the students or reflective presentation following the submission (common in some creative subjects).

Appropriate use of AI

The Australian Government has developed three overarching goals for school students working with AI: education outcomes, ethical practices, and equity and inclusion. The Framework for Generative Artificial Intelligence in Schools from the Federal Department of Education has 25 statements that fall under six principles based on the Australian Government's AI Ethics Framework, but written specifically for schools:

1 Teaching and learning
2 Human and social wellbeing
3 Transparency
4 Fairness
5 Accountability
6 Privacy, security and safety

The Australian **eSafety Commissioner** provides resources for users of digital tools and is also concerned about the use of biased data in training AI programs. This may lead to 'invisible' assumptions being made about people that may affect their right of access to something based on a predicted stereotype.

Sophisticated applications may also play a role in online abuse and scams, by impersonating people convincingly and the inclusion of personalised information. Using generative AI tools creates information that is part of a user's digital footprint. AI prompts, chat-bot exchanges, social media posts and comments can be used to custom-make a message that targets an individual, even copying and mimicking **voiceprints** of friends and family. Over-sharing information on insecure platforms can increase risks for users. Serious online abuse and restricted content can be reported directly to the eSafety Commissioner's office.

18.1 ACTIVITIES

1 **Create** a timeline of significant developments in AI and other related technology. Identify which available technology had the capacity to impact media production processes, including post- and pre-production formats and ideas.
2 **Apply** communication skills to discuss the potential of machine self-awareness. In pairs or class teams, debate the point at which AI could be considered sentient (conscious). Write your main arguments down and take turns at counter points. Seek agreement on common points to conclude after a set time.
3 **Evaluate** the argument of Nick Cave or other creatives about the ownership of their work and define when media should be considered art. **Justify** your viewpoint about the art-worthiness of AI images.

COPYRIGHT AND REFERENCING

Media production is one area at the pointy end of integrity and ethics debates. For media producers, one of the most demanding concerns is the issue of originality. Modern technology makes the issue

> 'Original thought is like original sin: both happened before you were born to people you could not possibly have met.'
>
> **Fran Lebowitz**, American author, public speaker and humourist

even more complex. Remixes, mash-ups and internet re-transmissions are all much easier to produce now because of file-sharing sites such as YouTube and AI software.

Originality

Most producers of media texts aim to achieve originality. However, in practice it is difficult to achieve, and almost impossible to achieve in true and perfect form.

An original work is often thought to be one that is new and has never been done before. It is unique and the first of its kind. For most people, originality is also closely associated with the word 'creative'. This word has its genesis (origins) in the concept of creation – the biblical idea of the world being instantaneously created when nothing existed before.

The common definition of originality is typically that which is used for new scientific inventions. Realistically, even they are based on previous discoveries.

The common definition of creativity relates to divine inspiration – something that just occurs to 'creative geniuses' without any process or hard work. People think of creativity as the light bulb suddenly turning on (Figure 18.8). While this can happen, most often, idea generation is a process.

Legal definitions of originality in music, art and literary texts are based on the results of a series of court cases called precedents. In law, originality does not suggest that the idea has never existed before. Originality means that the work has originated with the author and has not been copied from somewhere else – either in whole or in part. The creative thought itself may not be totally unique, but the way it is expressed is all the author's. With this definition, the potential for new stories is unlimited.

Most analysts agree that if the common definition was ever used to judge media texts, all artistic production would grind to a halt soon after as brand new stories would be impossible to create. Hollywood may run out of blockbuster premises immediately. The legal definition is freer and recognises that culture is a complex mix of influences. We draw ideas and influences from all around us.

How original does it have to be?

It is often said that there are only seven basic stories in all of art, film and literature. Everything is just a variation on those. The Greek philosopher Aristotle argued that there were only two: comedy and tragedy! According to French philosopher Roland Barthes, 'the text is a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash'. Barthes suggests that not only are authors building on past works as they write from their side of the text, but so too is the audience, as they interpret stories from the other side of the text, based on their own past cultural experiences.

To be creative, you have to start with something in order to make something. Creativity can be seen as the ability to take existing objects and combine them in different ways for new purposes. When coming up with a concept for a video, media artists have to combine things in new ways that are unique to them. Media artists can draw on other sources for inspiration – all artists do (see 'Referencing', page 390).



gmstockstudio/Shutterstock.com

Figure 18.8 Many people understand the term 'originality' to mean completely new ideas appearing out of nowhere in moments of sudden inspiration. This is not the legal definition of originality, as we would soon run out of wholly new stories.

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Weblinks
Australian Copyright Council

Copyright Act 1968

Copyright

Copyright is a kind of IP right that protects who has the right to copy original work. Copyright owners have the right to copy their own work or original works that have been granted to them. To be legally original, the work must have the following features:

- be an original work – that is, not plagiarised
- be in a final form that can be read, heard or viewed.

Copyright does not cover ideas, concepts, styles, techniques and information. A completed script that you write is automatically copyrighted. Someone else could use a similar premise (idea) without breaching your copyright – but they could not use your wording.

Copyright law in Australia is based on the *Copyright Act 1968*. The Act has been updated many times. In 2006, it was brought into line with the American Copyright Act under the free trade agreement between Australia and the US. The main changes were as follows:

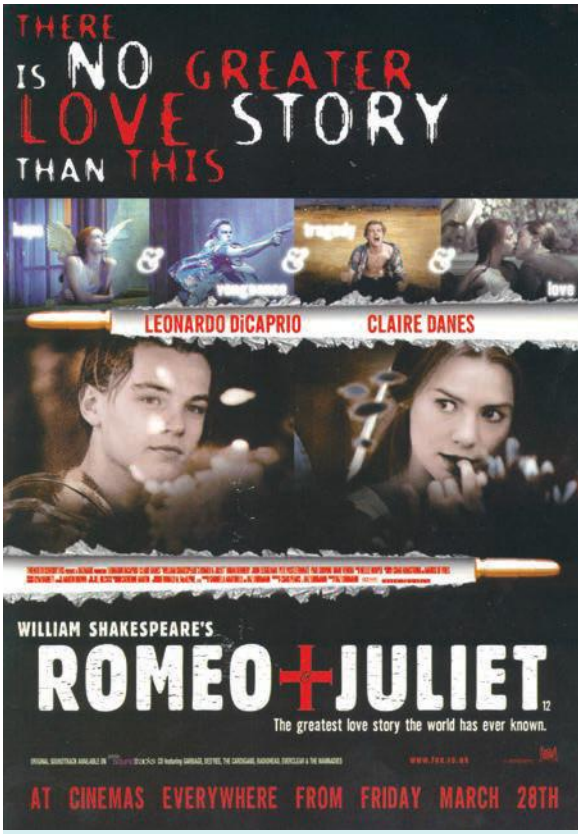
- **Circumvention.** It has become illegal to bypass the technology that some creators use to prevent copying.
- **Time shifting and device shifting.** It is legal for an individual to record a program to watch at a later date or on another device. However, it is not legal to share this recording.
- **Education.** Schools and universities gained certain exemptions for non-commercial use.
- **Comedy.** Parody and satire gained exemptions.
- **After death.** Copyright persists up to 70 years after the death of the creator of a work (previously in Australia it was 50 years).

Two important aspects of copyright law are IP and digital rights management.

- **Intellectual property (IP).** Creations of an intellectual nature are covered by copyright. IP might include computer programs as well as other works such as inventions and technological creations.
- **Digital rights management (DRM).** Some companies use DRM to protect their IP. DRM is a form of technological protection built into products to prevent illegal copying. DRM is commonly used in the exchange of digital media.

Creative Commons licence

The Creative Commons system of licensing creative works was founded in 2001 by Stanford University Professor of Law, Lawrence Lessig. Creative Commons is a non-profit organisation set up in the university town of Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA – the home of the famous Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Creative Commons has its origins in the free and open software movement.



Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 18.9 Poster for Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996). The creativity and originality lie in the unique vision that Luhrmann brought to transform, energise and modernise Shakespeare's famous play.

The Creative Commons project aims to set up a new way of thinking about copyright. The goal is to allow people to legally share and re-use creative material without having to pay high copyright fees. However, the creativity of the original author is still protected legally. Any use of licensed content has to be acknowledged or the name of the creator clearly stated (called attribution). A new user also has to respect the creator's wishes about how it is to be used. Some creators allow open use of their material, while others restrict it to non-commercial use (for example).

Types of creative ownership

Creative control used to have two opposite ends: total creative control, or no control whatsoever. Creative Commons licensing allows for a middle ground where some rights are reserved.

- **All rights reserved.** Traditional commercial copyright uses an 'all rights reserved' model

of operation. This means that all use of a work is regulated by the owner (the creator) or the distributor. A few exceptions exist for educational use and for comic or satirical use.
- **Some rights reserved.** Creative Commons licences allow for some protections of the creator's rights, while also allowing freer access for others wanting to use the content.
- **No rights reserved (public domain).** Work in the public domain can be said to be owned by the public. Anyone is free to use it in any way they like. No royalty fees have to be paid.

Origin of the name 'commons'

Originally 'the commons' were those elements of the environment that everyone could access in common. These included the oceans, the beaches and the air. In other words, it was common to everyone and free to use. In some countries, such as England, common land was also set aside that did not belong to the king or other rich private owners. Ordinary people were free to access this land as well.

Today there are other commons, such as public health or education. Certain creative works can also be seen as a cultural common. Public art, nursery rhymes, folk music and historical landmarks are examples of cultural commons.

The 'tragedy of the commons' is a term coined by economist Garrett Hardin in 1968. According to Hardin, those things that are owned by nobody, but which can be exploited freely by anybody, are bound to come to a sad end. Hardin gave the example of a common cow paddock accessible to all. It would be in the best interests of every individual cow owner to put their cows there until the paddock was totally eaten out and utterly degraded. Even the last green blade of grass would be worth it to someone. A series of sensible individual decisions then leads to the destruction of a common good.

The idea of the Creative Commons is to avoid the 'tragedy of the commons' and to preserve the benefits of accessible, commonly available cultural properties. Creators are not left exploited by others appropriating their works for their own benefit.



Standard Studio/Shutterstock.com; raisulislamicons/Shutterstock.com; icon99/Shutterstock.com

Figure 18.10 Creative Commons licensing seeks to be a middle ground between formal full copyright and the 'open slather' of the free public domain.

Types of licences

Creators of cultural content who use a Creative Commons licence can choose different licence options. There are sixteen different licences made up of possible combinations of the four conditions shown in Figure 18.11. However, only seven of these licences are popularly used.

Disadvantages of Creative Commons licences

The Creative Commons system is not without its critics. Perhaps the best way of looking at it is to not try to see it as a replacement for the existing copyright system. Instead it complements or works alongside that system for creators who want something different to the mainstream. Following are several objections to the Creative Commons system:
- **Creators do not get rewarded.** The usage is free. The main copyright system rewards creators.
- **Creators get more control.** It still gives power to creators and not those wanting to use their material (because creators still get to say how they want their work used).
- **Mainly online.** Most Creative Commons work is available online. This means it ignores any creative work that is not.
- **No withdrawal.** Creative Commons licences cannot be revoked or withdrawn. If you change your mind later about the work, it cannot be upgraded to traditional copyright.
- **Any use, really?** You may not be happy with all possible uses of your work. Some uses you might think are in bad taste, immoral, wrong or the opposite of your own beliefs.

Referencing and homage

Many filmmakers cite Alfred Hitchcock as someone who was important to the development of their own works. Some filmmakers, including Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese, deliberately reference Hitchcock. In *Jaws* (1975), Spielberg used a similar technique to Hitchcock's famous contra zoom in *Vertigo* (1958). In *Goodfellas* (1990), Scorsese deliberately makes reference to the title sequence in Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). In filmmaking and all media arts, referencing is a common way of acknowledging the important legacy of a director or particular work.

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To reference something in the visual arts is to indicate that there is a connection or link to another art form or artist in the field. Therefore, one work refers to another (see intertextuality, page 250). Referencing can also mean that one work is based on another, but it has been changed in some significant and major way to add new meaning.

Influences, inspirations and homage

Being 'influenced by' a media arts work means that what you do has been affected by the other work. This could mean that, as a result of another work, you have adopted a certain style or have become fascinated with certain themes.

Being 'inspired' by another work suggests that the work encouraged a burst of creativity in you. This may or may not be directly obvious in the finished work.

In media arts criticism, the term 'homage' is said using the French pronunciation (*om-arzh*). Homage means to pay affectionate respect to another artist's work. In practice, it tends to be similar to referencing. However, it can mean making a special tribute production.

Important works of television and film have been influenced or inspired by or pay homage to other famous works. For instance, the *Star Wars* franchise has been influenced heavily by films. In the documentary *Everything Is a Remix* (2010), Kirby Ferguson claims that George Lucas was influenced by films such as *Flash Gordon* (1980), *Triumph of the Will* (1935) and *The Dam Busters* (1955). The droid C3PO looks like the robot from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), claims Ferguson. When Luke Skywalker returns home to discover his aunt and uncle have been murdered, it is very much like a scene in John Ford's famous Western *The Searchers* (1956). In that scene, the hero returns to find his brother's family murdered and the farm burning. These scenes have clear connections to the hero's journey (see page 228).



Creative Commons Australia: http://creativecommons.org.au/learn/licences/

Figure 18.11 The four main conditions of Creative Commons licences. There are sixteen possible licences made up of combinations of the four conditions. Licences are displayed with the symbols indicating what conditions the creator has imposed.



United Archives GmbH/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 18.12 The remade shower scene from Gus Van Sant's *Psycho* (1998). Van Sant declared the remake of *Psycho* shot for shot was paying homage to the classic film. The industry magazine *Variety* did not give high praise: 'Imitation, in the case of Gus Van Sant's *Psycho* may be the sincerest form of flattery, but it's hardly the most scintillating.

18.2 ACTIVITIES

1 **Create** a list of your favourite productions that are similar to the task you are planning to undertake for a media production. **Describe** why you have chosen them by using the following questions as a guide.
   - What appeals to you about them?
   - How could you use those ideas as a stimulus and transform them into something of your own?

2 **Describe** your main influences in terms of media texts. **Give information** about these texts and include **examples** of specific scenes from them that you have found influential. **Create** a list of texts that you admire, and that you wish you could pay homage to in your own media production. Include thumbnail images from them showing aspects you really like.

3 List five media texts that you would like to reference (make a direct link with) in a production. **Analyse** what it is about these texts that has influenced you and that you would like to reference. **Identify** the key elements in the scene and **describe** what you would change and what you would like to use.

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19 Project management

MANAGING PRODUCTIONS

21st century skills and production management

In the 21st century, young people need a broad range of skills as well as knowledge of subject disciplines. The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) refers to a set of 21st century skills that underpin all senior syllabuses including Film, Television & New Media (FTVNM):

- **Critical thinking.** This skill involves being analytical and evaluating information to solve problems and make reasoned decisions.
- **Creative thinking.** Generating new ideas and creatively seeing new connections and links lead to creativity and innovation. In the Arts, this skill area is always in high demand.
- **Communication.** The ability to communicate effectively in verbal and written form using visual language and symbol systems is an important skill in the new world of digital communications and artificial intelligence.
- **Collaboration and teamwork.** Productively interacting with others and being able to value and build upon the ideas of others is especially important in the media industries. Much of the work in media fields requires collaborative teamwork.
- **Personal and social skills.** Being good with people, management skills, being ethical and having cultural awareness are now skills that are in high demand. This is because many routine tasks are capable of being done by machines and artificial intelligence. It is the people-skills that only humans can acquire and use.
- **Digital literacy skills.** There are two key parts to this skill. First is the skill in being a productive user of technology and understanding its ways of operating. Second are the skills of digital citizenship and the understandings of ethics and responsible production and use and being safe, positive and responsible online.

> Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2024), 21st century skills: Explanations of associated skills

The subjects FTVNM and Media Arts in Practice (MAP) teach all of these skills. Media production brings them into practical use.

Transferable skills

Transferable skills are skills learned in one situation that can be applied to another. The 21st century skills are transferable to many different situations. For example, planning a surprise birthday party requires various project management skills, such as planning, organising, managing tasks, budgeting and controlling costs. By reflecting on the skills they possess and can apply to project management roles, individuals can better position themselves for success in media production.

What is project management?

Project management combines two key considerations: the project and its management. A project is a unique, temporary undertaking with a defined set of deliverables, a defined beginning and end, and a specific outcome. Achieving this outcome requires management skills, such as collaboration and careful planning, to keep the project on track and within budget.

Project management skills can be developed through experience and learning. These skills apply to four general areas of management, which include:

- **Project planning.** This involves defining project goals, determining tasks and necessary resources, creating schedules and establishing budgets to ensure the project is completed successfully.
- **Project execution.** This area focuses on carrying out the project plan, coordinating resources,

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managing tasks and ensuring the project stays on track and meets its objectives.
- **Risk management.** Identifying, analysing and responding to potential risks impacting the project's success. This includes developing contingency plans and strategies to mitigate or manage risks.
- **Team dynamics.** Understanding and managing the interactions, communication and collaboration among project team members. This involves fostering a positive team environment, resolving conflicts and ensuring team members work together effectively to achieve project goals.

Project management constraints

Successfully managing a project requires carefully balancing several competing priorities, including time, quality, scope, resources and risk management. These five priorities are interconnected – changes to one will impact the others. For example, increasing scope will likely increase time and cost. Reducing time negatively impacts quality. Trade-offs are often necessary, but risk management is always the highest priority. These challenges must be managed during a project:

1. **Time.** Projects must be completed on schedule.
2. **Quality.** Deliverables must meet required performance standards.
3. **Scope.** All agreed deliverables must be completed.
4. **Resources.** The project must be completed within the approved budget.
5. **Risk management.** Safety is an important consideration in project management.

A sensitivity approach to production: ESG and DEI

Driving positive change is crucial for building and maintaining public trust. As media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion, informing audiences and influencing societal norms, media businesses have a responsibility to use their platform to drive positive change.

Considering sensitivity contexts, such as environment, social and governance (ESG) and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), and their implications for a project can form the backdrop of design and delivery. Audiences and stakeholders increasingly want responsible and sustainable practices that go beyond the individual creative interests of the producer.

Environment, social and governance (ESG)

Delivering a media product can affect future ecological and equitable pathways. Media producers must consider a project's impact through the lens of ESG. Applying ESG principles to media project planning involves assessing environmental impact, promoting diversity and inclusion, engaging with communities, establishing alignment with governance structures, and ensuring compliance with relevant laws and standards.

Here is how you can apply ESG to media project planning and project management. You can minimise the project's environmental impact through eco-friendly practices and sustainable resource management for production. You can promote social responsibility within the project team and content design. Good governance can happen when making creative content decisions, and ethical and accountable practices align with regulations established by higher authorities. For example, creative decisions should be aligned with social norms so the media does not create offensive representations.

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)

To demonstrate a commitment to DEI, media producers should actively seek opportunities to ensure diverse representation in project teams, encourage diverse perspectives in the creative stages and feature diverse talent on-screen and behind the scenes. They should also provide equal opportunities, foster an inclusive culture, encourage open communication and engage with diverse communities and stakeholders.

Benefits of considering sensitivities before starting a project

Integrating sensitivity contexts into media project planning and management can help in the following ways:

- **Reduce risks.** By addressing sensitivity concerns proactively, projects can minimise the risk of negative impacts and failures that could harm the project's reputation and outcomes. This is also a quality assurance process for the stakeholders.
- **Enhance stakeholder engagement.** Demonstrating a commitment to sensitivity contexts can improve relationships with stakeholders, including investors, customers, employees and communities, leading to increased support and collaboration, and repeat business.

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- **Drive innovation.** Considering sensitivity contexts can inspire creative solutions and innovations that address sustainability challenges and create value for the project and its stakeholders.
- **Improve long-term success.** Projects tend to have better long-term outcomes if they are more resilient, adaptable and aligned with evolving societal expectations and values.

Starting the project

Once pre-production is coming to an end and production commences, managing the logistics of the production itself may seem daunting.

The role of the media artist in the project

During production, the media artist is the writer, producer and director. They are also responsible for some of the major production roles as well. However, that doesn't mean media artworks are an isolated project. Productions require 'talent' – the actors, models or interview subjects. Productions also require some kind of assistant production crew, depending on the complexity of the production. This crew will operate under the media artist's direction. As the director, producer and chief ringmaster for the production, the media artist has the following roles:

1 Visionary
2 Chief decision maker
3 Employer
4 Coordinator
5 Communicator
6 Safety officer



fStop Images GmbH/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 19.1 A director with their cast and crew on set. The filming process is a collaborative project where everyone is united in working towards the same goal. The director (or directors) ultimately takes the ownership and management of the production, but this should not become an isolated project. Gaining support from the people around you allows for the production to run smoothly.

Decomposition/chunking

Decomposition in project management is a critical step in the planning phase because it helps to clarify all the necessary work, allocate resources appropriately and set realistic timelines. By answering the following example questions, a project manager can decompose a project into smaller tasks, making it easier to assign, track and manage work throughout the project lifecycle. This process also enhances communication and understanding among team members, as everyone can see how their tasks contribute to the overall project goals.

To begin the chunking process, you need to:

1 Define the project's final deliverable and outline its major components
2 Break down each component into key milestones, tasks and subtasks
3 Detail specific actions, inputs, outputs, responsibilities, skills and resources for each task
4 Consider the other tasks you are trying to complete
5 Estimate time, effort and potential bottlenecks for each task
6 Evaluate risks associated with each task and develop mitigation strategies
7 Establish quality standards and measurement methods for each deliverable at the task level
8 Review and refine the work breakdown
9 Check for missing tasks, redundancies and opportunities for optimisation.



Figure 19.2 Chunking a project into smaller steps keeps it moving forward and to proposed deadlines.

Risk management

Risk management in media industries involves identifying, assessing and prioritising risks, followed by the coordinated and economical application of resources to minimise, monitor and control the probability or impact of unfortunate events. Risk management principles are especially important when projects involve creative processes, technological innovation and unpredictability. For more on risk management see Chapter 17.

Using checklists and templates

During the pre-production phase, checklists help the media artist keep track of the various decisions that happen prior to (and during) production. Media artists use checklists to manage their crew, actors and equipment (Figure 19.3). Checklists when filming are often structured in a similar template to a three-column script with the location, required actors and required equipment.



Figure 19.3 Equipment bookings should be made as soon as possible. 'Pencil in' proposed bookings even before you know exact details for your shoot. Dates and times will be apparent when the filming window is set by due date cut-offs and reduced by cast and crew availability.

Scheduling deadlines and time management

Weblinks
Screen Job Descriptions

Film Industry Jobs

The schedule progress and budget of movies was once primarily measured by the shooting ratio: the number of screen minutes achieved compared to the footage shot. Live TV had the highest ratio of virtually 1:1 and was considered a low quality artform. Most types of documentaries would be higher, although not as high as feature films at perhaps 10:1. Big budget, international brand advertisements would be the slickest, with about two days of filming for a 30-second product. Digital footage means that cost is no longer dominated by the number of takes. Superhero comic book action/fantasies can get to ratios of many hundreds to one.

Filming style and degree of difficulty of the shooting will help a producer plan for budgets and an expected shooting ratio. A first assistant director (1st AD) can then plan the precise coordinating details. With oversight of the entire project, the 1st AD calls 'wrap' when they are satisfied with the day's schedule progress. Other crew must also be hired. This needs a production 'window' planned to determine who is available, and leave enough post-production time before the film is due for release or submission.

Production schedules

Short films can be scheduled without the need for automating software that professionals use. A **stripboard** is a way to sequence the filming of scenes in a sensible order. A summary of each scene is placed on a strip, digitally or on paper (Table 19.1). It includes the scene number, interior or exterior, location, and day or night. This is the key information at the head of a properly formatted script scene.

The duration of the scene should be estimated according to the average of one page of formatted script for roughly one screen minute (1st ADs will time pages down to 1/8ths). This length will help decide how many scenes can be realistically filmed in one session. Strips can then be arranged in order according to 'algorithm preferences', which can be applied manually:

1 Place all of the exterior strips first and all the interiors last, forming two blocks of filming.

Table 19.1 Paper strips for each scene enables 'visualising' of the algorithm processes used in production software. Use the scene heading information to create the strips, starting in the order of the story. To maximise scheduling efficiency for students, the strips should also list characters appearing in the scene.

SCENE NO.	I/E	D/N	SET/SYNOPSIS	TIME
Characters				**Spec. req.**

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2 Within each of these two sets, group all of the same locations together, forming smaller blocks.
3 Arrange the locations in order of travel to avoid going back and forth.
4 Within each of these locations, arrange all of the 'day' locations first, leaving 'night' until last.
5 Within each time-of-day group, place the scenes with the most actors first.
6 Any scenes within each time of day that have a single actor should be last in that block of filming.
7 Look at the length of screen time for each scene and use a predicted shooting ratio to estimate how long you need to spend filming each scene. (note this time on set on the strip).
8 Check the sequence for anything that must be filmed in order (e.g. character haircuts, destroying a jacket or smashing a guitar).
9 Undo any of this planning that may have to fit with special permissions or access – something that is only available once (e.g. an interview with the Prime Minister, a solar eclipse, an Air Force fly-over).

'Chunk' the scene order into groups that could be filmed in a session. 'Shooting out a location' is a term from the industry that means everything to film in one spot has been covered. Some locations may need a return visit on another day to get through all of the scenes set there. Other days may have several location moves to record a series of short scenes. These scene groupings are kept for the next stage of planning.

Any remaining flexibility could be shot in the order of the storyline. Some directors have sacrificed budgets to simply film the story in order, such as *The Revenant* (2015) and *A Beautiful Mind* (2001). This is to allow actors to stay in role for the natural flow of the story. It may also reduce briefings, re-direction and continuity errors.

Travelling for location backgrounds may feel daunting; however, unlike theatre, the audience is not usually expected to 'imagine' backdrop elements. What the viewer sees is a channel for creating meaning, and there are no excuses or apologies that can be made to the audience after 'play' is pressed. Locations should not be chosen for the filmmakers' convenience, but for the meaning and mood they add.

Some potential days within the filming window may have to be excluded from the schedule. Coordinating cast and crew can be the most difficult aspect of an amateur production, sometimes harder than professional ones:

- **Check part-time work commitments, including being 'on-call'.** If possible, ask the actors to be 'unavailable' on the roster for production day.
- **Check assessment commitments.** Make a note of what assignments are due for the cast or crew around that time.
- **Check family commitments.** Negotiate blocking out actor and crew diaries ahead of the shoot.

Wet weather cover

Filmmakers need to have a backup plan in case the weather is unsuitable for filming. The scene heading on a narrative film script should begin with the number of the scene, then INT/EXT. Arrange all of the interiors last so that there is a standby scene to shoot if the weather is not suitable. The wet weather cover scenes for each shooting day should be as close to the planned location as possible. Once all of the exteriors are completed, the crew can finish filming any remaining wet weather cover. This planned work sequence can be considered as the **shooting schedule**.

The best standby cover is a studio shoot with no view outside. This can be done at any time of day. Surprisingly, a scripted rain scene is not a favoured wet weather cover. Genuine rain varies its intensity, interfering with continuity. Uncontrolled water on set has safety implications for electricity and the staging of action. It can also ruin dialogue recording. Hiring the local fire brigade is much preferred. For students, even digital rain or snow may be easier than filming in the real thing.



Sergey Lavrentev/Shutterstock.com

Figure 19.4 Productions sometimes construct entire replica houses inside a studio. This allows filming to continue during bad weather or throughout the night. For an ongoing series, the lost days of filming cost more than the duplicate set.

SC	PG/ TIME	I/E D/N	SET	CHARACTER	ARTIST	P/UP	M/U W/R	ON SET
12	4/8 0.30	INT N2	HEAD OFFICE The package arrives	STEADMAN	xx	0640	0730	0830
				CARNEY	xx	0650	0730	0830
				APRIL	xx	MOW	0715	0830
				TULSI	xx	MOW	0715	0830
				CONNORS	xx			CLD
				ALIANE	xx			CLD
				EXTRAS:	2 guards	MOW	0715	0830
					1 courier	MOW	0715	0830
					5 queuing customers	MOW	0730	0830
					Steadman's driver	MOW	0715	0830
					Pianist	MOW	0715	0830
				DOUBLES PIANO HAND DBL	xx	MOW	1015	1045

Figure 19.5 Call sheets list requirements for each scene following long-standing conventions. Column abbreviations represent interior or exterior, and day or night (a number beside D or N indicates the day in the script story world). P/UP is pick up time by a driver for the essential actors. Non-essential actors for shooting the scene are listed as MOW – for Make Own Way. M/U columns list make-up or wardrobe preparation times. On set is the 'ready to film' time and will be shown as 'called' if the actor is already present from a previous scene.

Call sheets

Each crew member is kept informed through a **call sheet** for shooting on a particular day. The day's requirements are listed, with all of the scenes that have been grouped together. These filming needs are extracted from information in the script.

Some productions may choose to use paper call sheets because they impose their own ban on all personal devices, preventing any crew from leaking spoilers or **paparazzi** photos, such as often happens with the *James Bond* franchise.

A theoretical school-based shoot can demonstrate scheduling priorities. The need to preserve wet weather cover as a back-up activity is reflected in the filming order of shots within a scene *and* also the overall order of scenes within a production.

Working with people in a production

It is possible to work individually or in groups in media production in FTVNM Units 1 and 2. MAP students also have that option at times in negotiation with the teacher. Groups or teams are very common in media industry practice.

A production team is composed of two or more individuals who are working on a clearly defined media production task that requires them to work interdependently, or even to work in formal roles. Ideally, everyone in the team has some control over their area of work. They should also be responsible and accountable for coming up with the media product.

Choosing a group

There is no single method that works to form the perfect group. However, there are three methods that media production groups have commonly used. Each can be equally successful if things go well, but each also has disadvantages. This is shown in Table 19.2.

Stages groups go through

A popular explanation of the stages that groups go through in their development was developed by psychology Emeritus Professor Bruce Tuckman:

1 **Forming.** Groups organise themselves and members get to know each other. They decide on routines and tasks. Often, this is an easy stage as

Table 19.2 Advantages and disadvantages of different group formation methods

GROUP FORMATION METHOD	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Friendship	• Good group support system • Automatic team spirit • Improved communication • Free exchange of ideas • Well known to one another • Raised achievement if all are committed to achieving good results • Reduced conflict	• Disputes can cause loss of friendship • Too much time chatting or laughing • Greater conformity in thinking • Reduced innovation • Reduced achievement if all not committed to results
Skills-based	• Good specialisation in roles • Strengths come to the fore • Higher-quality work • Commitment based on expectations of quality • Innovation based on specialised knowledge	• Loyalty to each other not automatically there • Need to get to know one another • Coordination problems • Over-focus on techniques and skills reduces overall achievement
Randomised	• Hidden talents can be there • Ideas are stimulated by new encounters • Less conformity in thinking	• Loyalty to each other not automatically there • Personalities unknown • Greater potential for conflict • Coordination problems • Unknown standards of quality

everybody is friendly and differences of opinion are not evident.

2 **Storming.** In the storming stage, different ideas compete and there are discussions and arguments about what to do. This can be a painful, argumentative stage when ideas are rejected or conflict develops. Successful groups move through this quickly. Some groups stay locked in the storming stage throughout the project.

3 **Norming.** The team develops a 'norm' or generally accepted idea or plan. Everybody agrees to get behind this and work towards a common goal.

4 **Performing.** Some groups reach this stage and perform at a high level. Usually in these groups, everybody is self-motivated and there isn't a need for continual monitoring of performance.

According to Professor Tuckman, groups can go in and out of these stages. They can also remain stuck in a stage (usually storming). Often, a change in membership or a new problem will cause the group to shift back into one of the earlier stages for a while.

Group size

A production team is best if it is made up of a relatively small group of people. The smaller the group, the more likely members are to contribute. Coordination problems in large groups often end up reducing the quality of each individual's input. This can be referred to as the Ringelmann effect. In 1913, French agricultural engineer Max Ringelmann tested the strength of men in a tug of war. An individual man could pull around 85 kilograms. A group of seven men, roughly equal in strength, managed to pull 450 kilograms – a huge difference. In this situation, a group can achieve much more than an individual. However, note that seven times 85 is actually 595. Ringelmann had proved that, while groups are effective, coordination or process problems reduce the output. The aim of good production teamwork should be to reduce the losses and maximise the benefits of group effort.



Wayne0216/Shutterstock.com

Figure 19.6 In a series of experiments, it was found that one person could pull 85 kilograms. Seven people of approximately equal strength could pull 450 kilograms – not the expected 595 kilograms (that is, seven times one person's effort). This is the so-called Ringelmann effect: the loss of output caused by group coordination problems.

How can you ensure a successful group?

According to organisational psychologist Eduardo Salas, there are five main elements of a productive team:

1 **Leadership.** Whether it is leadership by one person throughout or by different people at different times during the production, leadership is essential. Some groups may have multiple leaders. Leaders help understand the task and motivate others to get started.
2 **Adaptability.** This is the ability to change approach according to different circumstances. For instance, if post-production video editing reveals that there isn't enough footage, an adaptable team can come up with solutions.
3 **Performance monitoring.** Making sure that each member has completed their tasks as the group goes along is an important factor in success. Checks needs to be performed before deadlines to avoid delays.
4 **Back-up behaviour.** Group members need to be supportive to one another. If someone can't get things done, they will benefit from friendly back-up. Back-up should follow performance monitoring.
5 **Team orientation.** This refers to team spirit and the ability of the group to stick together when things get tough.

What stops groups reaching their potential?

Production groups can fail to reach their potential because of faulty processes. There are three main areas of faulty processes.

- **Coordination problems.** Group members don't get things completed on time, or there are misunderstandings about what is required.
- **Social dynamics.** Members of the group can become offended or create difficulties by being too argumentative or obstructive.
- **Motivation.** One or more group members can lose motivation, leaving other members to struggle.

Social loafing

Have you ever done something physically difficult in a group, such as lifting heavy furniture or pushing a bogged car? Perhaps you've put in a bit less effort than you would have if you'd been doing it by yourself? Perhaps you thought someone else was stronger and could do more of the work? All you had to do was look like you were lifting or pushing. That describes social loafing.

Social loafing is the slackening of effort that can happen when people have the attitude that 'someone else will do it'. This lack of effort is often unconscious. Social loafing is one of the main reasons that some groups do not reach their performance potential.

Encouraging social labouring

If you know that other people who are important to you are depending on you, and if you know they are watching you do something you are good at, you will often perform better than if you'd been doing it alone for yourself. This is the opposite of social loafing, and has been termed 'social labouring' by sociologist Rupert Brown.

There are several ways in which you can encourage social labouring in your media production groups:

- **Make the group important to its members.** A group of friends or people who know each other well can be more likely to work above and beyond the effort level of an individual. This is because the group members care about the others' opinions. They also don't want any bad feeling about loafing lingering after the production is over.
- **Have a group identity.** If the group isn't a friendship group and doesn't have a strong team spirit to start with, then try to find ways to give the group a special identity. One way of achieving this is by setting up a production company.
- **Increase specialisation and give members credit for their skills.** If members believe that their good work or good ideas will be recognised publicly, they may be more inclined to work harder. Giving them specific roles to perform and then giving them credit for those roles can help increase social labouring.
- **Keep groups reasonably small.** It is harder to be a social loafer when your contribution is indispensable because you are part of a small group.

Reaching project closure

Completing a project is not just about hitting major milestones but also about carefully wrapping up all the intricate details and unresolved matters that have emerged. By incorporating the following steps during the project's initial planning phase, you can ensure a smoother transition at the project's conclusion, maintaining focus and effectively managing all the final details.

Challenging factors

Certain factors can make the closure of a project quite difficult:

- **Lack of checklists.** A lack of a comprehensive, documented list outlining the tasks for project closure.
- **Team member turn-over.** Reassignment of team members during the project life cycle can lead to additional responsibilities for those remaining.
- **Motivation problems**. There can be a decline in motivation towards the end as focus shifts towards future assignments.
- **Procrastination of closure.** Team members can be reluctant to conclude the project, often due to the preference for established working relationships over new, uncertain assignments.
- **Loss of interest.** There can be a waning interest from stakeholders in the finalisation of the project due to drops in morale or general exhaustion.

Planning for the end stage

Avoiding the challenges of the closing stage involves strategic planning from the beginning of the project. This includes clearly defining project goals with measures to evaluate performance, and using checklists to comprehensively wrap-up the final stages.

A checklist for the closure stage should include:

1. Resolve all incomplete activities linked to the project.
2. Fulfil all deliverables as per the project scope.
3. Secure all necessary approvals for the project's outputs.
4. Review the project outcomes against set expectations.
5. Complete all administrative requirements.

Post-project evaluation

The evaluation phase of a project is as crucial as its execution. Wrapping up a project requires careful judgement of the degrees to which objectives have been met. This phase is sometimes called the retrospective phase.

A media producer must evaluate a project after completion to ensure objectives are met. They should gather stakeholder feedback and enable continued improvement for future projects. An evaluation judges the effectiveness of key steps in the media project. This includes comparing the project's outcomes against the stakeholder objectives and analysing constraints on resources, time spent and adherence to deadlines. It is also beneficial to conduct surveys or interviews with stakeholders to assess their satisfaction and their views on project success.

Because the evaluation is often after the closure stage when morale may have dropped, it is important to acknowledge team performance, celebrate successes and document effective strategies to avoid repeating mistakes in the future.

Questions for post-project evaluation

By addressing these questions at each stage, project teams can improve their methodologies and approaches for future projects.

- **The project's final stages:**
  - What were the intended objectives and have they been realised? How do the final costs and time spent compare to the initial projections? What is the feedback from stakeholders on the project's success and team performance?
- **For surveying results:**
  - Which strategies contributed to the project's success?
  - What would we avoid in future projects based on our experiences?
  - How can we apply the lessons learned to future projects?
- **Preparing throughout the project:**
  - How will we integrate lessons learned into each phase of the project?
  - How will we ensure that the post-project evaluation is planned for and resources allocated?

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19.1 ACTIVITIES

1 **Experiment** with different ways of choosing groups, **trying out** different formation techniques to **discover** the best combination before you settle on your final production group. Suggested ways of forming the experimental groups include the following:
   a **Skills-based**. Decide on a small number of the important specialised roles required for production. Divide the class according to those students who would like to specialise in those roles or those who have the necessary skills. Form groups by randomly selecting one person from each group.
   b **Randomised**. Line up the class in numerical order based on the digits in their house number/street number. Groups of the required number are then formed by dividing up the line of people.
2 **Create** a flow chart showing some useful processes that can work to ensure group success, **representing** each process and labelling the flow chart.
   Describe each stage in the process.
   Some suggested stages include:
   - Swap contact details.
   - Provide a back-up person for each role.
   - Allocate someone who will monitor how everyone is performing.
3 **Resolve** a production company name and logo as a means of building team identity. **Solve** the conceptual problem of developing an appropriate idea and then **combine the elements** into a moving-image media production.
4 **Design** a storyboad for a short film script using specific conventions from that pre-production planning format, as described in the steps (see page 307).
5 **Design** a shooting schedule for a short film script using the planned sequence from the stripboard. Combine the information into one table, breaking up the stripboard information into individual filming sessions for a scene/number of scenes that are conveniently grouped.
6 **Design** a call sheet for the first day of shooting for a short film script using specific information conventions from that pre-production planning format (see page 346).
7 Research the frequently interrupted production timeline for *Dune* (1984). **Describe** the various reasons the production schedule was not met. **Consider** how you would improve the time management behind the production if you were given the task.
8 **Create** a role-play as a project management team that integrates ESG and DEI principles into a media project**. Consider** aspects such as eco-friendly practices, diverse representation, inclusive work environments and ethical decision-making processes.
9 **Evaluate** a project closure phase by role-playing as a project team wrapping up a media project. Follow the steps outlined in project management processes, such as **resolving** incomplete activities and **evaluating** outcomes against expectations. **Justify** your decisions by conducting a post-project reflection.

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20 Production

WORKING WITH THE 'TALENT'

Casting and directing actors

Whatever the nature of your production, you need actors, models or subjects, sometimes known as 'talent'. Call them what you will in the medium of your choice, but whatever you name them, you will need people to perform in front of a camera.

Casting

Casting is said to be 75 per cent of the success of any film – at least, that is what the actors say. Scriptwriters say just three things make a film: the script, the script and the script. Whichever you believe, the acting is an important part of any audio visual production.

Many student productions do not spend enough time and care on the casting. If you get the casting right, the actor becomes the character and there is much less need for coaching input from the director (Figure 20.2). Following are some general suggestions for student productions:

1 **Cast adults in the roles of older people.** Where possible, it is best to cast age-appropriate actors. See if you can source them from family or friends outside the school. It is possible to get your school friends to play the part of a young gangster or a detective, but when maturity is called for, you need someone mature.
2 **Suit actors to their parts.** You have the whole school to choose from. You also have your outside contacts. There are so many different personality types and physical types. You will be able to find someone who has in them the essential element that makes them suitable for the part.
3 **Cast actors who will turn up.** A big problem for student filmmakers is the actor no-show. If you are lucky, the no-show happens early in the production. If you are unlucky, the actor pulls out after the production is well under way. You may need to redo the whole thing. Try to avoid this at the casting stage by choosing people who are reliable.
4 **Have understudies.** Make sure that some of your minor actors are available to take a bigger role if there is a no-show from a key player.



D. Sinclair/photo

Figure 20.1 All the gear packed up and ready to film. Production is one of the most enjoyable aspects of Film, Television & New Media (FTVNM). Each production will boost your skills. The finished product will be something you will want to show your friends and family. It will also be a record of your school days long into the future.

Auditions/screen tests

School drama productions have auditions, so why not your media production? A social media advertising campaign could alert a lot of people to your audition. You could also put up posters around the school, or just distribute flyers among your friendship circle or within the drama department.

- **Advantages.** Auditions give you the broadest talent pool. If you have abundance, you can pick and choose. Auditions also let you know who is committed enough to turn up. That is a good indicator of their willingness to turn up for the production as well.
- **Disadvantages.** Auditions are often very public events. You may not want to make such a big splash.

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Figure 20.2 Whatever your production, you are going to need actors. Casting the right people takes a lot of the pressure of directing off you. If the actors are right for the part, you can just let them find their own presence in the role.

You will need the following for your audition/screen test:

1. A camera and perhaps a monitor so that you can watch the performances and see how your actors look on screen.
2. Script 'sides' for the actors to read from. Script sides are cut-down versions of scenes that allow the potential actors to demonstrate their skill, but do not require them to read long and complex parts.
3. A quiet and easily accessible location.
4. A handout for each of the actors, giving them details of the shooting dates, the locations and a short summary of the production.

Remember, there is no such thing as a bad actor, only actors who are not right for the particular part. Make sure you are grateful and courteous to all of those who turn up for the audition.

Acting for a casting audition is really putting yourself on the line, and it takes a certain amount of courage. Let people know as soon as possible of the outcome of the audition.

Talent scouting

The most common method of casting for student productions involves approaching people directly and asking them to act in your film.

- **Advantages.** Approaching people directly is a much more discreet way of casting your production. You get to control who knows about it, and you don't have to deal with all comers.
- **Disadvantages.** The chances of someone turning out to be unreliable are somewhat increased if you have to ask them to act in the first place. You may also have to respond to their refusal if you approach them directly.

You may find the following helpful if you are approaching someone directly:

- a flyer or card for the production with an image or design that shows the concept at a single glance
- a story synopsis or treatment
- details of the shooting dates and locations.

Directing your actors

For your actors, having their faces projected over a big screen on your school's premiere night is a risky thing and they need to be brave to act for you. It is very important to make your actors feel safe. Your aim is to get the best out of them. This means all your comments should be positive and encouraging. Effective directing is solely focused on getting the best performances.

Your actors might fit into the following categories:

- **Drama students.** These people are trained and often quite experienced at performance. However, they might be more used to theatrical performances. Film performances need to be played down from stage performances because the camera is much closer.
- **Enthusiastic friends and family.** You may need to direct these people to just be natural in the role, without overacting or 'putting it on'. Try to get them to forget they are acting.
- **Reluctant performers.** If you have cast these people well, then their natural qualities will be true to the character. If not, you may have to encourage them along.

Acting basics for directors

There are some things about acting that all directors should know, says Michael Rabiger. One way to find



D. Sinclair/photo

Figure 20.3 The director explains to the actor how she wants her to perform the scene. Good directing makes the actors feel safe from harsh criticism, but also gives them guidance about how to play their role.

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out about them is to try acting out the script yourself. When you are preparing for the production, do not read your script at your study desk. Read it aloud, moving around as you think the actors will need to. That way you will have an idea of how to direct them.

A director helps their actors to achieve the following:

- **Focus.** Losing belief in what they are doing is the enemy of all actors. Actors have to stay in character and keep thinking their character's thoughts. If an actor loses focus, try getting them doing something real in the character's world, such as looking at their watch (in character) or handling a prop. This small shift can regain focus.
- **Interior monologue.** We all talk to ourselves in our heads. We talk inside our heads as our own voice, our own self, but the actors need to talk as the characters they are playing. If the actors talk to themselves as their characters, they become more believable.
- **Interior life.** Once the actors are talking to themselves as their characters, they can develop an interior life of feelings and reactions. This interior life becomes visible as things that they do: small mannerisms and actions that reflect the inner life. These are what the camera likes: small external signs of what a person is really feeling.
- **Objectives.** A character is interesting when we see them try to gain their objectives or have their needs met. Everyone has needs at every single moment of their lives. The job of the actor is to work out what their character's needs are in each line of dialogue and action. This will mean a lot of preparation for a good actor. They will have to go through each page of the script and work out what they think is their character's objective at that point.
- **Business.** These are all the real-world physical activities that the actor does that reveal their inner life. It could be fiddling with a prop on the table or searching for something in a room.

What to say to your actors: dos and don'ts

The following list of dos and don'ts for directors is based on lists prepared by a number of acting coaches and short-film makers:

- **Do use action verbs.** Give an actor a description of how you want them to act by using action verbs. Most of these verbs contain an action and an emotion (Figure 20.4). 'To accuse' is an action verb; however, it also has emotions associated with it. The emotions are held by the accuser and the accused. The verb 'accuse' also has physical movement associated with it, such as a pointed finger.



MPH Photos/Shutterstock.com

Figure 20.4 Many acting coaches advise directors to give their actors a 'playable' direction by expressing it as an action verb. 'To accuse' is an action verb that gives the actor an emotional base to come from. The interior emotion also suggests a bodily action – in this case an intense stare. An action verb also has a target: the other actor.

- **Don't act it out or read it for them.** This is called giving a line reading. You are then just asking the actor to imitate you. Even if they are a good mimic, it will still look and sound fake. This is because it does not come from the actor's interior monologue and interior life. Try one of the following instead:
  - Ask the actor about how the character is feeling when they are in the scene.
  - Give the actor an action to do that will help them summon the mood.
- **Do remind actors about previous scenes.** Media productions are often shot out of sequence. To get your cast in the mood, you will need to remind them of where their character has just come from. Actors need to be oriented at the start of each scene (Figure 20.5).
- **Do be constructive.** Do not say, 'Ethan, you are waving your arms about like a madman.' Whatever you are thinking privately, let this come out as something like, 'Keep the same strong intensity, Ethan, but express it more with your eyes than your hands.'
- **Do give permission to fail.** Always let your actors know that there can be another take. 'Freedom to fail' is one of the most powerful tools a director

can use. This takes the pressure off the actors and they often give better performances as a result. In the same way, lines do not have to be word for word. Pressure to get the lines right can also be very destructive.

- **Do build your own authority.** Make sure the actors know that you are the only one commenting on their performance. Do not let other crew make careless comments. There is too much chance they will say something off-putting or insulting.
- **Don't let it be bad.** If a performance was not good enough, have the courage to ask them to do it again. You can try the following to help break a stalemate:
  - Ask the actor to play it in completely the opposite way. For example, a tragic scene could be played as a comedy. After that, come back and play it straight again. The change of rhythm may have given it new energy.
  - Ask the actor to do something physical. Often making a physical action will bring out the meaning of the lines in a better way.
- **Don't let them act alone in a crowd.** If an actor is uptight, they often over-learn their lines and deliver them by rote, like chanting. They are not responding to the other actor, but simply delivering their lines on cue and acting as a lone individual. Instead, they should be reacting to what other characters are saying. The actor needs to draw their reactions from the other characters and react at the moment that something happens, just as in real life. This comes from their interior monologue and interior life as the character.



D. Sinclair/photo

Figure 20.5 It is good to start each scene with a briefing from the director. Have the actors discuss your pre-production and listen to the way you see things. Also remind the actors of what scene their character has just come from. This is especially necessary in film production, where scenes are shot out of order.

Vox pops

If you are making a documentary, you may be tempted to include vox pops. The term 'vox pop' comes from the Latin phrase *vox populi* meaning 'voice of the people'. Vox pops are quick reaction comments from people in the street. Like the opinions of ordinary people, they are useful as a group reaction. Therefore, they are tightly edited to just a few quick words from each person.

A vox pop is not a legitimate survey. Even so, the professional standards of journalism demand that the weight of opinions the audience sees on screen should be broadly representative of those actually expressed when people were asked.

20.1 ACTIVITIES

1. **Create** a flyer or social media advertisement that you can use to approach actors and potential crew. **Explain** in the flyer a story synopsis of your film. **Create** some imagery to illustrate it.
2. Take some photographs of people you might use as potential actors and include them in a document. **Explain** what it is about each person you have photographed that would suit the role you have in mind. Provide **additional information** about the physical and personality attributes that allow them to take on the part of the character.
3. Form a small group and appoint one person as director or acting coach. Select a scene from an existing script. Have the remainder of the group act out the scene and then ask the acting coach to **give feedback** using the guidelines listed in this section. **Explain** (as acting coach) how the actors could have played the scene, giving **additional information** that will help actors **clarify** the requirements of their performance. Now try the scene again.

SET DESIGN, PROPS, COSTUMES AND CHARACTER APPEARANCE

Students and teachers can likely recall a scene from a student genre film that was supposed to show an important character in a significant location, such

as an old Mafia Boss in his hideout. Yet, what was *actually* shown on screen was a teenager in a school uniform, holding a stick and standing behind the bike racks.

When designing and creating productions, the choices made in student films about settings, props, costumes and character appearance can play a significant role in the overall quality of the production, as well as the believability of the characters and the story.



By Lachlan Pendragon, used with permission.

Figure 20.6 Office worker Neil finds out he is an animated character in Lachlan Pendragon's Oscar-nominated *An Ostrich Told Me the World Is Fake and I Think I Believe It* (2022). In an animated production like this, all the elements in the settings had to be carefully crafted to establish the office environment – from the tiny water cooler and storage boxes to the tiled ceiling with functional lighting. Pendragon studied Film, Television and New Media during high school in Brisbane, and he created this animation as part of his doctorate at Griffith Film School.

Set design

A key factor in the initial design of a production concept is access to filming locations and set decor, or what can be created or borrowed. This is particularly important if wanting to transport the audience to a different location or time period. It is frustrating spending hours writing scripts and treatments only to discover the production can't be filmed due to an inability to find the right setting. Take time to choose locations carefully and analyse the layout and items in the room. For example, if your own house doesn't suit the look you are after for a scene, maybe you could ask a relative, neighbour or one of your actors to film a scene at their place instead.

Furniture and appliances

The style and arrangement of items in a room can say so much about a character and their lifestyle or help create the required mood in a scene. Consider carefully how the furniture is arranged, and practise positioning the camera in different places around the room to check the framing and analyse the setting. Furniture might need to be shifted slightly to make use of existing light sources in the room or to create a certain feeling. Positioning items closer together or introducing extra furnishings could create a cosy atmosphere for a scene, or it could feel cramped and claustrophobic. Alternatively, items of furniture could be temporarily removed when filming to make the room feel emptier in order to reinforce a character's isolation, for example, or suggest the person's socioeconomic circumstances.



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 20.7 Enid (Emma Myers) and Wednesday (Jenna Ortega) are roommates in the rebooted *Adams Family* Netflix series *Wednesday* (2023–). The colourful set design of Enid's side of the room is in stark contrast to the dark Gothic tones of Wednesday's half, and the setting and costuming reflects the difference between their personalities.

Decor and wall decorations

The way a room is decorated and the personal belongings in a space can quickly communicate information to an audience without words (Figure 20.7), and this is significant when student productions often have strict time limits. Story exposition can be conveyed through small items that could feature prominently in close-up shots to draw the audience's attention, or in the background of the setting to create meaning. Elements such as photographs of characters, or an overdue bill or school report card stuck on a fridge might need to be manufactured beforehand but this attention to detail can help 'sell' the overall concept.

The colour scheme of a room can evoke certain emotions, and although there are usually limitations to what can be achieved (for instance, it's unlikely your parents or caregivers will let you repaint a room

for a school assignment), the colour scheme can be altered by small elements such as a certain coloured blanket on a bed, throw cushions on a couch or a poster on a wall. Soft furnishings, artworks and posters can also be representative of a character's cultural background (Figure 20.8) or a character's interests and hobbies.



Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 20.8 In the Netflix series *Never Have I Ever* (2020–23), Devi (Maitreyi Ramakrishnan) is a smart but hot-headed high school student who is navigating the challenges of dealing with grief, a complex mother/daughter relationship and her quest to become popular. Devi's bedroom reflects her Indian heritage in the colours and decor in the room, alongside her identity as an American teenager.

The little things

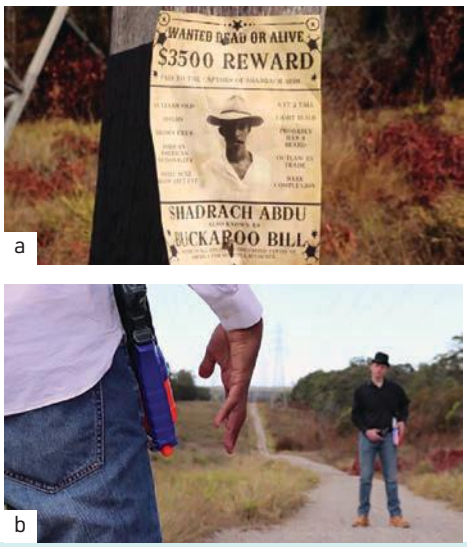
The small details in a setting can either be the finishing touches to help communicate meaning or, if overlooked, can break the suspension of disbelief by forcing the audience out of the narrative. Look carefully at the space, focusing on all the little things. Check for personal items that don't match the story, such as family photos that would contradict the narrative, and put items in cupboards or out of sight (with permission). Also be careful of clocks in the background of shots to make sure three hours hasn't gone by according to the clock in what is supposed to be a one-minute interaction in the production.

If a character is organised and tidy, make sure this is reflected in the setting. Sometimes this might need to be exaggerated in a setting to be easily noticed, such as putting appliances (e.g. toaster, kettle) out of sight in a kitchen to have clear benchtops for a clean look. Or, a setting might need be made deliberately *untidy* (again, with permission) to suit the narrative and create meaning.

Teachers have seen many shots over the years where a 'dust bunny' or ball of hair rolls across the floor like a tumbleweed in a Western, and this can distract from the point of the shot and ruin the moment. If there will be ground shots or close-up shots in the production, you may need to vacuum/dust/mop before filming. Any reflection or window shots might require cleaning the glass unless a dirty mirror or window is part of the story. The overall appearance of the setting is important and requires attention to detail and organisation before filming begins.

Props, costumes and character appearance

The representation of a character is one of the key elements of designing and creating a production. It is important that props and costumes are organised *before* the day of filming! Certain genres have props and clothing that are common conventions, such as futuristic technological devices or white lab coats on scientists in science-fiction films. If making a production in a particular genre, the props and costuming need to uphold those codes and conventions, unless the film is deliberately challenging the usual representations and expected tropes (Figure 20.9).



a

b

Filmmaker Jamie Crockett

Figure 20.9 a & b Stills from Jamie Crockett's student genre film *The Tales of Buckaroo Bill*, showing a reward poster and shootout scene. The props and costumes were influenced by the classic iconography of the Western genre and items like the reward poster were designed by the student. Other *mise en scène* elements were modernised and made comedic such as using nerf guns as pretend weapons.

For the significant *mise en scène* items that will 'make or break' your film concept, make sure you can source these before writing your whole design and scheduling the film shoot (Figure 20.10). Try to avoid school uniforms unless your characters are supposed to be students in the story.

Appearance elements to consider:

- **Clothing.** Don't forget the layers where needed, such as a collared shirt under a business-style jacket. Also make sure the clothing fits the actors before the day of filming.
- **Footwear.** As well as the visual appearance and making sure the whole outfit makes sense, footwear can affect the way an actor walks and how they portray the character in their movements.
- **Hats or other headwear.** These items can be essential to the believability of a character's occupation, such as a hard hat and PPE for a construction worker.
- **Accessories.** Financial status can be suggested by jewellery, such as the CEO of a corporation having an expensive-looking watch.
- **'Everyday' props.** Props such as a handbag, briefcase, umbrella or walking stick can contribute to the character representation and say something about their personality or other needs.
- **Hairstyles and facial hair.** This can include styling but also general cleanliness of hair. You can respectfully make requests of your actors ahead of time if appropriate, such as asking them not to wash their hair or shave on the day of filming to achieve a certain look for a character.
- **Makeup and other cosmetics.** These small elements can refine and enhance the representation of a character, even down to the fingernails and whether they are neat and painted, or dirty and unkempt. Consider whether the production includes close-up shots showing a character's face or hands.
- **Overall presentation.** The way an actor wears the clothes and the presentation of those clothes can communicate different things to an audience. For example, the exact same outfit could have different meanings depending on whether it is neat and tidy, or dishevelled and dirty.



Film still from student work by Izzy Park.

Figure 20.10 *Yours Truly*, a student film by Izzy Park, has a major scene where the protagonist, Esme, is getting married. A church location was organised ahead of time, and the audience can immediately recognise the 'bride' representation through the choices of a white lace dress, hair, makeup, jewellery and the bouquet of flowers.

20.2 ACTIVITIES

1 When brainstorming ideas for your upcoming assessment, do an audit of what you have access to at home for settings, cars, props and costumes, and **identify** any interesting things you could use in a production. Also consider friends and relatives who might be able to lend you something or let you film at their place.
   a **Create** a list of these available elements and brainstorm possible production concepts using one or more of the interesting settings or items.
   b **Compare** your list of possible *mise en scène* elements with the common settings, props and costumes of different genres (see page 259 for different genres). **Determine** whether you have access to key items to make a short production using the codes and conventions of a particular genre, or a hybrid of genres.

2 **Analyse** the settings, props and costumes from winning student films from various Australian film festivals to **evaluate** what has worked successfully for student filmmakers (i.e. with little to no budget). Many competitions host videos online on their own websites, or on sites such as YouTube and Vimeo.

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SHOOTING PRODUCTIONS

Shot coverage

When you are filming, you will need to take the needs of the editor into account. It is very common for problems to arise in editing because there is insufficient coverage. Sometimes extra scenes are needed, or the order of scenes is changed. This often requires extra footage.

The following techniques may be helpful for providing the editor with sufficient footage:

- **Master shot.** Film a continuous master shot of important scenes so that there is complete footage of the whole scene in long shot with minimal camera movement.
- **Establishing shot.** Begin with a clear establishing shot that sets the characters within the scene. This could be accomplished with your master shot or you may have to take an additional shot.
- **Focus on talking characters.** Dialogue usually drives action, so collect shots of each character as they deliver their lines.
- **Reaction shots.** Sometimes editing requires reaction shots. How people respond to dialogue can be just as interesting as the dialogue itself. Collect shots of other characters' faces as the lines are delivered.
- **Noddies.** In news and documentaries, a reaction shot is often called a 'noddy' – so-called because they frequently show the reporter nodding in response to the comments by the interviewee. Noddies are often inserted between questions as a way of hiding cuts. Only nods are acceptable because journalists are professionally discouraged from over-reaction as it distracts from the interviewee. A noddy is filmed after the interview, when the interviewee has gone away. To provide accurate eye-levels, an assistant holds something (such as a pen) at the approximate height that the interviewee's eyes were at. The reporter then makes eye contact with that object.
- **Cutaways.** This is a shot of something other than the main action, which can be inserted to hide a jump cut or to condense action. These shots are therefore cuts away from the main action to something related but different.

The take

Once you have planned and set up everything, you are ready for the take.

A take is a continuous recording of a scene or shot and begins with the following calls made by the assistant director (AD):

1. *First positions* means everyone should get ready and finalise their preparations.
2. *Sound* begins the sound recording if there is a separate sound recorder.
3. *Turnover* or *camera* is the signal to begin camera recording, as called by the first AD. The clapper loader announces the scene and takes numbers. They hold up the clapperboard or slate with the numbers written in clear view of the camera. The clapperboard should be shot in close-up so that the scene numbers appear on the file thumbnails during editing. The camera operator calls *Mark it* once this is achieved. (Note: As film is expensive, often the clapper loader announces the slate number and take before the film rolls.)
4. *Action* is called when the camera has framed the actors and the scene is ready to begin.
5. *Cut* is called at the finish of the scene. It is traditional to wait a few seconds after the end of the last line to allow room for any necessary trimming required in the editing process.

How many takes?

The short answer to the question of how many takes is 'however many it takes'. Digital video means that once the actors and crew are assembled, the costs of production are relatively low. You will only be restricted by people's personal schedules.

Often the first take is the most lively and spontaneous. However, later takes can benefit from



MIA Studio/Shutterstock.com

Figure 20.11 There is a calling protocol around the use of the clapperboard or slate at the start of a take. Shooting the clapperboard in close-up at the start of each take means that it will appear in the file thumbnails, making it easier to keep track of various takes in the editing stage.

the extra practice. It is a good idea to have at least two takes that the editor can work with. If possible, these two should offer slightly different performances. Perhaps the actors can vary their pace or say things in a slightly different way. This allows the editor more room to manoeuvre in post-production.

Screen geography

Screen geography is the layout and direction of the action within the frame, and the point of view of the camera as it films. When editing and filming, attention must be paid to screen geography so that the movement within each frame matches that in the next frame. A car chase in which one car is following another must have the shots of each car moving in the same direction. If the leading car is moving from left to right of the frame, then the following car must use the same screen geography. This sounds easy, but if the camera has the wrong point of view, it can accidentally show a car moving in the opposite direction.

When simultaneous time is shown, it is common for the action in the two parallel locations to move in opposite directions. This suggests that the two sources of movement will converge at some point. Consider the classic simultaneous time situation of a car and a speeding train racing towards a level crossing. Ideally the car will move in one direction across the frame, the train in the opposite.

The 180-degree rule – 'crossing the line'

According to the 180-degree rule, an imaginary line exists called the axis of action. Imagine two people in conversation – the imaginary axis of action can be considered as a line between them, perhaps the line of eye contact. If you are filming these two people talking, you should always place the camera on the same side of the imaginary line. It can be moved to any position to show one person, then the other, but it should always stay on the same side of the line. Crossing to the other side will disrupt the screen geography, as a character will appear to be facing the wrong way (Figure 20.12).

Crossing the line can be done effectively if there is a neutral shot in between. This could be an overhead shot or a shot directly down the axis of action. After a neutral shot, it is acceptable to cross the line and film from the other side.

Avoiding jump cuts – 30-degree rule

Editing requires cutting between lots of different shots of a character or scene. Camera operators

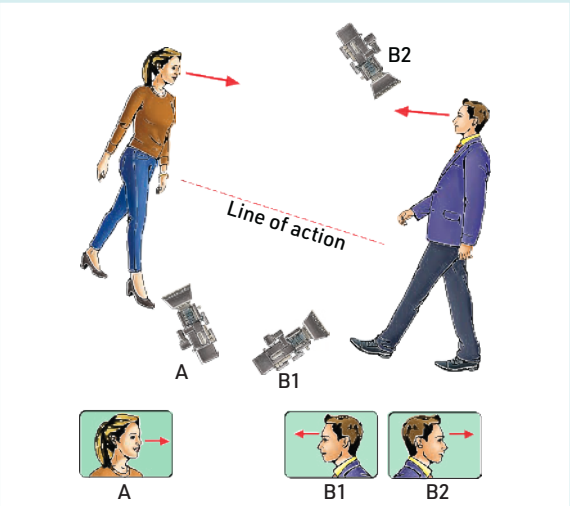


Figure 20.12 Screen geography requires that the camera stay on the same side of the dotted line whenever its position is changed. The line can be crossed, but only if a neutral shot is inserted between the two positions. For instance, the camera can be in the positions A or B1. Position B2 will see a character suddenly flip and face the other way.

in the production stage need to keep in mind that good editing avoids jump cuts by using the 30-degree rule.

- **Jump cuts.** A jump cut occurs when a cut is made from one shot to another of the same subject without any real change in camera position or shot size. It is called a 'jump cut' because the result is a perceptible jump that breaks the sense of continuity (see Chapter 2).
- **30-degree rule.** Classical Hollywood editing style suggests that the camera should be moved at least 30 degrees away from its previous position when shooting the same subject to avoid a jump cut and appear seamless. Some editors also demand that the camera should change shot size as well – for example, from a mid-shot to a close-up. The essential idea is to avoid the two shots looking similar to each other.

Rushes, pick-up shots and coverage

Professional film productions are often large industrial machines, converting human labour and creativity into screen material. First ADs keep track of progress through crude indicators like **shooting ratios**: how much filming is being done compared to the final script minutes that are

completed. Some specific strategies help the 1st AD maintain shooting productivity.

Rushes viewing

Known in the US as 'dailies', rushes are the raw shots viewed straight out of the camera. The names come from the requirements of shooting on actual filmstock, which must be processed before viewing. The '**clapper/loader**' bundles the day's filming and tapes the film cans in a particular way, across the tin. This ensures the brand-new unexposed film, which is taped in a different direction, is not accidentally sent to the processing lab. **Runners** courier the film to the lab, which could be any distance from the location.

While shooting on film may be reserved for the biggest budget productions, digital formats also have an urgency to view the rushes. Showing of rushes preferably happens at night, after the day's filming and dinner break. The rushes may be from a previous day's shooting, not necessarily the one just completed.

Pick-up shots

Shots that have to be recorded after the main filming of a scene is complete are known as **pick-ups**. A shot may need to be refilmed if something is technically wrong, such as an incorrect exposure or a focus pull that missed the marks giving a few blurry frames. Film must be loaded in lightproof bags without seeing into the film magazine that the celluloid is threaded into. As many filming locations are in extreme and spectacular environments, away from facilities, much of the equipment is vulnerable to sand, dirt, moisture and other contaminants.

If pick-up shots are needed, the 1st AD will usually add them to the shooting schedule as soon as possible. This is because most films will move their set-up to a number of locations. Props, location and even actors may only be available for a certain period during the shoot. The 1st AD will need to schedule before the **art department** begins to **strike** (dismantle and remove) the set.

Simultaneous shooting

There are several ways that professional crews work simultaneously to maximise shooting efficiency.

Concurrent episode shooting

A television series may schedule something like two half-hour location episodes to be filmed in a one- or two-week filming block. As a TV series commonly has a limited number of locations and sets, a lot of back-and-forth travel and set-up time can be reduced. Filming the two different stories interwoven within one schedule makes the planning for continuity critical. The crew are jumping between different days, within different stories, completely out of sequence. James Cameron filmed parts of *Avatar 3* and *4* at the same time for the New Zealand based parts of the shoot, near Auckland and Wellington.



Maximum Film/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 20.13 A private two-kilometre freeway was constructed in the US for the car chase scenes in *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003). In 2001, the second and third sequels in the franchise were filmed concurrently in Sydney. This TV-style scheduling is not common in films but can produce savings in production costs, which can be spent elsewhere.

Revolving directors for episodes

Traditional episodic television can be delivered by multiple directors. With the '**series bible**' setting the unchanging factors in the backstory, different directors can deliver episodes within that framework. A series may break filming into a three-stage rotation. One director can be working in pre-production on



Kraft74/Shutterstock.com

Figure 20.14 *The Mission Impossible* series (1988–90) shot in Victoria and Queensland was a reboot of a 1960s icon. The *Mission Impossible* franchise is heavy with special effects and stunts. Unlike a stand-alone film, an ongoing TV format brings constant demand in safety planning and pre-production coordination. The Australian TV series of *Mission Impossible* used rotation of multiple directors.

their own set of scripted stories. Another director can be on set with the crew, working through their own scripts. A third director may have just finished filming and is able to sit with the editors and sound mixers while the post-production is completed. The long-running soap opera *Home and Away* (1988–) reached 101 different past directors in 2024.

Shared footage

Shooting digital formats allows multiple editors to access footage simultaneously. This particularly suits the reality TV format, where stories must be 'created' from available footage. Modern editing platforms allow data servers to be accessed simultaneously to work on different stories. Episodes may consist of out-of-sequence scenes, reversed footage or horizontally flipped eyelines to create seamless narratives. Multiple location crews can upload contributing footage of different teams, as with the competitive reality building show, *The Block* (2003–).

Multi-cam shooting

In many cases, shooting with multiple cameras lowers the production values on screen. This is because one camera gets in the way of another, limiting framing and movement options. Lighting and sound are further limited to setting up in a way that is 'good enough' for each camera, but perfect for none. Interior scenes for sitcoms and soap operas are often filmed this way, as are some interview set-ups. The advantage is that an almost 'live record' is possible without the need to edit. As one long take, these scenes often have more in common with a stage drama than a film performance.

High-end film production may use multi-cam shoots for difficult to repeat continuity. Dance or fight scenes requiring precise choreography may be shot on multiple cameras, particularly with large numbers of actors in shot. Elaborate stunts that cannot be repeated need to be covered in multi-cam.

Second unit

Many films run a **second unit**, which is filming in parallel with the **main unit**. The second unit may be called in to work on multi-camera scenes, but often they work separately on shots that are not for dialogue scenes or do not require the main actors. Even close-up shots of a bomb being defused might be done with a main actor **hand-double**, freeing up the central cast for more essential tasks. Working with animals is notoriously time-consuming, especially if a particular action is required by the script. This patient work is often reserved for the skeleton crew of a second unit.

Locations

There are three main locations used in shooting: indoors, outdoors and studio. Each has its own characteristics. Before you begin shooting, you are advised to do a reconnaissance or 'recce' (pronounced *rekky*). It can be a good idea to take test shots with a smartphone so that you have an idea of what problems might occur on the day.

Indoor shooting

Indoor shooting requires care with the following:

- **Space for shooting.** The camera needs to be far enough back to take in the action.
- **Lighting.** Is there sufficient light, and can adequate power be brought into the rooms to run video lights? Windows can be both useful and a problem. A window can be a light source, but if it is behind the subject of the shot it creates a problem with **backlighting**.
- **Sound.** Some rooms can have problems with sound bouncing around. Clap your hands together to see if there is an echo. Overcoming echoes requires bringing in a lot of sound-absorbent material. Blankets, doonas, cushions and the like can all help reduce sound reflection. It can also be a good idea to record a 'room-tone' track. This is a soundtrack of the room with no one talking. It might capture, for example, the sounds of fans, insects or refrigerators. A room-tone track is usually about 30 seconds to a minute long. It can be used to cover total silences and gaps created in editing. (See also 'atmos track' in outdoor locations.)
- ***Mise en scène*.** Indoor locations can allow a more careful attention to *mise en scène*. Arranging furniture and background objects is all part of set dressing. Do not just accept the location exactly as it is. You can improve the *mise en scène* by being artful.

Outdoor locations

Outdoor locations pose challenges as well. You will need to consider the following.

- **Backgrounds.** You will need to check what else may be included in the framing. Outdoor settings are much less controlled, and there may be distractions that can come into shot.



Weblinks

Thelma & Louise alternate ending

Mission Impossible multiple cameras on jump stunt

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- **The public.** Passers-by can cause problems by coming into shot or heckling.
- **Security.** Theft is much more likely in public spaces. You will need to have someone monitor the unused equipment and cases. Alternatively, use cable ties to lock them to some available fixtures.
- **Equipment leftovers.** It can be easy to accidentally leave camera cases or spare tripods in shot when shooting outdoors.
- **Lighting.** Outdoor locations can also pose lighting problems. Harsh midday sun can cast sharp shadows on actors' faces. Shade under trees can create dark areas. Light can be directed into areas of shadow with reflector boards.
- **Sound.** Recording dialogue can be more difficult in outdoor locations. Boom poles and directional mikes can make it easier. However, there is a lot more uncontrolled sound outdoors. It can also be a good idea to record an 'atmos track'. An **atmos track** (or atmosphere track) is a recording of the natural sounds of the location. It is often placed under dubbed dialogue.

Weblinks
The mobile journalist vs TV crew

Story created using a MOJO kit.



Courtesy Wubishet Leckenby

Figure 20.15 Many large high schools have studios. A studio can create a more controlled filming environment. However, it can also come with particular problems depending on how and where the studio is constructed. One of the most common problems is intrusive sound from other sources outside the studio.

Studio locations

Studios used in productions by FTVNM students vary in size. Some may just be a room with a small green screen in one corner. (A green screen is used as a background upon which other images are overlaid electronically in post-production editing programs.) Other studios may be larger and have specially fitted equipment. Studio filming requires consideration of the following:

- **Green screen reflection.** The paint used on many green screens is highly reflective and can cast a greenish tinge over the actors. Various fixes are available for this in post-production. However, adequate lighting (particularly backlighting) can reduce the problem.
- **Clothing choices.** While green screen and blue screen colours are chosen because they are the most removed from the tones of human skin, green or blue clothing will cause problems.
- **Sound.** Many school-based studios have problems with echo. This is because there is often very little absorbent material such as curtaining, furniture or set stands. Often unwanted sound can be transferred from other parts of the school (Figure 20.15). Air-conditioning systems can also cause noise problems.

Recording on mobile devices

Smartphones are everywhere. Statista (2023) estimates that by 2027 there will be over 7.5 billion smartphones in the world, in a population estimated by Pew Research Centre to be 8.3 billion.

Unsurprisingly, this pocket device has become one of the most common filmmaking tools in the world. Used daily for social media content and journalism, smartphones have also been used to create feature films, such as 2015 Sundance Film Festival hit *Tangerine* (Figure 20.16).



Maximum Film/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 20.16 Critically acclaimed film *Tangerine* (2015, directed by Sean Baker) was shot using three iPhone 5S smartphones and using the FilmicPro app. Use of iPhones was a budgeting decision: it allowed money saved to be spent on locations and extras.

A smartphone can be removed from a pocket and used to immediately record moments, a key reason why it has become the primary camera device for journalists. For instance, it is much more common for journalists at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation to use a **mobile journalism** or 'MOJO' kit to film press conferences, live crosses and television stories rather than use a dedicated camera person. These kits are usually comprised of a smartphone with a high-quality camera, a small tripod, a microphone, an LED light and an external battery, all attached to a smartphone rig or tripod mount to enable single-handed operation.

Use of mobile journalism kits allow more rapid transmission of stories, including through live-streaming across various social media platforms. It can allow more authenticity in interviews because time does not need to be wasted in complex technical set up, and mobile phones are a commonplace, everyday technology to the interviewee. There is also the capacity to shoot more creative footage than permissible with large standard traditional television cameras. Research by the Reuters Institute notes the assumption that use of mobile journalists allows more content to be created and released by news networks. This research also notes that when gathering vox pops, people are more likely to stop when asked for an interview by a mobile journalist than by a two-person television crew.

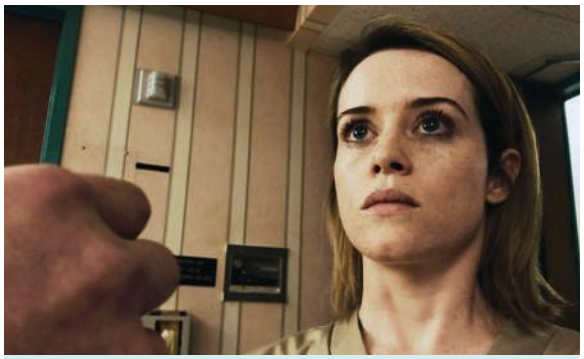
In the mid-2010s, Award-winning director and cinematographer Stephen Soderbergh shifted from using the traditional high-end cinema cameras with which he shot *Erin Brockovitch* (2000), *Traffic* (2000) and *Oceans 11* (2001) to filming on an iPhone from 2018 onwards because of the accessibility and immediacy the device allows.



iStock.com/vitranc

Figure 20.17 A London journalist recording a piece to camera using a mobile journalism device. There are many advantages to the use of smartphones as storytelling devices, particular in telling the news.

Soderbergh was drawn to filming with an iPhone for horror film *Unsane* (2018) because it allowed manoeuvrability in claustrophobic, tight spaces, perfect for telling a story set in a psychiatric hospital. For the mostly-improvised *Let Them All Talk* (2020), Soderbergh used only an iPhone rig with the FilmicPro app, sound equipment and a wheelchair, omitting his usual single LED-panel lighting device for natural light. A mobile device, for Soderbergh, allows a cinematographer to be nimble and supports greater intimacy between characters and audience.



Bleecker Street Media/Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 20.18 Claire Foy in Stephen Soderbergh's 2018 horror *Unsane*. Soderbergh used an iPhone 8 to shoot the film, enabling him to create a sense of grimy claustrophobia by filming up close, in tight spaces.



Bleecker Street Media/Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 20.19 Stephen Soderbergh used an iPhone, a gimble and a wheelchair to film a tracking shot down a narrow corridor in 2018's *Unsane*.

Checklist for successfully filming with a smartphone

Prior to shooting

- Ensure consent has been received for all talent and locations. While mobile devices are everyday objects, when being used for filming the same rules apply as for standard cameras.
- Confirm there is plenty of storage space on the device.
- Clean all lenses.

- Disable notifications so as not to disturb the shoot.
- Make sure the device is fully charged, as is the back-up power bank.

Arriving on location

- Bright light needs to be positioned behind the camera.
- Check audio – use of an additional microphone is best. However, if just using the device's in-built microphone, determine how close to the subject the device needs to be in order to record audio clearly and mark this spot. The ideal maximum distance to record audio using just the device's native microphone is an arm's length.
- If camera movement is required, assess the location for trip hazards and eliminate these risks.

During shooting

- Achieve a smooth shot by attaching the device to a tripod or mobile filming rig such as a gimble. When using a mobile device, the cameraperson's body becomes part of the equipment – elbows can be braced against the ribs to stabilise a handheld shot; zooms are achieved by the cameraperson zooming with their feet rather than using the device's digital zoom; likewise, tracks are replaced with the cameraperson's feet.
- Unless filming for a specific social media platform, hold the device horizontally to achieve the familiar 16:9 aspect ratio.
- Set the recording quality to as high as possible, such as 2K or more, so that in post-production shots can be cropped in if needed.
- Frame up. If using the native camera, set the AE/AF lock (Figure 20.20).
- Press record, then cue action, to ensure that the start of the shot is captured.

After shooting

Transfer the footage to an editing device (Figure 20.21), ensuring to keep a back-up.

Weblinks

Australia's SmartFone Flick Fest

Toronto's SmartFone Film Festival

Spain's Cinephone Film Festival

Dublin Smartphone Film festival

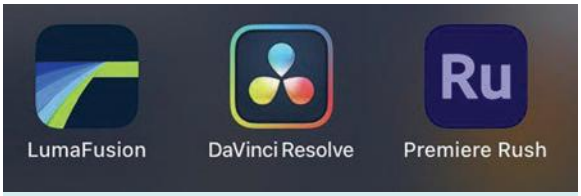
Recording sound

Good sound will give your production a professional touch. Take the same care with your sound as you do with your visual footage.



Aimee Gust

Figure 20.20 Tap and hold to set the AE/AF lock on the device to ensure that the desired settings stay in place. Adjust for each shot. If using an app such as FilmicPro, which adds DLSR settings to a smartphone camera, adjust and set the ISO, shutter speed and aperture.



Aimee Gust

Figure 20.21 Editing is completely possible on a mobile device as well, and becoming easier with the development of efficient editing apps such as LumaFusion, Adobe Premiere Rush and Davinci Resolve for iPad, that allow for quick turnarounds from production to post-production to content release.

All sound recorded on set or on location is called production sound. It includes dialogue, natural sound from the environment and any other sounds made as the actors perform.

Other sounds can be added in the post-production process, but live production sound is always the most realistic.

Microphones

Microphones (often shortened to 'mikes') are a means of converting sound into an electrical or digital signal. Microphones are often categorised according to the directions from which they can pick up sound (Figure 20.22). Different directions have different purposes.

Omni-directional microphones

The prefix *omni* means 'every', so these microphones have a spherical pattern of sensitivity. They can pick up sound from every direction more or less equally. Omni-directional microphones are good for recording situations where several actors are delivering dialogue standing close together in a quiet environment. They are also good for recording atmospheric or ambient sound from all around.

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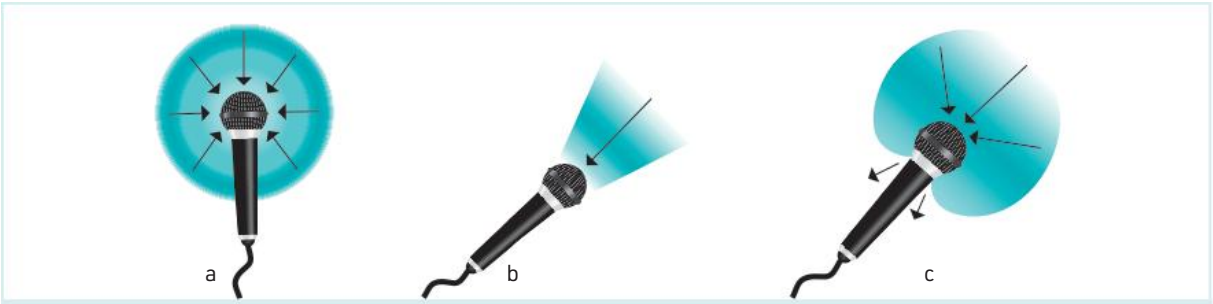


Figure 20.22 (a) An omni-directional microphone can pick up sound from every direction. Its directional sensitivity is roughly spherical in shape. It is good for picking up general sounds from all around, but not so good if you just want to focus on one sound. (b) Uni-directional microphones pick up sound from one direction only – the front. Uni-directional mikes are good for blocking out all other sounds except the one you are focusing on. They are not good if you want to pick up from multiple sound sources or collect ambient/atmospheric sound. (c) Cardioid microphones pick up sound in a pattern that is roughly heart-shaped (hence the name). They are a good general-use microphone, but they are not as effective when there are many sources of unwanted sound.



Figure 20.23 (a) Road case and microphones. Good sound can make all the difference to your productions. (b) Sennheiser MK 816 microphone and a selection of wind baffles – from top: a 'zeppelin', a 'dead cat' or 'Wind-jammer' and a 'windsock'. (c) Sennheiser MKH 816 and 416 microphones. These have a super cardioid recording pattern.

However, omni-directional microphones are not good for picking out the sound of one person's voice when there is a lot of surrounding sound. For example, a reporter on the side of a busy freeway would not use an omni-directional microphone because the sound of traffic would be at least as loud as their voice and the microphone would not 'reject' any of the freeway sound.

Uni-directional microphones

The prefix *uni* means 'single' or 'one'. A uni-directional microphone picks up sound in one direction only – from the front. Uni-directional microphones are good in situations where you need to focus on one sound source to the exclusion of all others. This could be when a character is talking and you need to focus only on them. A uni-directional microphone can also be used to cut out traffic sounds or other loud noises near where someone is speaking. These microphones work by rejecting sounds. They must be pointed like a spotlight so as not to include the unwanted background.

Uni-directional microphones are not good where there are multiple sound sources (unless you are recording them shot by shot). They do not work well if several people are speaking, unless you move the microphone towards each one as they speak. This is the job of the boom operator, or 'boom swinger'.

Cardioid microphones

The word cardioid means 'shaped like a heart'. A cardioid microphone collects sound in a restricted pattern that is like an upside-down heart. It is a kind of uni-directional microphone, but with a broader pick-up area. Cardioid microphones are a good compromise between omni- and uni-directional mikes. They are good for general use. Super-cardioid microphones use the physics of a longer tube for the microphone capsule. The longer the tube, the narrower the 'on-microphone' area. The better directional control means it needs to be aimed almost perfectly, but is favoured by professional boom operators.

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Techniques for audio recording

- **Using headphones.** It is advisable to use headphones when recording sound so that you can hear what the microphone is picking up. This will also prevent a situation where cables may be accidentally unplugged and no sound is recorded. The headphones will allow you to pick up problems. Select headphones with closed ear pads so that you do not hear sound from outside or leak delayed sound back onto the location.
- **Sound levels.** Switch on the sound level display so that you can see sound is being recorded at adequate levels (Figure 20.24). This will also serve to warn you if the sound accidentally stops recording while you are filming a scene.
- **Placing microphones.** The position of the microphone depends on the needs of the camera. The most important position for the microphone is out of view. Beyond that, a microphone is ideally placed between 30 centimetres and 1 metre away from the person speaking. It can be placed above or below the level of the mouth. Placing it level with the mouth can cause explosive breathy sounds.
- **Atmos track.** An atmos track is a recording of the natural ambient sound of the location. It might include leaves rustling, traffic or birds. For an indoor location, the atmos track (sometimes called a room-tone track) is a soundtrack of the room with no one talking – just the silence of the room but with the same number of people in it as when you were recording the dialogue and action. An atmos track is usually two or three minutes long in case it needs to be placed under dubbed dialogue.
- **Recording narration.** A voice-over track should not have any accidental sounds in the background, nor should it contain any echo. Unless you have access to a soundproof studio, the best place to record a voice-over track is inside a car. This is because the interior is sealed and there are lots of absorbent surfaces, such as seat covers and carpets. If you cannot record inside a car, then use a small room. Choose a room that has carpets, curtains and plenty of furniture. You can also build a small enclosure around the microphone and your narrator's head and shoulders. Blankets and cushions are good materials to use.

Weblink
How sounds are faked



Figure 20.24 Use the sound levels display function on the camera so that you know you are definitely recording and that your sound levels are appropriate.

Recording Foley and sound effects

Sets are noisy and often crowdy places. Lights hum, feet shuffle, buttons click, papers rustle, production crew breathe in and out. Exterior locations are even noisier with the added sounds of weather, aeroplanes, motorcycles, cars and chatty pedestrians that could pass by at unpredicted moments.

The difficulty in fully controlling noise when filming means that most sound effects audiences hear in the finished television or cinema production are not the sounds recorded live on set, but sounds created and mixed in post production by creatives such as Foley artists (Figure 20.25).

Foley, named for early sound effects pioneer Jack Foley, involves the creative use of objects to create diegetic sound effects that support the



iStock.com/geogif

Figure 20.25 Film sets contain considerable uncontrollable noise, which makes the sound effects recorded during the shoot often unusable. In this exterior set, the actor's footsteps would be obscured significantly by sounds of the road and possibly wind. They would need to be replaced in post-production with recorded, clear footstep sound effects to be heard by the audience.



iStock.com/CasarsaGuru

Figure 20.26 The sounds heard in nature documentaries are almost entirely added in post-production rather than recorded live by the filmmakers. This is because, to film animals in their natural environment without disrupting them, the crew have to position themselves very far away, filming through extremely long telephoto lenses.



dpa picture alliance/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 20.27 Sajjan Chowdhry and Karnail Singh at work creating a horse and cart sound effect in their studio in India, where they have created the Foley for over 3000 films over three decades. A Foley artist's studio might look like a junkyard but is actually a storeroom of inspiration and objects with which to create potential sound effects.

action on screen. A **Foley artist** will re-create sounds in a controlled studio environment, often live while watching the moving-image product, to replace those not able to be recorded cleanly on set. These sounds are predominantly setting, weather, footsteps (considering the ground surface, acting and footwear), movement (for instance, a person crossing their legs), props (such as a sword being unsheathed) and costume (for instance, removing a shirt and throwing it on the floor). The process of creating the 'right' sound involves significant experimentation and out-of-the-box thinking, as well as persistence, as every sound effect needs to be recorded individually. Some of these sound effects might be combinations of multiple objects, and often involve household or everyday items (Figure 20.27).

Some Foley artists have become household names through their creation of iconic sound effects, such as Ben Burtt, who created the sound of lightsabers in *Star Wars* and popularised the use of the stock 'Wilhelm Scream' as an audio in-joke.

Lighting techniques

Light is used to enable the recording of an image and to communicate mood. Techniques for achieving these two priorities will be decided by the sensitivity and capabilities of the camera and access to lighting equipment. Creative use of relatively simple lighting arrangements can produce striking results (Figure 20.28).



Roberto Finizio/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 20.28 In her music video for 'Tennis Court' by Lorde (Ella O'Connor) has a distinctive approach to engage audiences. A single, unbroken shot spans the three-minute clip with no change to the camera. Instead, cinematographer Andrew Stroud uses lighting changes to alter audience perspective. The intensity of the light is left to 'punch' the emotions of the song, as the singer does not even deliver the lyrics.

Lighting equipment

Lights do not necessarily need to be powerful to achieve the desirable effects. Distance from the subject is an effective way to adjust lighting if the appropriate safety is considered (see page 70). Studio grid lighting should generally be left set as a semi-permanent arrangement for the space it is in. Portable light set-ups can offer more flexibility, giving stylised results.

- Large lights using bulbs can illuminate big areas and give hard shadows.
- LED lights offer safer handling and are best suited to soft lighting.

Weblink
An example of the work of foley artists

- Hardware-style working lights without barndoors can be creatively used as a multipurpose solution and can safely be placed on the floor for dynamic results.
- Camping torches and laptop computers set to a blank colour screen can even be used for closer shots of faces.
- A black **cutter** and a white **reflector** are useful tools to control indoor lighting.
- Coloured lighting gels add richness, especially the 'party colours' that are not naturalistic.
- Timber pegs, tape for cables and oven mitts for bulb lights are good safety additions.
- Reflectors (large card or polystyrene) become significant light sources for outside daylight shooting.
- Thin sheets or table cloths can soften harsh sun outdoors as a **grifflon**.
- C-stands are excellent for holding reflectors; a spare light stand or tripod may also be able to have a reflector clamped to it, remaining still for shooting.

Three-point lighting

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Standard three-point lighting rule

In standard **three-point lighting** (Figures 20.29) there are three main positions for the lights:

- **Key light.** This is the hardest and brightest light and is focused slightly to one side of the main subject. The key light is normally the main source of illumination.
- **Fill light.** This is a softer, more diffuse light that is placed slightly to the other side of the main subject at about the same angle as the key light. The fill light fills in the shadows cast by the key light.
- **Backlight.** This is placed behind the subject and works to separate the subject from the background. If the subject is against a wall, the backlight creates a sense of three-dimensional distance or separation, preventing the subject from being 'plastered' to the wall by the intensity of the two main lights. Backlights are usually hard lights to better create an outline around the subject.

Three-point lighting is used in most situations even today. Audiences now accept it as natural looking, yet it also has the effect of glamourising its subjects.

Using reflectors

Reflected light reduces contrast for outdoor shoots and acts as an extra light source for indoors. The high contrast of faces in shadows from hats presents an obvious need for 'bounced' light. Cameras 'read' detail within a certain range so equalising the brightness gives improved images and a more professional feel. In full sun, even an A4 piece of paper can make a difference to a face in shadow. The bounced light should be balanced to not overpower the main light source. Wider shots will need a larger reflector for the greater distance, which can be improvised from any white surface, such as card or **coreflute**.

Manufactured reflectors are a worthwhile tool that does not require power for remote filming. Many have the option of white or silver, which gives a harsher light that can reach a little further. Some come with a 'goldie' cover, allowing the yellow light of a sunset to be suggested. Collapsible wire-frame reflectors become compact for travel and many of these have a built-in **scrim**, which can soften the overhead light on one person.

For interiors, a reflector can be a great fill light. If the key light is giving modelling on a subject from one direction, a reflector can be placed in the light spill from the other side. A white reflector will bounce back the same colour light in the form of a

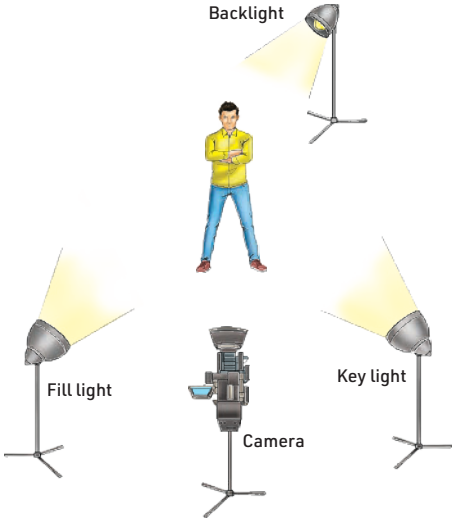


Figure 20.29 The layout for standard three-point lighting. In practice, the lights may need to be moved around somewhat until the shadows have been reduced.

soft fill. If a filming space is not large enough to fit the key light at a good distance, the main light can be aimed away from the subject and bounced back with its own reflector to reduce harshness.

Natural and incidental lighting

Existing lights on location can provide enough light for cameras to function but are usually supplemented to improve the look. For documentaries and real locations that rely on natural lighting, subtle fill can be provided from a light on the camera. Strong, news-gathering versions of this can be referred to as a '**sun-gun**'. A more flattering solution is a **ring-light**, commonly used for flattering lighting on social media posts. Battery versions can be mounted on the roaming camera.

With many light fittings running LEDs, the bulbs can be swapped for the 'daylight' versions. If film lights are being used, **colour correction** gels can be secured over them to match the colour of the natural lighting. Older tube fluorescent bulbs should be avoided for their green or purple tones, and the flicker rate on certain shutterspeeds. Functioning lights within a shot are called '**practicals**', and additional desk lamps and so forth can be deliberately placed in shot as a lighting strategy. Open books or papers on tables can help bounce this practical light up on faces. If an overall boost to the existing lights in the room is needed,



a

Two-point: K, F – Key light (RH) and fill. 'Broad lighting' directs the key light to the wider side of the face.



b

Two-point: K, F – Key light (LH) and fill. 'Short lighting' uses the fill light on the more visible side of the face area.



c

Three-point: K, F, B – Daylight-coloured backlight is added to the key and the fill, separating the subject from the background.



d

Three-point: K, F, B – Contrasting warm-coloured tungsten backlight lifts the hair colour from the background even more.



e

Two-point: K, B – Key light and backlight only leave a darker line when the fill is removed.



f

Two-point: F, B – Backlight and fill reduces modelling on the face.



g

One-point: B – Backlight only shows the work an individual light does within a three-point set-up.

Figure 20.30 The key light may be placed to mimic a genuine light source direction. Distance can be used to fine tune the brightness of the fill light, and the backlight must not shine directly into the camera lens. Each light should be individually cut to check the contribution it makes.

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a large film light pointed at the centre of the room can use the whole ceiling as a gentle reflector.

Natural lighting may not always look natural to the camera. Overhead sunlight is particularly harsh and is very often manipulated by professionals. Huge lights are one way to fill the shadows formed when the sun is behind a subject. This is the case for a James Bond scene in *Casino Royale* (2006) when the character emerges from the ocean. Strong lights are needed to compete with the sun behind him and the reflection shine can be seen on his wet body as he stands up. The opposite strategy is to reduce the sunlight. A **sailcloth** can be suspended with a translucent soft light over a section of the set, but cannot be used in a very wide shot. When this is mounted on a frame, it is used like a 'grifflon', which can be suspended over a conversation. Thin bedsheets, table cloths or sheer curtains can do a similar job if they are translucent enough. When filming a close-up, a large white umbrella or cotton parasol may be able to cover the actors.

Weblinks
Sun fill lights: Casino Royale beach scene

Grifflon use: City Slickers movie clips lighting continuity.

20.3 ACTIVITIES

1 **Demonstrate** your learning by creating a narrative video. **Structure** a short narrative video. **Sequence** audio and visual elements to systematically reveal to the audience the key features of the story type you have chosen.
2 Research moving-image content created on a mobile phone. **Identify** similarities in terms of languages (shot size, camera movement, etc.). **Evaluate** the strengths and limitations to determine what type of story would be ideal for shooting on a mobile device.
3 Working with a partner and experimenting with everyday objects you can locate around you, **create** sound effects for the following:
   - The angry footsteps of a large person, who is storming away from a confrontation that didn't go their way
   - A hungry baby robot
   - Rain falling on water
   - A morose ghost drifting down a hallway
   - A space ship activating light speed
   - Leaves rustling as an animal pushes through them

   Remember to keep an experimental mindset and consider different ways to strike, shake or drop (such as softly, with your fingernails, with an object, firmly, shaking it and so on) or combine each object (using two objects simultaneously). **Reflect** on your experiments and what was most successful.
4 **Select** a short sequence from a moving-image media product that contains no or minimal speech, and delete all the audio. Working individually or with a partner, **create** sound effects to replace the originals. You might consider changing the original mood or meaning through the sound effects you create.

SHOOTING DIALOGUE FOR STORY-BASED VIDEOS

Scenes involving dialogue are fundamental to most productions in television and film. Shooting and editing these scenes well is crucial to the success of your video.

Shooting dialogue

The traditional way to shoot a scene with dialogue between characters is called the master scene technique. It is also known as the shot/reverse-shot technique. This technique involves three basic shot categories:

1 a master shot
2 individual shots of each person, which are used for shot/reverse-shot editing
3 cutaway shots.

Preparing to work using master scene technique will require you to begin with an analysis of the scene goals and elements. Once you understand these, you can shoot the three basic categories of footage.

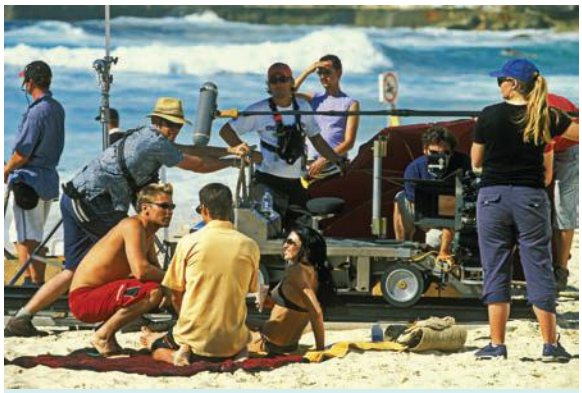
Scene elements and goals

The first step in the process is to analyse or break down the scene into its core filmic elements. These filmic elements are the people and objects that are most important in the scene. For example, if a conversation is between a man and a woman, then there are just two filmic elements. Perhaps the conversation becomes an argument. If you add a letter and a knife used to open the letter, then

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there are four filmic elements that will need to be individually shot (Figure 20.32). When the video is edited, these elements can be cut together to tell the story in the most dramatic and exciting way.

Each scene has a particular dramatic purpose in the narrative. You will need to determine the goal of the scene you are shooting. Once you know this, you can decide where the high points of emotion or intense drama are. Directors traditionally place their close-up shots at these high points.



Rob Francis/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 20.31 The sound recordist holds the boom pole and microphone just above the characters and out of the frame of the camera. This can become a feat of endurance depending on how long the take is, and how heavy the microphone and pole are. In a single-camera shoot, a master shot will be recorded first and then each character will be shot in mid-shot or close-up as the scene is repeated.

Master shot

The master shot is a continuous shooting of the whole scene, showing all the elements as they appear together. Usually the master shot is some kind of long shot, depending on the amount of space required around the characters.

The master shot has three main purposes:

1. To act as an establishing shot, because it shows all the characters in the setting or landscape. After the establishing shot, the shots can move progressively closer to their subjects.
2. To provide coverage, since it is usually shot continuously from beginning to end of the scene. This means it can provide a back-up if any of the other shots do not work for some reason, allowing the editor to cut back to the master shot to hide any problems.
3. To provide the basic soundtrack. It is possible to cut to the soundtracks from the closer shots if required, but the master shot provides the baseline.

The master shot also determines the side of the line of action (180-degree line) that all other shots will be filmed from. The closer shots of characters (the shot/reverse-shot sequences) will need to remain on the same side of the line as the master shot, unless special techniques are used to allow a change.



D. Sinclair/photo

Figure 20.32 Students shooting the master shot of a dialogue scene with four elements: two characters, a letter and a 'prop' knife used to open the letter. The beginning of the master shot can be used as an establishing shot to open the scene.

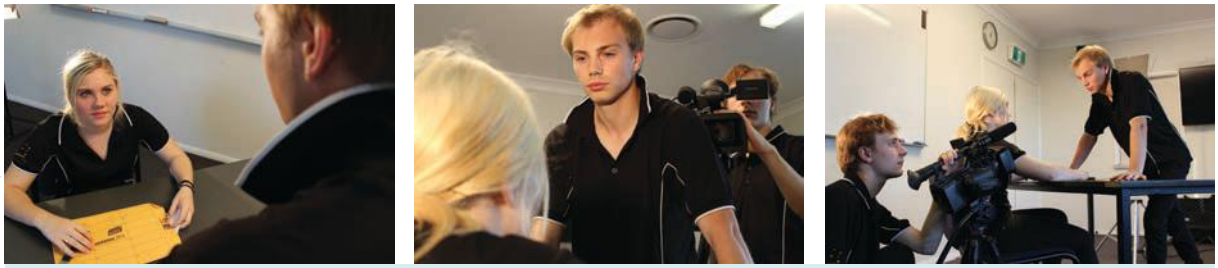
Shot/reverse-shot

After the master shot, the director then re-stages the scene several more times using a variety of closer shots such as medium shots and close-ups. Medium shots do not convey as much intensity and emotion as close-ups, so the close-ups will be used at the high points of the scene. Close-ups may also be used to show objects when they become significant. The director refers to the marked-up script, which shows the pivotal moments when the close-ups are required.

The shot/reverse-shot technique is often used in conversation when a character makes a comment and the director wants to show the impact on the other character. This is called a reaction shot.

At other times, reverse shots may be used to position the audience in the space inhabited by the characters. These kinds of shots could involve both characters. For example, a medium shot or close-up may also show part of the shoulder of the other person. This allows the audience to see the characters in relation to each other (Figure 20.33). This type of shot is called an over-the-shoulder shot, a two-shot or occasionally (because it is not a cleanly framed shot of a single character) a dirty single.

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D. Sinclair/photo

Figure 20.33 Over-the-shoulder shots can be used to show characters positions in relation to each other. Camera placement and angle should approximately match the eyeline of the character whose point of view we are seeing. When matching eyelines between characters, the height of the camera may be adjusted to reflect the position or height of the other character.

Matching eyelines

Master shot technique requires the scene to be shot several times with the single camera focused on each of the different characters or objects. Often the other characters are present for the re-staging, but sometimes they are not.

There are two important factors to consider when matching eyelines:

1 **Sightlines.** The direction and focus of the actor's eyes must be accurately lined up to precisely where the audience believes the other partner in the conversation is situated. You can help the actor do this by holding something at the point where the other actor's eyes would have been or you can use one of the crew as a stand-in.
2 **Camera angle and placement.** The camera angle or camera placement should reflect the approximate height or place at which the audience expects the other character to be. For example, if one character is a lot taller than the other (or is standing while one is seated), the height of the camera should be adjusted to reflect this (Figure 20.33).

Cutaways

Cutaways are shots from within the scene that cut away to something other than the characters themselves. A cutaway could be to an object that has significance in the scene, or to other non-specific characters, such as a group of bystanders.

Cutaways have the following functions:

- **Highlighting significance.** Cutting away to an object in a scene can suggest that it is going to be important. For example, cutting away to a knife lying on the table may foreshadow its involvement later.
- **Adding detail.** A cutaway can add details to the action. For example, a cutaway to a clock can add tension and give the audience information about time pressures.
- **Patching edits.** Cutaways are useful for gaps in continuity or for compressing time. They can also be used to hide the jumps when sections of dialogue are cut out.

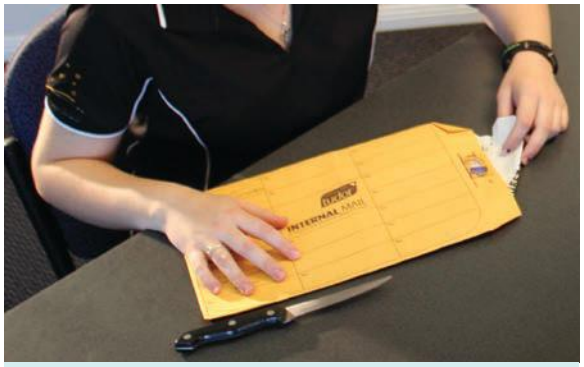
Editing dialogue

Dialogue is one of the main building blocks of storytelling in film or television. Both fictional narratives and documentaries rely on dialogue, and sometimes also narration.

- **Cutaways.** Shots away from the main action (such as reaction shots) can be used to condense long dialogue passages. Use three shots to do this:
  - Show the person speaking.
  - Cut away to the person listening. Let the speaker finish their sentence while the audience is distracted by the reactions of the person listening. Then get rid of all the dialogue you wanted to condense.
  - Cut back to the original person speaking but beginning with the new section of dialogue.
- **Overlapping dialogue.** It gets boring to show one person talking then cut to another. Better technique is to cut to the second person while the first person is still talking. The first person's sentence finishes while focused on the second, then allow the second person to respond. When overlapping dialogue is used at the end of a scene, **J-cut** and **L-cut** techniques can be used.
- **Reaction shots.** If you were observing people talking, you would dart your attention from one to the other from time to time. Try to estimate just when you would do that yourself, and that

is probably when your audience would want to glance at the other person.

- **Progress the action.** Dialogue needs to progress the action or the story. Get rid of everything that doesn't do that, even if you like it.
- **Genre.** Cut dialogue according to genre. Some genres, such as romantic comedy, are very dependent on dialogue. Others, such as action movies, have quite sparse dialogue.
- **Cut in the pauses.** People make small pauses all through their speech. Use these to your advantage if you want to condense the dialogue. Cut on the small pauses and quickly move to another part of the dialogue. Using the space between words allows you to move things along more quickly.



D. Sinclair/photo

Figure 20.34 A cutaway to an envelope and a rubber prop knife that will be significant later in the scene.

20.4 ACTIVITIES

1 View the museum scene in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). **Analyse** the scene for its construction, using master scene technique, breaking down the scene into the **constituent parts** of classic use of the technique. **Consider** how many elements there are. List them, and then **interpret** the role they play as part of the whole sequence. **Explain** how Hitchcock uses the elements to create associations in the minds of the audience.

2 **Structure** two short video sequences demonstrating your understanding of the 180-degree rule (crossing the line). Shoot and edit one sequence without crossing the line. Shoot and edit another sequence correctly crossing the line using one of the available techniques.

3 **Create** your own dialogue scene using master scene technique, **solving creative** and **technical** issues as you use the different filming and editing techniques. Include other scene elements as well as the main characters, **combining** them into a polished moving-image media product.

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21 Post-production

POST-PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES

Now that you have the raw materials from the production stage, the next stage is post-production. Post-production is often just referred to as 'post'. One of two things will happen in post:

- your hard work will pay off, *or*
- your production mistakes will come back to haunt you, and you will quickly need to find solutions.

The editing process

The basic steps involved in digital editing have been established over many years. Similar processes existed for traditional film editing and linear video editing.

Establish the project folder

You will need to set up a project folder to store all your production files. Ideally, this is kept on the local hard drive of the computer you are using to edit. This is because it will be much faster for the files to operate if they are based locally rather than on a USB or remote server. Check to see that you are not saving the folder to a network drive. Video files are too big to travel efficiently over a school network and you will be unable to edit them.

Laptop users can label the folder by the project name and save locally. Shared edit suite users need to clearly label the folder with your name(s). Save the folder to the local drive.

Gather your media

Import all your production files into the project folder. The following steps will help you to organise your files and folder:

1. Make a back-up of all the raw files immediately. Store them on a separate drive that you can keep in a safe place.
2. Rename the camera files. Label all the production files in a logical way. The name should tell you what they are at a glance.
3. Create subfolders to categorise your media. Use whatever sorting system is useful to you. A simple system is to sort by scenes. Some editors use the following system of folder names:
   - video files
   - audio files
   - assets (such as titles, subtitles and various effects)
   - final exports.

Log your footage

Ideally, you should view all footage and make a record of what is there. This is called logging. Naturally, you will just want to start editing straight away. However, the logging process is a good way of seeing what is there and what is missing. Logging also lets you check for faults. It shows you the material you cannot use. Going over the footage also helps to stimulate new ideas. Getting all the images into your head is part of the imaginative process.

A video log is usually a written document with several columns giving descriptions of the shots and the action they portray. Suggested format and headings are shown in Table 21.1.

Table 21.1 A video log is a good way to get all the shots into your head and helps creative problem-solving to occur when you need it to.

FILE NAME	SHOT NUMBER	SHOT SIZE	ACTORS	ACTION	NOTES

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Make an edit decision list (EDL)

An edit decision list (EDL) is a written document that is based on the video log. An EDL puts the shots in the order in which they will appear and gives an indication of titles and transitions.

An EDL is a planning document often with three columns indicating the shot number, description and type of edit (Table 21.2).

Begin constructing your story

Editing is a process of shaping and constructing a story. Place the clips on the timeline in the order of the EDL. A rough cut can be made first, and then you can refine it later.

Most editors cut for story first and then cut for time. The most important thing is to tell the story as it should be told. You can trim it later to meet the time requirements.

Add titles

An important part of the editing process is the creation of titles and credits. The opening title design sets the tone for the whole production. Titles within the story can be an important way of helping the audience to understand complex events. Credits are a way of acknowledging all the people who helped. They also let your teachers know what roles you undertook.

Mix audio

Adding music and sound effects to your dialogue tracks is one of the later stages of editing. Layering these under the main dialogue track requires some skill. You will need to adjust the levels to make sure that the dialogue is not being drowned out. Adjusting the tone and level of a soundtrack is called 'sweetening'.

Sound does not need to exactly match the timing of the cuts you are making to the vision. The sound can overlap cuts made for scene changes. This creates a stronger sense of flow in the editing. There are two kinds of overlapping sound (Figure 21.1):

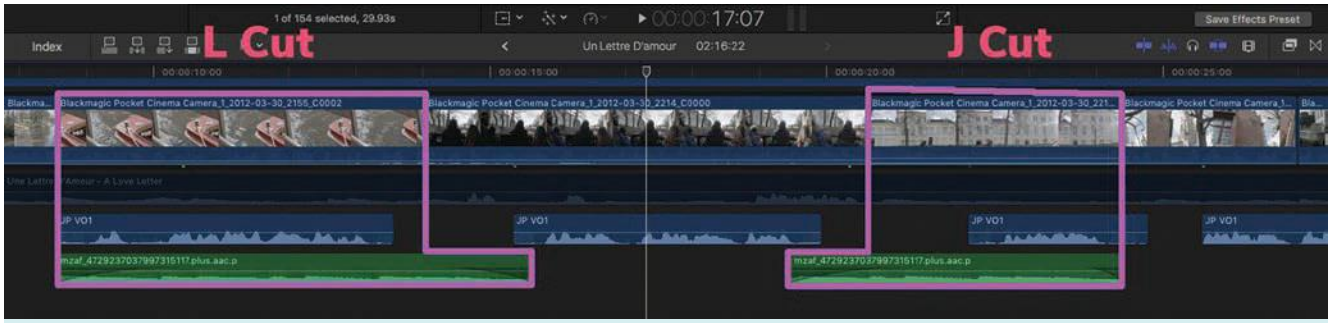
1. **J-cuts.** When the sound of the next scene can be heard while the vision from the previous scene is still playing, it is called a 'J-cut'. This is because the sound overlapping early resembles the jutting swoosh tail of the J, while the vision (the ascending vertical stroke stem of the J) comes in a bit later. A J-cut provides anticipation.
2. **L-cuts.** The reverse situation, where vision cuts out but sound continues, is called an L-cut. Here, the ascending vertical stem of the L represents the vision of the previous scene, while the horizontal arm suggests the soundtrack continuing on for a while after. An L-cut suggests remembrance.

Add effects

Digital editing systems are capable of a vast range of effects (Figure 21.2). Many students also use specialised programs to create more complex effects.

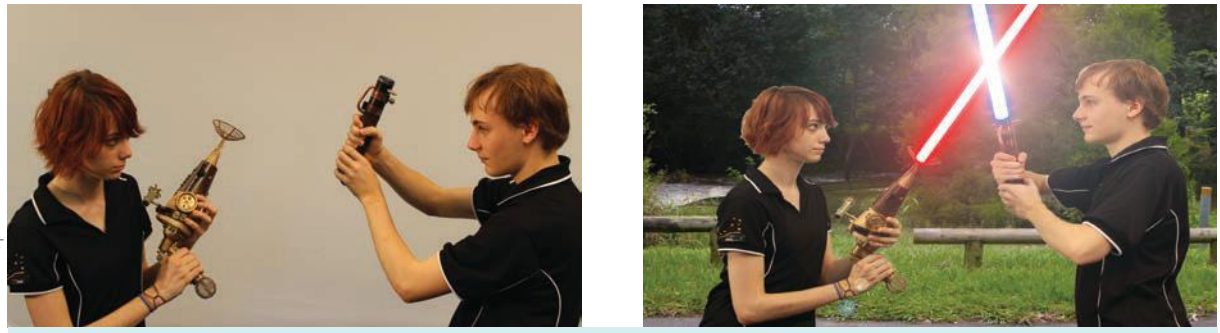
Table 21.2 A simple layout for an edit decision list.

SHOT NUMBER	SHOT DESCRIPTION	TYPE OF EDIT



Internetvibes/thefranswah-studio

Figure 21.1 A video editing timeline showing J-cuts and L-cuts. The terminology refers to the overlap of location sounds at the scene transition. When the audio transition out of a scene lags behind the vision cut, an 'L' diagram is formed by the shot vision and its location sound. A J-cut is the opposite.



D. Sinclair/photo

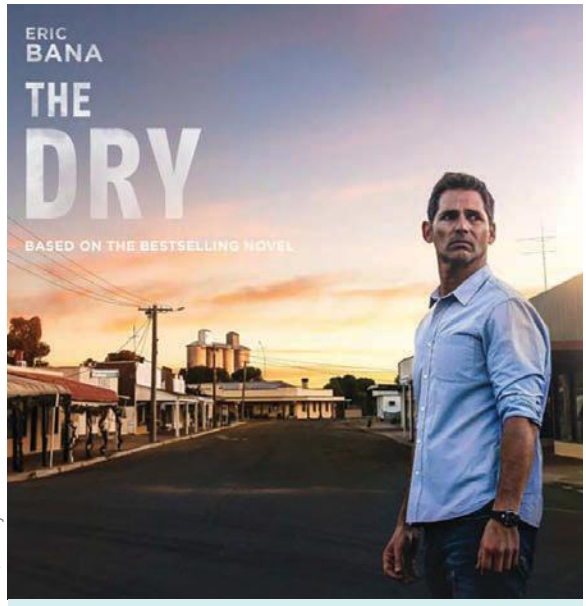
Figure 21.2 Characters fight it out with 'light sabers' and lasers. Once the basic story has been constructed on the timeline, you can add special effects.

Export

Export your finished production in the format required for assessment. You may like to make a second export using a higher definition format as well. Save back-up copies of your export. If you are working in a group, ensure each member has a copy.

Getting a production to the right length

A production rarely comes in at the right length. When it does, enjoy your good fortune. Most productions are too short or too long after the first edit has been done (Figure 21.4).



BFA/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 21.3 A poster for *The Dry* (2020), which topped national cinemas with its crime-based mystery. Aaron Falk (Eric Bana) looks back to his childhood to solve a hometown mystery. Teenage regrets from the past are recalled in scenes intercut with events in the present day, with former FTVNM student Joe Klocek playing teenage Aaron Falk. Long drawn-out L-cuts reinforce the haunting impact of those past events on the present.



Gorodenkoff/Shutterstock.com

Figure 21.4 It is rare for a production to come in exactly at the right length on the first edit. Most are longer; sometimes they are shorter. Cutting the production down is easier than adding to it. However, either can be achieved if you allow enough time to do it before the due date.

When it's too long

A video that is too long runs the risk of boring the audience. Even if the production is really well done, all stories seem to have a natural length and your audience will be annoyed if you over-extend the narrative.

When the production is too long, the best place to start trimming is at the beginning. There are two reasons for this:

1. At the start of the production, you would have thought you had plenty of time. Scenes were probably allowed to run a little longer than absolutely necessary.
2. Audience attention must be grabbed immediately. The pace must be quick. You can speed things up here, and probably end up improving the audience appeal a great deal.

Go through each scene and ask yourself whether it is adding to the film's plot and if it is not essential from a storytelling point of view, then it can easily

be cut out altogether. Small cuts made to each scene can add up to substantial changes in the overall length. You will probably end up with a much better production as well.

When it's too short

A video that is too short is a lot harder to fix than one that is too long. If you did not get enough footage in the production stage, you have a bigger problem.

When trying to make a production longer:

- **Do not flashback whole scenes.** Audiences find repetition irritating. However, when a video is too short, it is very common to search for a solution such as a complete repeat of the first half. Often, this can mean running the whole sequence in reverse motion and then ending up with a scene saying it was all a dream. Generally, this technique does not work. It is too obvious.
- **Extend the tension.** Find scenes where there is a climax in the action. Try to draw out this scene a little longer by holding the tension longer. You can do this by using parallel editing/simultaneous time. If you lack footage, quickly film some reaction shots in close-up with neutral backgrounds.
- **Add a montage.** At an artful point in the production, you may be able to create a montage out of various found pieces of production footage. Edit this together in a new and lively way that adds something extra to the story at that point. The audience will not notice the intrusion.
- **Re-film a new scene.** Using one or two available actors, quickly film a short segment in a neutral daytime setting, or choose a dimly lit indoor or night-time setting with shafts of light on the actor's face only.

Titles

Stylish titles are an important part of the impression that a film or video makes upon its audience. Putting extra work into your titles can add a lot of value. The terminology of titles includes the following:

- **The title card** is a non-moving title that is held on screen for a length of time. Often, the term refers to a title over a black screen, like the title cards in old silent movies.
- **Supers** are titles that appear over moving action or scenes. 'Super' is short for 'superimposition'.
- **Head credits** are the names of famous actors placed at the beginning of a film, before or after the main title.
- **Inter-titles** are title cards that appear within the production, often between scenes. They are often used to let the audience know that time has passed – for example, 'Three days later'. Inter-titles were very common in silent films.
- **End credits or tail credits** are the long list of credits and acknowledgements at the end of a production.
- **Scrolling credits** are usually scrolled vertically to allow equal time for each person, and to make it easier for the audience to read.
- **Crawling titles or crawling credits** are horizontally scrolling text.



Piotr Zajac/Shutterstock.com

Figure 21.5 Official lettering on stands used at the Berlin premiere of the James Bond movie *Skyfall* (2012). Choice of font is something of an art in itself. The limits are imposed by the audience's sense of good taste. However, it can be advisable to avoid fonts with very thin outlines, as these can flicker on screen.

Getting good titles

Following are some general suggestions for creating good titles:

- **Short film, short title.** Opening titles on short films should be as brief as possible. Feature-length movies can afford to drag things out. Short films seem pretentious or above themselves if they extend the opening titles too long.
- **Opening title design.** The titles at the beginning should work to set the expectations of the audience. It can be effective if the title design gives away clues about the genre. The opening title should also hint at the central conflict or premise. One of the best examples of this is the opening titles of *Jaws* (1975).
- **Supers over steady shots.** Camera movement underneath a superimposed title is very

noticeable. Use shots where the camera is on a tripod, or where there is very little movement. However, superimposing over a gentle pan or tilt usually works.

- **Spelling and typos.** All textual mistakes look much worse when they are on a screen. It is also difficult to change them after they have already been included in an exported film. Titles should be thoroughly checked before they are finalised.

Timing your titles

If titles are incorrectly timed, they can annoy the audience. Slow titles can even feel as though they are slowing down the film. However, titles that flash off the screen before people finish reading are frustrating. There are some rules of thumb for achieving good timing for titles:

- **Counting.** A common rule is that ordinary text can be read at three words per second. To get the correct length for your titles, simply count the number of words and divide by three. The quotient is the number of seconds you should leave the title up for.
- **Reading.** This technique requires that you read the titles aloud. Speaking them aloud is a little slower than reading them silently. Wait a brief moment after you have finished reading aloud and then cut the title.

21.1 ACTIVITIES

Resolve the video you made in the production stage (see page 370) into a fully edited story, **solving** post-production **technical problems** and **creative** and **conceptual issues** as they arise.

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22 Distribution

ABOUT DISTRIBUTION

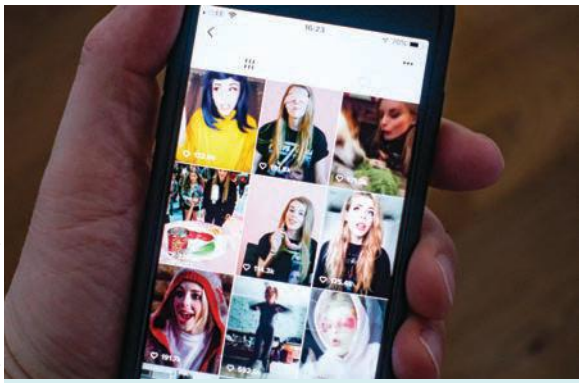
Distribution refers to the method in which the media artist wishes for the audience to access their finished media artwork. There are various methods of distribution, but they are not all suitable for every media artwork.

Digital distribution

With technology advancing at a steady pace, digital distribution offers many possibilities for media artists to reach a wide network of audiences. Digital distribution has never been more accessible for content creators.

Social media distribution

Social media now offers media artists various platforms with incredible reach to share their media artworks. For example, when sharing still-image artworks, a media artist can use Instagram to share their photography and build a following with users to interact directly with the uploader. Moving-image media can be shared with various social media sites, the most common being TikTok (Figure 22.1).



Cyberstock/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 22.1 A profile on TikTok showing the video collection created by the user. TikTok is designed for shorter length moving-image content but is also a good method of distribution for short series split into smaller sections.

This platform allows users to create short-form videos that can be shared instantly and relies on algorithms and tagging to spread awareness.

Streaming

Streaming has grown in popularity with various streaming platforms readily available. This distribution method can be costly and more difficult than sharing via social media, but it has a large reach to audiences and a certain level of authenticity.

Video-sharing and audio-sharing sites

Video-sharing sites such as YouTube offer the media artist flexibility on the duration of their productions, allowing for digital uploads of 10 minutes (without advertising) or longer. This platform has various kinds of content, which can make promotion of the video difficult. Yet, on YouTube, audiences can directly like, subscribe and comment on the production.

SoundCloud is another platform that gives independent audio artists the opportunity to release their work and also upload podcasts. It allows for audio artworks to be shared online to gain exposure with audiences to comment.

Other forms of distribution

When creating moving-image media, a media artist can still release DVDs to distribute them to a wider network. There is also the release of moving-image media via local cinemas. Media artists can release their work exclusively for certain film festivals or local competitions, such as the BUFTA Film festival, STUFFit film festival or A Very Short Film Festival. For audio distribution, the release of CDs as well as vinyl records may suit the target demographic. Finally, for still images, the media artist can enter various photography competitions to gain recognition and build a portfolio of work.

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School and community distribution

If the media artist decides to distribute to schools, the artwork needs to be academically educational and suitable for the younger age demographic. Schools often distribute content within their own community, so a relationship with the school is needed to do this. The media artwork could also be socially educational to school audiences, with a focus on mental health or pastoral care initiatives led by various organisations such as Headspace and Kids Helpline. Schools are restricted spaces for distribution. The media artist should carefully evaluate the appropriateness of content for children including:

- G and PG classification ratings
- censorship
- school and parental permissions and approval processes
- parental input and complaints.

When creating content for a school, media artists should consider:

- Do:
  - make sure of suitability for multiple year levels
  - ensure classification rating of your work before distribution
  - account for the context of your school setting
  - review the themes being explored and whether they suit your target age level and the school setting.
- Don't:
  - create content with any coarse language or adult themes
  - target the content to one year level – unless it is themed such as 'graduation', etc.
  - explore topics that might be considered sensitive/offensive by the audience
  - screen your work publicly without considering the broader audience of parents and the school community.

The media artist may decide that their own local community is the best method for distribution. Similarly, media artists need to consider the context of their local community and the methods available for distribution within that community.

Platform distribution and 'platformisation'

The rise of platformisation has significantly disrupted and displaced traditional forms of film distribution (Figure 22.2). **Platformisation**



Melting Spot/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 22.2 A local community film festival screening in an outdoor venue. Media artists may decide that their media product is best distributed among their own community based on the context of production.

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refers to the rise of digital platforms as dominant infrastructures for various forms of cultural production, distribution and consumption.

The displacement of traditional film distribution by platformisation has had significant implications. Some of these are:

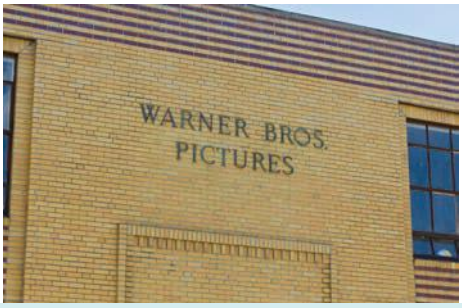
- **Power shifts.** Platforms have gained substantial power in the film industry, often dictating terms to producers and distributors. They control access to audiences and can influence the types of content made and distributed.
- **Changing business models.** Platformisation has disrupted traditional revenue models based on ticket sales and licensing fees. Platforms often operate on subscription-based or advertising-supported models, altering the economics of film distribution.
- **Fragmentation and abundance.** The proliferation of platforms has led to a fragmented and abundant film landscape. Audiences are divided across multiple platforms, and the volume of available content can make it challenging for films to stand out and find their audience.
- **Evolving role of theatres.** As platforms have eroded the exclusive window for theatrical releases, the role of movie theatres has been displaced. Theatres are exploring how to differentiate themselves through enhanced experiences and exclusive offerings.

Platform distribution

Media platforms, particularly online platforms, have revolutionised the distribution of short films and their entry into short film festivals worldwide.

FilmFreeway, launched in 2014, embodies several key features of platformisation:

- **Aggregation.** FilmFreeway aggregates a vast number of short film festivals from around the world on a single platform. This aggregation simplifies the process of discovery and submission, reducing the time and effort required by filmmakers.
- **Standardisation**. The platform standardises the submission process across festivals. Filmmakers create profiles, upload their films and submit them to multiple festivals using a uniform interface. This streamlines the process and reduces the complexity of dealing with varying requirements across festivals.
- **Data-driven decision-making.** FilmFreeway collects data on festival preferences, submission trends and filmmaker behaviour. Festivals can use this data to make informed programming, marketing and outreach decisions. Filmmakers can also leverage data insights to tailor their submissions and maximise their chances of acceptance.
- **Network effects.** As more festivals and filmmakers join the platform, its value increases. A larger pool of festivals attracts more filmmakers, while a diverse range of short films draws more festivals to the platform. This self-reinforcing network effect is a hallmark of successful platforms.
- **Disintermediation**. FilmFreeway enables direct communication between filmmakers and festivals, reducing the need for intermediaries such as sales agents or distributors.



Jonathan Weiss/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 22.3 The traditional brick-and-mortar modes of distribution are slowly being overtaken by streamlined, simplified digital alternatives.

Emerging issues

Platformisation also raises concerns about power dynamics and control. FilmFreeway and other platforms have significant influence over the short film ecosystem. Its algorithms and curation practices can shape the visibility and discoverability of festivals and films. The platform's policies and fees can also impact the accessibility and diversity of the festival landscape.

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22.1 ACTIVITIES

1 View the Netflix suggested content section for three different users: yourself, a parent/guardian and a friend. **Describe** the differences between each user's Netflix page. **Identify** the target audiences that are typical of the suggestions Netflix makes for each user.
Evaluate the accuracy of the suggestions made by Netflix. Is the user part of the same target audience that the suggested content appeals to? Do the suggestions align with the individual tastes of the user? **Consider** further film and television suggestions based on your own knowledge of each user.

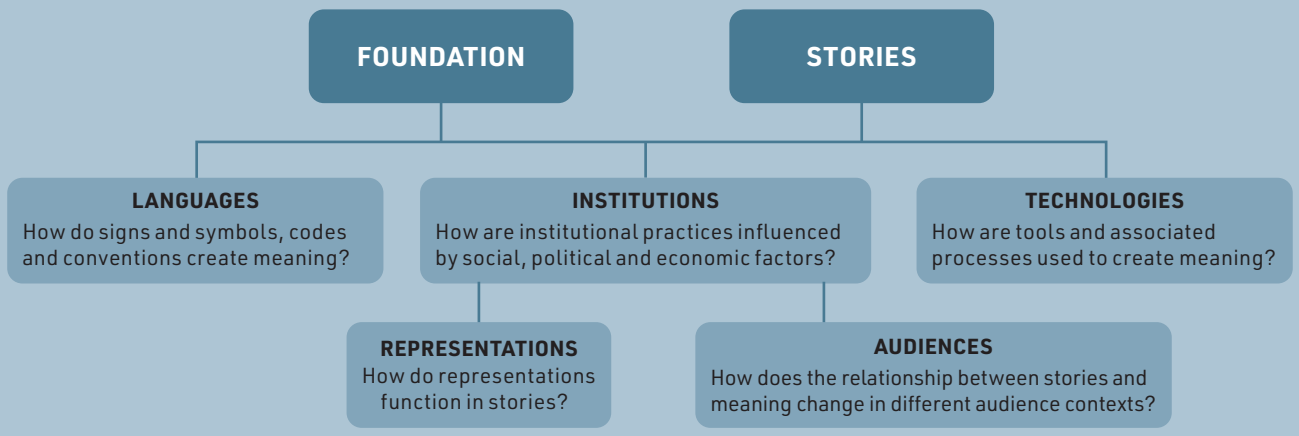
2 **Analyse** the recent video output of a popular TikTok or YouTube content creator. **Consider** how frequently they release their content. **Identify** the technical and symbolic codes that are typically used in their content. **Interpret** the kind of presence they create through the technical and symbolic codes used. **Identify** the target audience based on the presence they have created.
Evaluate if this platform is the best for their particular content and make suggestions about other possible forms of distribution.

3 **Create** a hypothetical film festival and design a marketing strategy that leverages the features of a platform such as FilmFreeway to attract short film submissions.

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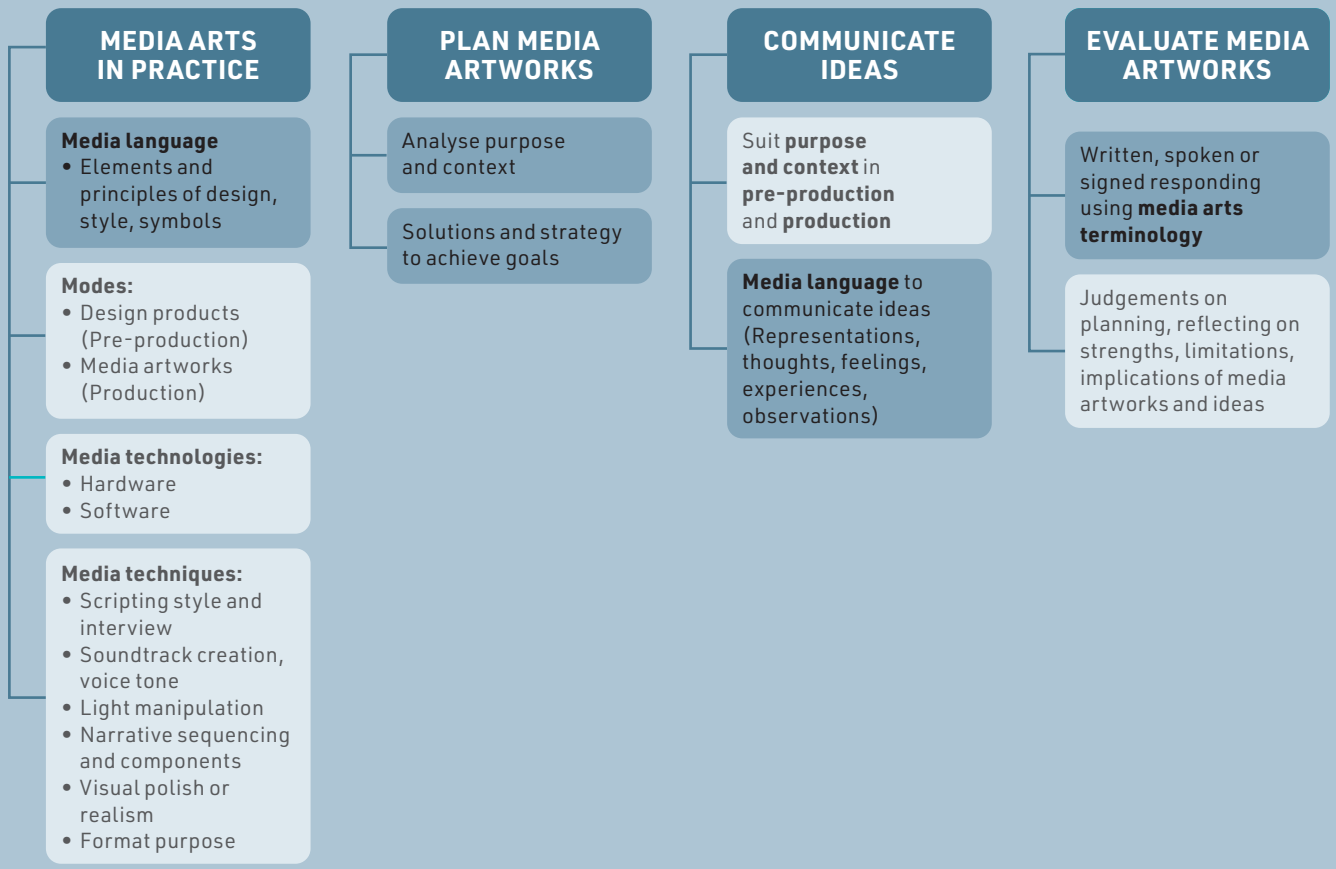
Film, Television & New Media – Units 1 & 2

Areas of study in this chapter and unit question addressed:



Media Arts in Practice

Topics in this chapter:



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23 Writing about media

WRITING ABOUT MEDIA IN FTVNM ASSESSMENT TASKS

Communication is at the heart of media. Writing about media in assessment tasks is similar to producing a moving-image media story for a target audience because it requires clear and purposeful use of language.

To write successfully about media in assessment tasks, it is essential to explicitly use media terminology. For example, rather than writing that the sound in a scene is 'layered' or 'interesting', using terminology such as *diegetic* or *non-diegetic*, *contrapuntal* or *parallel* demonstrates greater media knowledge.

Writing about the key concepts

The **key concepts** (technologies, representations, audiences, institutions and languages) are fundamental to the communication of meaning in moving-image media. These key concepts are impacted by the context of production and use they are operating in.

To understand the **context of production** for a media product, questions such as the following can be researched:

- Who made the product?
  - What were their attitudes, values, beliefs and previous experiences?
- What was happening at the time the product was being made that might have influenced:
  - the technologies available to be used?
  - the attitudes, values and beliefs informing representations of particular characters?
  - the technical and symbolic codes able to be used? For instance, bad weather or the reliance on timing of sunset/sunrise could constrain storytelling decisions.
- How was the product funded?
  - For example, it is important to know that Leni Riefenstahl's 1935 film *Triumph of the Will* was commissioned by Adolf Hitler. This is a strong indicator, prior to even viewing the film, that it is propaganda.
- Where was the product made?
  - For example, if it was made in a country with high censorship, there will be constraints on how and what stories can be told.
- Who is the intended target audience? This can influence representations constructed.
- Why was the product made?
  - What were the stakes for those involved in the product? For example, a documentary might allow a cause to be heard and succeed; or a filmmaker might risk arrest by making the story.

Understanding the **contexts of use** involves investigating particular questions, such as:

- When is the product being used? For example, what time of day it is being released or shown?
- What technologies is it being used on?
  - Is it being viewed on a cinema screen by some audiences but on a phone by others?
  - How will this impact the communication of meaning in the film (e.g. will it make long shots hard to see clearly)?
- How was the audience imagined?
  - Is the audience meant to buy what the product is selling? Does the product assume the audience will be passive or active? Does the filmmaker think the audience's brain will fill in the gaps? For instance, in her 2022 film *Summer with Hope*, Iranian filmmaker Sadaf Foroughi relies on the intelligence of the audience to think outside the frame and put together

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the puzzle pieces of the story she was not allowed, due to Iran's strict morality laws, to put on screen.

- How is the product being used?
  - Is it being used or viewed as intended? For example, if a film has been made for the cinema screen but is being principally consumed on mobile phones, this could significantly change the audience experience or interpretation of meaning.
  - Is the audience remaking or reworking the product; for instance, using in-game footage to make their own stories on YouTube?
- How is the product restricted, such as by digital rights management in specific locations, or enabled, such as through streaming service distribution?
- Who releases it?
  - What funding or access do they have?
  - What about the audiences – do they require good internet to watch it? What locations does this restrict access to?
  - How is viewing impacted by censorship or classification?

While relevant to all components of media, how a text might be interpreted, analysed or evaluated will vary according to the key concept focused on. For example, an analysis of Jonathan Glazer's award-winning 2023 film *The Zone of Interest* could result in vastly different interpretations depending on the key concept focused on. *The Zone of Interest* follows the daily, at-home life of the Nazi commandant of Auschwitz concentration camp, Rudolf Höss, and his family. The events in the film take place in the family's house and garden, while over the wall Jewish prisoners are tortured and murdered in the concentration camp (see Figure 23.1).

A viewer focusing on **languages** might discuss the meaning behind the film's refusal to use close-ups or to show what is happening on the other side of the wall. A **technologies**-focused analysis might draw attention to the way Academy Award-winning sound editors Tarn Willers and Johnnie Burn mixed the sound effects to position the audience to become complacent about the events happening on the other side of the garden wall in Auschwitz. Examining the film from the key concept of **audiences** could raise discussion about how interpretation of the film depends on viewers having prior knowledge about the Holocaust and what happened at Auschwitz, and therefore being able to interpret the sounds, costumes and subtext of the dialogue. **Representations** analysis could examine how the idea of 'everyday evil' is portrayed in the film, whereas looking at the film in terms of **institutions** might focus attention on the impact of the film being a co-production of the Polish Film Institute, and the influence of Poland's experience under the Nazis.



Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 23.1 How filmmakers create meaning and how audiences interpret meaning require the interplay of the key concepts: technologies, languages, audiences, representations and institutions. A single moving-image media product, such as Jonathan Glazer's chilling *The Zone of Interest* (UK/Poland, 2023), set in the Nazi commandant's house next to Auschwitz concentration camp, can be interpreted in various ways depending which key concept is focused on.

Analysing media

Analysing media is a critical skill in today's information-saturated world. By following this annotated checklist, you can systematically analyse media content, considering various aspects such as form, source, language, evidence, target audience, normativity, potential impact and cultural context. This comprehensive approach will help you better understand the media piece and its significance within the larger societal and cultural framework:

1 **Identify the form of media**
   - Determine whether it is a news article, social media post, advertisement or entertainment content.
   - Each form has its own unique characteristics and purposes that influence the message and interpretation.

2 **Consider the source and potential biases**
   - Research the background and reputation of the media outlet or creator.
   - Understand the context in which the information is presented.
   - Be aware of potential agendas, political leanings or financial interests that may shape the content.
3 **Examine the language, tone and framing**
   - Analyse the choice of words and the emphasis placed on certain aspects of the story.
   - Consider what information may be omitted and how this affects the overall message.
   - Evaluate how the language and framing can impact the audience's perception.
4 **Assess the evidence and arguments presented**
   - Critically evaluate the facts, statistics and expert opinions cited in the media piece.
   - Check if the sources are reliable and credible.
   - Look for contradictory or missing pieces of information.
   - Determine if the reasoning is sound and logical.
5 **Consider the target audience**
   - Identify the intended audience for the media text.
   - Understand how different demographics may interpret and react to the message based on their personal experiences, beliefs and cultural backgrounds.
   - Evaluate the potential impact and significance of the media content on the target audience.
6 **Apply the lens of normativity**
   - Examine how the media content reflects, reinforces or challenges dominant social norms and values.
   - Analyse the representation of various social groups and identities, such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability.
   - Identify the prevailing stereotypes and norms being perpetuated or challenged.
   - Consider the ideological messages and values embedded in the media content.

Evaluating media

Evaluation is about making judgements. These might be judgements about the effectiveness of how specific technical and symbolic codes are used to create tension, or judgements about the significance or value of a moving-image media product.

To evaluate, limitations and strengths must be judged against criteria. Reaching a conclusion requires justification with evidence. For example, students might be asked to *evaluate the participation of regional audiences in online games*. To make a judgement on this, students need to consider *barriers to participation* (one criteria) and *enablers of participation* (another criteria). Evidence is provided from research or in the stimulus of each of these criteria.

Then, looking at the evidence for each side, a judgement could be made and a conclusion drawn: that there are more barriers to participation in online games for regional audiences than enablers, and therefore participation is limited.

Any moving-image product can be evaluated in terms of languages, technologies, audiences, institutions or representations. For example, students could be asked to evaluate how a filmmaker uses a particular method to communicate a specific purpose, such as evaluating:

- to what extent technologies are used to create meaning in the music video *Weapon of Choice* (2000)
- how effectively technical and symbolic codes (such as lighting) are used to create mood in the opening of *Double Indemnity* (1944).

Evaluation is supported by well-chosen language that indicates the judgement. For instance, 'purposeful' is a much more specific evaluative word than 'good'.



Fredrick Kippe/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 23.2 In court, a judge evaluates evidence to determine whether it is convincing before reaching a conclusion. Strong evaluation requires convincing evidence.

WRITING CASE STUDIES

A case study is a research method investigating a particular product, question or real-life situation. The term refers to both the process of investigation (the studying of a particular 'case') and the written work submitted at the end of the process.

In the subject of Film, Television & New Media, the investigation will generally focus on a specific moving-image media product or media events over a period of time. The task will likely be based on the subject matter and the key concepts for the unit.

Case choice

Depending on the assessment's context and task instructions, the specific case to investigate may be chosen for you or you may be able to select your own focus. If selecting a topic yourself, your case choice topic must be specific enough so that the response can be written within the word limit, while still allowing appropriate depth in the analysis and evaluation.

Reading the task instructions carefully and seeking clarification if needed is an essential step in all assessment. Check the criteria of how the assessment will be marked to ensure your idea will satisfy requirements and it would also be wise to confirm your idea with your teacher. When deciding on a 'case' for investigation, conduct preliminary research to ensure there is enough information available for you to make supported judgements.

Research and evidence: primary and secondary sources

Sources are the products, reference materials or evidence that you use to find out more information about a particular topic. It is expected that your case study follows referencing conventions such as the use of in-text citations and a bibliography.

Generally, primary and secondary sources are necessary in a well-researched case study investigation.

- **Primary sources** are considered the original product/experience being investigated. This can include the original productions such a films, TV/online episodes, online videos and other elements involved with the original production experience, such as pre-production planning or media related to promoting the production.
- **Secondary sources** are written/created about, or in response to, the primary sources.
  - They can include:
  - textbooks and books
  - research articles and academic journals
  - news stories and interviews with the creators/filmmakers (articles, radio, video)
  - websites and blogs
  - production reviews (e.g. film reviews)
  - documentaries
  - podcasts or video essays
  - social media.

Ensure you carefully consider the source of your information, its reliability and how you will use the evidence to support your judgements. Traditional sources of information such as academic journals and books are useful starting points, but occasionally it can be difficult finding information when the chosen case is a recent or current phenomenon at the time of writing. Less 'academic' sources may be required to support evaluation about the success of production, such as the critical reception of a film as described in reviews and news stories.

Structure and content of case studies

Case studies are written in a report style format, and it is usual to have a basic structure of an introduction, body and conclusion, with the body section split into three or four paragraphs. For the body paragraphs, it is common to use specific subheadings to signal the topic of these sections in the case study report. Consult the task sheet (including scaffolding section) and marking guide, and be careful not to go off on tangents.

Case study introduction

The introduction will need to establish a clear topic or thesis for your case study. Ensure the case choice is well-defined, and that the opening is written so that readers want to learn more. Briefly set the context for the case by considering: who, what, when and where.

Once you have finished writing your case study, compare your introduction with the rest of your report to ensure the introduction fits what has been written. Make sure there is coherence, especially if you discovered new points about the topic during the writing process.

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Body paragraphs

This is where you write the main part of the task with the analysis and evaluation. To effectively analyse and evaluate the case, this may include first identifying the target audience and examining the contexts of production and/or use.

Production contexts and target audiences

Investigating the production context for your case study may include (but is not limited to) explanation of:

- location and time period of production
- who made the product
- financing and budgeting
- government regulations or other institutional requirements/restrictions
- intended target audience
- market research and product testing
- product distribution and audience access
- available technologies.

The contexts of production and use can have a significant impact on how media is created, and how the product is viewed or accessed by audiences. It is important to clearly identify the audience for the production/s of your case study choice towards the start of the report. Avoid vague statements such as, 'this film would appeal to a wide range of people'. When, where and who creates a production can influence factors such as available technologies, ratings, settings and costumes, representations and cultural contexts. Events at the time of the production can also affect the production process and overall outcome, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on media production around the world. Consider who wrote/directed/produced the work, as well as other key roles in creating the production – a single filmmaker, a small team or a big company? Funding budgets and sources – whether commercial, private, crowdfunded, government/public funds or a combination – could mean there are requirements and/or limitations placed on the production.

Studio websites, behind-the-scenes footage and press releases can be sources of information about intended audiences for productions. Check the ratings classifications for productions, and research how the production was marketed and advertised. The way audiences are expected to access the productions can affect how it is made in the first place, such as the use of closer shots if a production is to be viewed mostly on a small screen.



Album/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 23.3 Taika Waititi on set directing *Thor: Love and Thunder* (2022). Filmed in Sydney during the pandemic, the film crew and actors needed to follow strict COVID-19 protocols on set, such as wearing face masks.

Analysis and evaluation

There are two main approaches to structuring the analysis and evaluation in the body paragraphs of a case study.

1 Each body paragraph may include both analysis and evaluation,
2 The report structure may have a couple of paragraphs analysing features of the case, followed by a paragraph or two evaluating factors to reach judgements or conclusions about the chosen case.

The **analysis** of the features of the case will change depending on the task specifics, but it is usual to require analysis of specific evidence from the primary source/s, which can be supported by references to secondary sources.

Evaluating factors to reach judgements or conclusions about the chosen case will require evidence to back up points, particularly about whether the production was successful in its purpose, such as appealing to a particular audience. Investigate the different factors that impacted the case, including the benefits and/or limitations of these factors. For example, if evaluating the evolution of CGI technologies, a limitation could involve discussion of the Uncanny Valley effect, and how this factor affected the success of the product with audiences.



20TH CENTURY FOX/Cinematic/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 23.4 Andy Serkis stars as Caesar in the reboot film series, which started with *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* in 2011. The film used motion capture technology to create realistic ape characters, rather than rely on practical special effects. New Zealand special effects company Wētā FX (formally Wētā digital) created over 1000 digital effects shots for the film, and developed performance capture technologies to allow filming on location.

Research any statistics about the production to support the evaluation, such as overall profit, ratings, award nominations/wins, audience numbers, online views or social media statistics to help make conclusions. There may also be impacts in relation to audiences or institutional progress in relation to hiring practices for cast and crew.

Analysis and evaluation of the chosen case in relation to the key concepts could involve the following:

- **Technologies.** The use of technology in the case can be investigated by analysing the primary source and related content. For example, when viewing the production, you might be able to identify the use of technology, such as drone shots or the use of digital special effects. Through accompanying media, such as behind-the-scenes videos, or secondary sources, such as interviews and articles, there may be discussion of what technologies were used to create the product.
- **Languages.** If analysing the use of media languages, check the task sheet carefully to see if both symbolic and technical codes are required, as this can sometimes be in the criteria. It is often useful to include both anyway, such as the way cinematography decisions (technical codes) combine with the *mise-en-scène* choices (symbolic codes) to create meaning for an audience.
- **Representations.** Investigating the representations in a case could include researching the traditional representations for that type of production or that type of story, and whether the case upholds or challenges these usual representations. As well as analysing the appearance of characters, also consider how they sound, how they move, their skills, what they say, the power dynamics and relationships with other characters, and their role in the narrative.
- **Institutions.** The institutions involved in media production can influence the creation, distribution and consumption of media. Behind-the-scenes videos and interviews with the production creators or actors can be a source of information for how the institutions involved influenced the creative process. Also research the 'About' section of the companies on their websites, which often have details about policies and procedures that govern how they operate.
- **Audiences.** The intended audience will influence how a production is made to appeal to that audience, and sometimes there can be surprises where a production finds an unexpected audience. For media created in the past, analyse whether the features of the productions still appeal to contemporary audiences.

Case study conclusion

The conclusion of a case study may include a final evaluation judgement about the success, popularity or importance of the 'case'. This finalises the evaluation points made in your body paragraphs. A summary of the main points is common practice, but this is more effective if the ideas are there to emphasise an overall point, rather than just reminding the reader of what came before.

23.1 ACTIVITIES

1 **Construct** a timeline showing significant events over the development, production and distribution of your chosen case. Include additional information about events and key dates such as stages in the production creation, release dates and updates, awards, and 'milestones'.

Template
Activity 23.1

2 **Identify** a film and/or TV series that has been rebooted or remade with gaps of time in between instalments. **Analyse** how the main characters are **represented** in the different versions of the production, and research the **context of production** in terms of the intended **audience** and any **institutional** constraints. **Evaluate** the success of the different **representations** of the main characters for the **audiences** at the time, and consider whether the older versions of the characters would still appeal to modern **audiences**.

Extended response

To communicate in-depth analysis and evaluation of moving-image media, an extended response format is most commonly used. This is generally an analytical essay that responds to a question about a key concept in relation to a specific stimulus, which students will not have seen until they begin the exam.

Structuring a response

An analytical essay involves clearly communicating a viewpoint in response to the question, through an introduction, several body paragraphs and a conclusion. A viewpoint requires the identification of the meaning communicated, two or three ways this has been communicated and an overall judgement about how well the meaning has been created. This is also known as a **thesis**.



Weblink
The Zone of Interest trailer

For example, if the question asked students to analyse and evaluate the trailer for *The Zone of Interest* (2023) in terms of the key concept of audiences, then a viewpoint could be that the communication of meaning through sound, costumes and dialogue subtext relies on audiences having prior knowledge about the Holocaust, and will be more effective for audiences with some historical knowledge of World War II.

To develop this thesis, the extended response could:

- outline the film's context of production and use in the introduction, and state the thesis
- expand on the first way meaning is communicated (in the above example, this would be through sound) in a body paragraph, weaving judgement throughout
- expand on the second way meaning is communicated (in the above example, this is costumes) in a body paragraph, weaving judgement throughout
- expand on the third way meaning is communicated (in the above example, subtext of the dialogue) in a body paragraph, weaving judgement throughout
- provide a conclusion making clear the reasons the thesis has been proven.

Paragraphing is always a recommended way for structuring an extended response. A paragraph might include:

- a topic sentence that identifies the technique used to create meaning (identified in the thesis) and links to the key concept
- evidence from the stimulus and analysis of how this creates meaning, with language of evaluation woven throughout
- a linking sentence that refers back to the key concept and summarises the overall effectiveness of the technique examined in the paragraph at communicating the overall meaning identified.

In addition to these structural features, an effective extended response must make accurate and appropriate use of specific film, television and new media terminology. For example, when referring to sound features, the terms **diegetic** or **non-diegetic** should be used. Reference to costume should highlight that this is a component of ***mise en scène***. Throughout the whole extended response, links need to be consistently made back to the key concept from the question. For instance, in the above example, **audiences** are the central concept and therefore this word needs to be woven throughout the whole response.

Referencing

In an assignment compared to an examination, referencing expectations can vary. Use of time code is helpful to identify moments viewed in both conditions.

When referring to the stimulus, it is helpful for students to use specific descriptions (for instance 'shot 7') or timecode, such as '0.10–0.14'. If quoting from dialogue or written information, students should use quotation marks ("/") to indicate that the words are not their own, and where possible place the name of the source or author in brackets ( ) after

the quotation, for example, 'in *The Zone of Interest* trailer, stark white text on a black background tells the audience to "not look away" (0.47–0.49)'.

Reference lists are not generally required in an examination due to the unseen nature of the stimulus and question.

Writing under exam conditions

In the Film, Television & New Media course, extended responses are written in exam conditions, over an extended period of uninterrupted time, typically two hours. Extra time for planning is allocated, but students are not permitted to seek input from teachers or exam supervisors to help them during this time.

An extended response exam is similar to running a marathon, where successful completion requires training. Students should practise planning writing under timed conditions.

Responding to an unseen stimulus in the exam

Practice in responding to unseen stimulus and unseen questions allows for authentic and unique responses. While stimulus for an exam is short to allow for re-watching, all forms of moving-image media from a variety of genres presents suitable stimuli for an exam. A stimulus might be, for example:

- a short film in its entirety
- a section of a longer film or television show
- a music video
- a advertisement
- an example of video game play
- a vlog from YouTube
- a piece of social media content
- a trailer.

As stimulus is unknown, students need to have a clear approach to effectively using planning time, to ensure confidence and composure in an examination context. Essentially, an exam needs a strategy, just like a football game.

In developing a plan for responding to unseen stimulus questions, it is helpful for students to self-reflect and consider which of the key concepts they have the strongest understanding of. This helps with targeting study strategies on areas where their knowledge is not as strong, and also helps students choose the best question and save time during planning.

Types of exam questions

Questions that ask students to write about moving-image media seek to elicit evidence of the student's understanding of how key concepts are used to communicate meaning, the significance of context of production and use, and of the thinking skills of analysis and evaluation.

Extended response questions seek to have students:

- look closely at a piece of moving-image media and break it down into component parts or key features that relate to the question and specified key concept
- look for patterns between each of these component parts or features and interpret the meaning created
- make judgements about the product in terms of the strengths and limitations of those elements in communicating the overall meaning
- use accurate and relevant film, television and new media terminology
- structure a written response cohesively.

To support students in demonstrating evaluation skills, questions often ask students *how well* or *to what extent* a key concept has been used to communicate meaning.

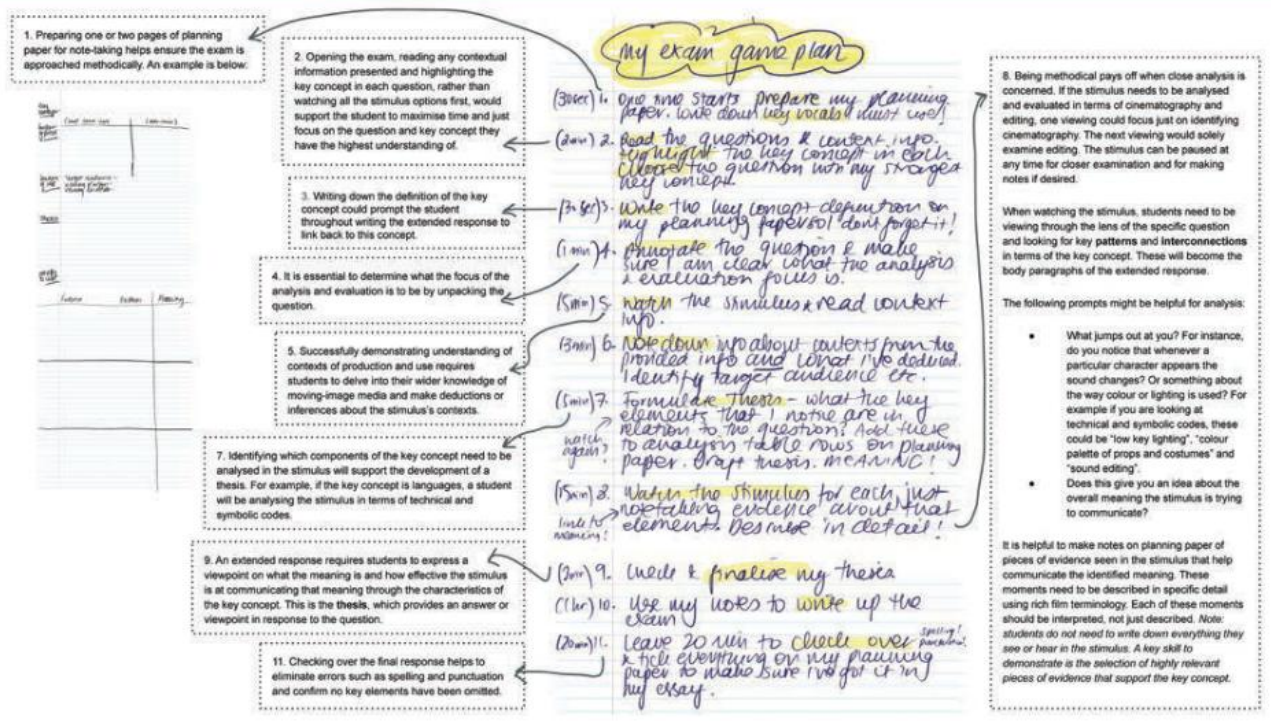
Viewing, note-taking, planning and writing the response

Strategy is key to a successful extended response, including for approaching viewing, note-taking and planning in examination conditions where every second counts. There are no set rules about what a strategy could involve because every student is different. However, students who use planning time, and are methodical about understanding the question and reviewing the stimulus before writing, are often more confident in their response.

Figure 23.5 is a sample student strategy for viewing, note-taking and planning. This student spent approximately 35 minutes planning out of their overall examination time. This strategy would be developed in class through consultation with the teacher and the student's reflection on their progress and understanding.

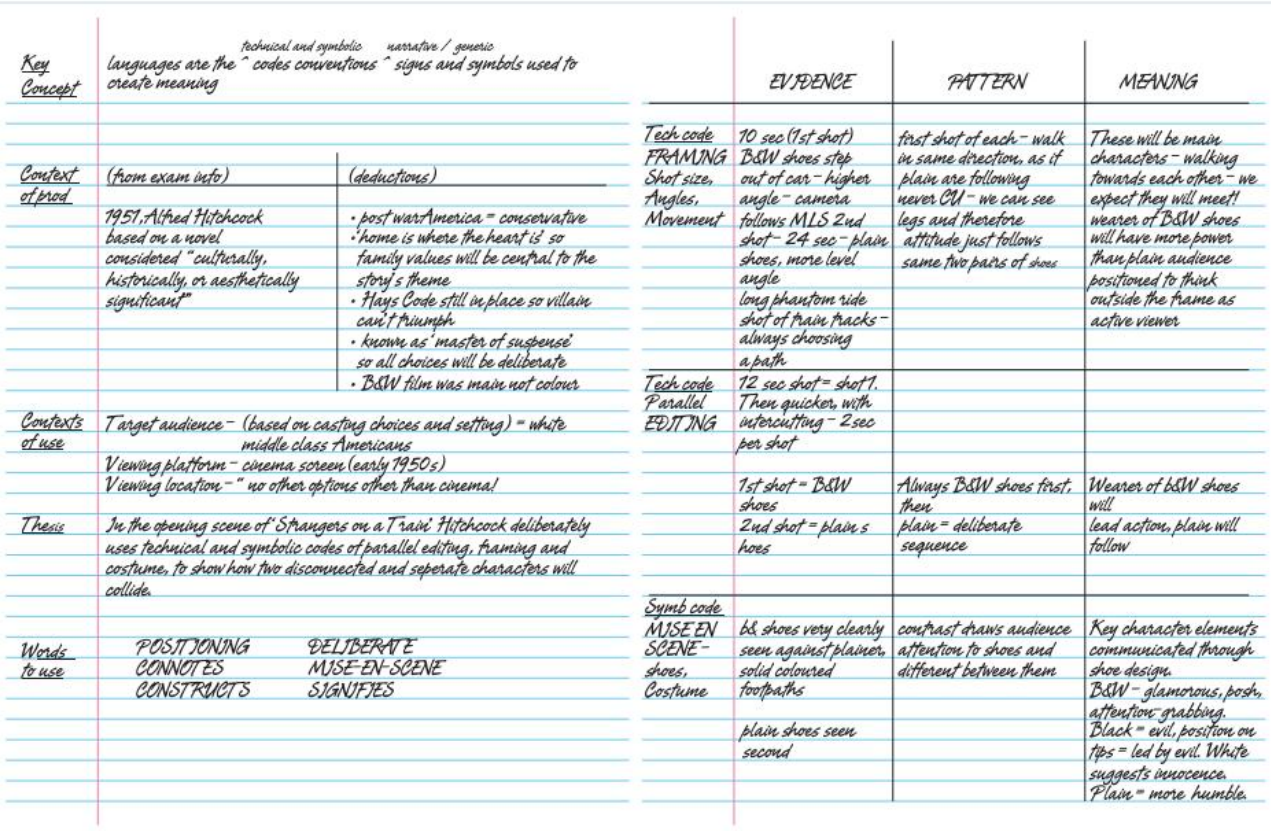
With a clear strategy, completing an extended response examination becomes a significantly less stressful event. In their exam, the student with the example planning strategy chose the question in Table 23.1.

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Aimee Gust

Figure 23.5 This student's strategy for the exam makes use of the maximum planning and writing time available. As part of their planning process, this student has made detailed notes in preparation for writing their exam response. The text box annotations highlight the impacts of each section of the student's plan for their exam.



Aimee Gust

Figure 23.6 How the student's planning strategy might look in an examination in response to the question in Table 23.1.

Table 23.1 An example of an exam stimulus, the exam question and contextual information.

CHOSEN QUESTION	CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION	STIMULUS
How does Alfred Hitchcock use technical and symbolic codes in the opening scene of *Strangers on a Train* to create meaning?	*Strangers on a Train* is a 1951 psychological thriller American film by 'master of suspense' Alfred Hitchcock. The film is based on a novel by Patricia Highsmith. The screenplay was written in part by Raymond Chandler, an established crime writer who had previously scripted several film noir films. The story of *Strangers on a Train* follows two main characters: Bruno, a psychotic male, who meets Guy, a tennis player on a train journey. During the train journey, Bruno realises that both wish to kill someone. He puts forward an idea where they both exchange murders to evade the cops. Central to the film's storytelling is the idea of opposites. The film is now considered culturally significant.	Opening scene from *Strangers on a Train* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1951, USA) 0.00–1.22

23.2 ACTIVITIES



Template
Activity 23.2

1 As a class, brainstorm a word bank of **evaluating** language that can be **applied** throughout a response to signpost judgement. Avoid relying solely on words like 'good' and 'effective'. Use the *think, pair, share* strategy to **create** a class list of 10 different stimulus for each category listed below:
   - a short film in its entirety
   - a section of a longer film or television show
   - a music video
   - an advertisement
   - an example of video game play
   - a vlog from YouTube
   - a piece of social media content
   - a trailer.

   To do this:
   a Individually, **research** and locate five stimuli from one of the categories.
   b Collaborate with a partner who did the same category, striving to **create** a list of 10 stimuli for this category.
   c Share your list for a separate category with the class, creating a whole class stimulus bank.

2 In small groups, select one stimulus from the list created in Activity 1. Use the table below to **identify** how, for each key concept, the group can **Analyse** that stimulus differently. An example based on 'The Zone of Interest' has been done for you.

VIEWING FROM A LENS OF: →	TECHNOLOGIES	REPRESENTATIONS	AUDIENCES	INSTITUTIONS	LANGUAGES
This is what our interpretation focuses on: →	How the sound design and mixing positions the audience to become complacent about the events happening on the other side of the garden wall in Auschwitz	How the idea of 'everyday evil' is portrayed	Context of use: how interpretation of the film depends on viewers having prior knowledge about the Holocaust and what happened at Auschwitz, and therefore being able to interpret the sounds, costumes and subtext of the dialogue	Context of production: the impact of the film being a co-production of the Polish Film Institute, and the influence of Poland's experience under the Nazis.	The meaning behind the film's refusal to use close-ups or to show what is happening on the other side of the wall.

3 Undertake a practice exam:
   a As a class, select three questions from the class question bank developed in Activity 1 to create a class practice exam.
   b Individually, **apply** the student planning process above in timed exam conditions to plan a response to one question.
   c Individually, **apply** literacy skills to write an introduction and paragraph for this question.
   d Swap your response with a partner. Use the **evaluative** language bank from Activity 1 and the textbook glossary to improve the response in terms of **applying** relevant terminology.

9780170484176

WRITING ABOUT MEDIA IN MAP

MAP students have a particular set of demands in their writing because of the industry focus in the subject. This industry focus creates a strong need to be aware of audiences and the business contexts.

Why are production and use contexts significant?

Understanding the contexts of production and use is crucial when writing about media. Below are some reasons why contexts should be considered.

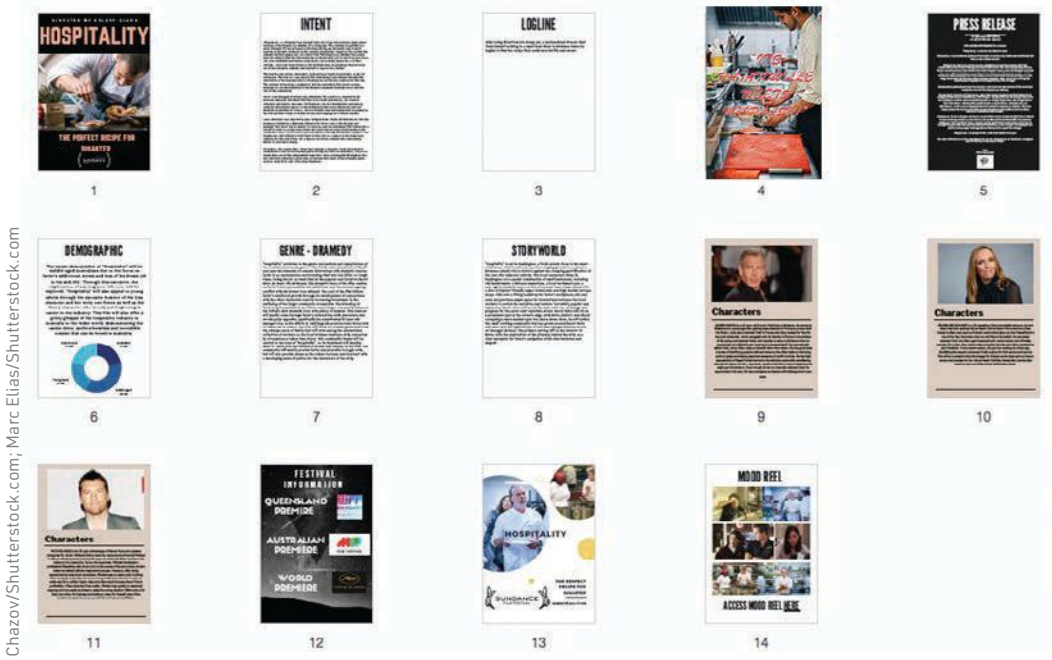
- **Deeper understanding.** By considering these contexts, writers can explore the complex factors that shape the creation, distribution and consumption of media products.
- **Critical thinking.** Examining these contexts encourages writers to think critically about the underlying power structures, ideologies and sociocultural influences that impact media products.
- **Historical and cultural context.** These contexts are often tied to specific historical and cultural moments. Understanding these contexts allows writers to situate media products within broader social, political and economic trends.
- **Audience engagement.** By considering these contexts, writers can better understand how audiences interact with and interpret media products.
- **Industry insight.** Examining contexts provides writers with a clearer picture of the media industry's inner workings, including the role of technology, financing and regulation in shaping media products.
- **Comparative analysis.** Understanding contexts allows writers to compare media products, genres and platforms.

Promotional texts

There are various ways to promote a media product at different points of production.

Electronic press kits

An electronic press kit is a package of trailers, still images, scene clips and other promotional material. The key purpose of the EPK is to service broadcast.



Chazov/Shutterstock.com; Marc Elias/Shutterstock.com

Figure 23.7 A screenshot of the various pages of an EPK. EPKs should be highly visual for the press and should capture the essence of the film or series. EPKs can also use videos and sound to further engage the press by promoting behind-the-scenes interviews, clips and sound bites from the cast and crew.

MAP SYLLABUS

Tick, tick ... BOOM!

3 March 2022 Film Review

Directed by Lin-Manuel Miranda

Run time: 115 minutes



Lifestyle pictures/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 23.8 A film review from a film website FilmBunker. This review uses images, tagging and formatting to engage the audience. Film reviews often follow a similar structure irrespective of their medium of release. Reviews should capture the essence of the film and offer recommendations.

Features of an electronic press kit

An electronic press kit incorporate some of the following:

- scene clips
- trailers
- sound bites (from cast and crew) and background information
- B-roll footage not included in the production
- featurettes
- printed information.

Film reviews

Film reviews help advertise a film just before or after its release. Film reviews can take many forms, with written film blogs, YouTube reviews and TikTok reviews.

Purposes of the film review

The purpose of a film review is to provide a snapshot of the film's plot, decisions and narrative beats without spoiling any major moments. A film review should concisely tell an audience what the film was about, the moments they enjoyed and hated, and their overall opinion.

Features of the film review

A film review should contain information about the film such as the director, run time and cast. It should also provide a rough summary of the plot based on what could be seen in theatrical trailers. Film reviews can be written but they can also be recorded, with reviewers featured on screen discussing the film more informally with the viewer. For example, TikTok allows users to post reviews where they use the medium to post images and text to interactively review the product.

Online review features

The main feature of an online film review is a video aesthetic that is less polished than official film or entertainment television programs. Online reviewers usually have the following features:

- They use a one light studio.
- They only use a singular camera on a tripod.
- Video is produced with a black background.
- Screen grabs are often informal and not official.
- The production values are just a skeleton crew or even just the reviewer themselves.
- It might have comedic elements where interviewing skills might change according to this personality 'brand'.
- Celebrities might be more informal and fun with a casual atmosphere.

MAP SYLLABUS

23.3 ACTIVITIES

1 **Analyse** the *electronic press kit* for musical artists Big Little Lions and March Angel. **Describe** the differences between each artist's EPK. **Identify** their target audiences based on the EPKs' designs. **Evaluate** which EPK more effectively reaches their audience. **Create** an EPK for a pop artist of your choice.

2 Read two different film reviews on Letterboxd about the film *Oppenheimer* (2023). **Describe** the different writing style of the two film reviewers. **Consider** whether either of the reviews would have benefitted from audiovisual technical codes as in a vlog review. **Evaluate** which film review was more persuasive. Make suggestions of other platforms these film reviews would suit.

9780170484176

GLOSSARY

180-degree rule Screen geography principle of not crossing the camera reversing 'line of interest' without justification.

30-degree rule Shooting and editing for continuity but jumping more than 30 degrees when showing the same subject in consecutive shots.

360-degree cameras Cameras that capture a full sphere of vision, single or multiple lens versions; can be called 'omnidirectional'.

360-degree sphere modes Automated function to combine images as a full field of view from one point; integrated lenses or multiple stitched images.

85 filters (a-c) Orange filters used to convert blueish (daylight) lamps or windows to match the colour of a tungsten light source.

Act (noun): significant section in a story made up of individual scenes that may bring new locations, time frames or characters to the story and allow breaks for the crew to reset a stage for live productions.

Action line Chain of events that constitutes the main plot line in a narrative.

Ad campaigns Linked advertisements around a unifying theme, often across platforms.

Ad copy Text to accompany advertisements that can be written or dialogue.

Additive colour Colour mixing system for light where adding all colours produces white.

Additive lighting Conventional way of targeting an object of interest by directing light on it, or supplementing a natural light source to gain the desired brightness.

Aesthetic Term from philosophy that essentially means the appreciation of beauty. In film, it often refers to the ways in which a visual image is constructed as appealing.

Algorithm Set of instructions, procedure or a formula used in a calculation, usually by a computer.

Analogue media Media forms that use materials from the real world, such as tape or film, to transmit their message.

Analogue renaissance A movement towards renewed interest in the qualities of older analogue technologies, such as vinyl records and celluloid film.

Analyse To examine or break down into parts in order to identify meaning or similarities or differences; analysis of media products involves applying an understanding of the key concepts and the contexts of production and use.

Anamorphic A type of lens and projection used to compress and expand the image captured on a smaller film frame.

Anamorphic distortion The horizontal squeezing or stretching of an image while the vertical information remains correct.

Animatic Pre-production tool used in filmmaking and animation where storyboard images are edited together with intended timing and sounds/dialogue. This creates a rough version of the production to test if it is a workable concept.

Animation 'bring life' to non-live action images with the illusion of movement.

Antagonist Character who acts against the protagonist, as an opponent or adversary. Also of classical Greek origin, the word 'antagonist' is built from *anti*, meaning 'against', and *agonistes*, meaning 'one who is engaged in a struggle'.

Anthropomorphised Giving human characteristics, emotions or features to animals, objects or other nonhuman entities

Aperture Variable opening in a lens which allows the light rays to pass through to the 'picture plane', where the image is created.

Apply To communicate meaning using literacy skills in the selection of language conventions, subject specific terminology and appropriate referencing conventions.

Arc shot A circular tracking shot with the subject in the centre.

Arcade video games Standalone game cabinets with built-in controls designed for public spaces.

Art department Responsible for buying or making props, costumes and backgrounds to match the production needs.

Art installations Usually 3D and temporary, artworks that change the experience of the display space.

Artefactual Object that has been created by a human, usually a cultural object or some kind of tool or technology.

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Assistant director (AD) Person who assists the director with coordinating production activity and supervising cast and crew.

'Atmos' track Atmosphere recording of consistent ambient sound to mask audio edits.

Attribution Acknowledging credit for contributing concepts or authors, or indicating a personal opinion (as opposed to fact) in narration, superimposed titles, or article by line in screen media.

Audience availability Time that people have to view media products.

Audience expectations Beliefs audiences have about a future media experience.

Audience 'reading' practices Ways audiences can understand texts. They include dominant readings, negotiated readings and resistant readings.

Audience Individuals or a group of people who are involved in using and making meaning of some kind of media product, and for whom that media product was made.

Augmented reality (AR) When technology (such as a smartphone) is used to superimpose images or video over a view of the real world.

Auslan A language of expressions, body gesture and hand movement used by the Australian deaf community, first defined in 1989 dictionary.

Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) Federal government body that regulates aspects of media content and technology.

Back focus The forming of a sharp image behind the last lens element inside a camera that coincides with the recording picture plane.

Backlighting Light placement behind the object being filmed from the camera point of view.

Ballast Power supply for HMI lights that facilitates the ignition of the arc at high voltage and then regulates the current to maintain consistency of light.

Barn doors Small, adjustable metal panels fitted by hinge to the film light itself to cut the light, creating areas of shadow around the beam.

Barrel of the camera (to look down) an eyeline directly into the lens.

Ben-day dots Regular patterning of dots to create colour or tone, originally developed for print media.

Billboards Large, single purpose outdoor public display frames.

Binary opposition Paired opposites that are often engaged in a power struggle, such as active/passive, good/bad, rich/poor.

Binary Consisting of a division into two.

Bollywood Prolific Hindi film production area of India, centred around Mumbai, dubiously named after Bombay and Hollywood.

Bots Self-sustaining autonomous programs that perform tasks.

Bounce-board Rigid reflector of pure white that creates a more diffuse effect than direct light.

Broadcast Communication that is spread widely and directed towards a broad or mass audience.

Bulb Glass tube containing a filament (commonly tungsten in smaller filming lights). A manufacturing weak point may be visible as a nipple and should be pointed out of the light to avoid excess heat.

Bumper ads Short ads, named for going between a program and ad break.

Call sheet Shared crew document with location. times and other requirements for a particular filming day.

Call-to-action Motivating phase of purchase or response message to an audience.

Camera angle The height and vertical direction a camera is pointing, usually defined by the relationship to characters but may also be in reference to an assumed floor within the scene.

Caricatures An exaggerated misrepresentation made to ridicule.

Case study Research method investigating a particular product, question or real-life situation.

Catch lights Directed specifically for eye highlights.

Catfishing Creation of false online identities to bait or manipulate others.

Causal agent Person, object or event that affects the course of the narrative.

Ceiling bounce Technique for quickly producing softlight by aiming lights up for interiors.

Cel animation Celluloid transparencies with hand-painted characters for each filmed frame.

Censorship Prohibition of sections of a text considered unsuitable to be seen by audiences.

Character arc Journey of change over the course of, and in response to, plot events.

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Character images Images of characters, often drawn for pitching video games.

Character outline Information that may go beyond the plot and physical appearance, such as back story and personality traits.

Chat GPT 4 A large language model harnessing artificial intelligence to assist with tasks or answer questions.

Cherry picker Industrial cane mounted on a truck or trailer also used in filmmaking to create aerial movements with camera and operator in a suspended bucket.

Chiaroscuro High-contrast lighting that produces deep shadows – an effect produced by low key lighting.

CinemaScope A widescreen film format with an aspect ratio of 2.35:1.

Cine-theatre Live drama presentations that integrate screen performances in the production.

Cinéma vérité Style of filmmaking, especially of documentaries, that attempts to authentically and realistically portray people and events, avoiding technical artifice through the use of handheld cameras, jump cuts, non-professional actors and so on.

Circular plot structure Narrative structure that begins at the end of the story before relating the chain of events that led to that conclusion; a common device in *film noir*.

Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) The federal regulator overseeing Australian airspace and Australian aircraft, except the military.

Clapper/loader Job on set to manage the recording or film media and identifying it, including via the clapperboard.

Classifies A system of allocating texts to particular categories.

Claymation Stop-motion using 3D flexible clay-like models.

Clickbait Attention-grabbing headlines or images linked to further information that is likely to be lesser quality or relevance.

Cliff-hanger Plot scenario generating excitement through audience uncertainty.

Climax Point of high tension or drama in which the protagonist faces success or failure.

CMOS (Complementary Metal-Oxide Semiconductor) Type of memory chip in computing that can be used as an image sensor in cameras, as electrons are produced in response to light hitting the chip.

Code System of signs that gain their meaning by shared understanding.

Cognitive bias A tendency to interpret facts according to pre-existing assumptions or entrenched processes.

Collision of images Juxtaposition of two images with different meanings to create a third meaning; first identified in early Soviet cinema, the technique formed the basis of almost all Hollywood special effects before the arrival of computer-generated imagery

Colour correction Compensating for incorrect camera white balance in available light.

Commutation Transferring or commuting a code into something else to discover its meanings.

Complementary Colours opposite on the colour wheel producing high vibrance at junctures.

Complication/conflict In classical narrative, the story's chain of events is set in motion when the orientation, normality or equilibrium at the start is disturbed by the introduction of complications or conflicts; only when these are resolved can equilibrium be restored.

Compression of time Shortening screen time to move the story forward.

Computer animation Image movement generated by a programmed visual path or automated 'in-betweening' of the key frames.

Congruency Alignment of the (ad) message with the brand identity.

Connotation Associated thoughts that any particular sign brings to mind, for example a rose has connotations of love.

Construction A human creation constructed out of selected details, rather than a complete and natural creation.

Context Conditions surrounding the text. May include the time of production, the language, the society, the natural environment etc.

Context of production and use Conditions surrounding the production and use of a media product.

Continuity editing Editing style favoured in Hollywood and designed to create consistency and smooth progress in the narrative. Cuts are made on action to distract audience attention from the transition. Also known as 'invisible' style.

Continuity Maintenance of the same actions, dialogue, costume, setting details and props in different

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shots or takes of the same scene. When this does not occur it is said to be a continuity error.

Contrapuntal sound Music or other sound that contrasts with the film image, providing a commentary on it or creating a third meaning. Also called asynchronous sound.

Contra-zoom, dolly zoom, triple-zoom reflex Specialised camera zoom that allows the camera to zoom in while at the same time tracking back in the opposite direction, creating a disorienting change in perspective; also called a dolly zoom, triple-zoom reflex or trombone shot.

Control Power that is wielded over others that reduces their agency.

Conventions Accepted ways of doing things and repeated patterns that audiences are familiar with.

Convergence Blurring of boundaries between different telecommunications media, such as between television and the computer, or between text, images, video and sound in multimedia products.

Cookie boards (cucoloris) Constructed objects mounted in the light beam to create patterned shadows.

Corflute Light-weight rigid plastic board.

Corporate advertising Promotion of brand identity and standing, rather than specific products.

Counter-stereotype Portrayal that deliberately sets out to challenge a dominant stereotype, for example by portraying a minority group in a more positive light.

Crab A sideways movement of a camera, often used in reference to four-wheel steering dollies.

Crane shot Device by which a camera is moved up or down a mechanical arm or crane, or raised and lowered at an angle to create a special effect

Crash zoom *See zip zoom.*

Create To bring a media product into existence from the pre-production stage using production and post-production technologies.

Creatives Advertising agency staff responsible for the conceptual content rather than technical production.

Crowdfunding The practice of funding a project by collecting money from a large number of people who each contribute a relatively small amount, typically via the Internet

C-stand (century stand) A robust, articulated stand for clamping equipment in place, such as cutters.

Cultist Someone who is a follower of cult texts.

Culture jamming Protesting by disrupting the expected social interpretations of media.

Cutter Rigid black panel to cast a sharp-edged shadow from a particular light.

Deep fake Convincing digital construction of an event or context which never occurred.

Deep focus Film technique using lots of light, a small camera aperture, a wide-angle lens and fast film, which ensures that everything in the shot, from foreground to distant background, is in focus

Deep swap Face swapping using artificial intelligence.

Deep swaps Automated software mapping alternative faces over moving images of people.

Demography Mapping of segments in society that share similar characteristics. For example, youth is a demographic group that shares the characteristic of being in their teens. Other demographic groups could be based on income, ethnicity, gender etc.

Denotation In communication, the naming or describing of a sign, for example' a rose is a tightly petalled flower with a strong scent'.

Denouement Final stage of the narrative when all the loose ends are tied up.

Desensitising Tendency for audiences to become less empathetic or shocked with increasing exposure to graphic content, such as gun violence.

Design To plan media products using the accepted conventions of pre-production formats and to justify the choices made, considering appropriate health and safety practices.

Diegetic Within the world of the story and available to the characters.

Diegesis The world of the story including the setting, characters and events.

Diegetic element Anything that is from the world of the story that can affect the plot, characters or setting.

Diegetic sound Sound from within the story (the diegesis) that can be heard by the characters.

Diffusers Translucent physical objects to soften light sources and the resultant shadows.

Digital actors Computer-generated actor that can be based on a human actor, or be created without a human as a reference.

9780170484176

Digital asset Objects such as props, modelled in or imported to a digital environment.

Digital defocus (Miniature effect) Digitally mimicking a single line of focus and implying a smaller scale of the subject.

Digital footprint: Records of interaction online of downloads, contacts, sites visited etc. stored across various networks.

Digital media Media that use a binary code system to represent information.

Digital signage Electronic billboards capable of changing displayed information or incorporating animation or video.

Dingle Piece of tree branch used to create an improvised shadow.

Director of photography (DOP, DP) Person responsible for the look of cinematography by manipulating exposure and lighting choices.

Discretionary spending Money available after essential costs are deducted.

Disequilibrium State of continuing upheaval that occurs once the disruption has upset the equilibrium and begun the chain of events.

Dispatcher According to Propp's theory of narrative character roles, the character who sends the hero off on the quest.

Distinct media Separate media platforms.

Disturbance/disruption Action that begins the chain of events and upsets the equilibrium.

Divergence Process of multiplying the forms of delivery of a media product.

Diversification Process of enlarging a company by taking over or merging with other companies.

Doll-house view Superior perspective, usually from above and isometric, featuring a cut-away view of sorts to imply control.

Dollying shot Tracking shot in which the camera is moved through a scene by means of a dolly (a tripod on wheels).

Domestic comedies Comedies set in the home.

Double exposure Single image formed of two images, created through exposing film to light twice, or layering one image over another through editing. (Also see 'superimposition'.)

Echo chamber Enclosed space bouncing back one's own voice and the digital media equivalent.

Environment images Images of story world settings often drawn for pitching video games.

Episodic stories Media text broken into distinct chapters with continuing narrative.

Equilibrium State of normality that exists at the beginning or end of a narrative.

eSafety Commissioner Australian federal government office with powers and responsibility in relation to digital content.

Establishing shots The shot in the scene that gives the maximum geographic or time information in the one frame; traditionally the first shot.

Ethical dilemma Ambiguous moral situation in which solving at least two problems may be mutually harmful to the other issue, or create more issues.

Evaluate To make a judgement about, assess or determine the merit, worth or value of a media product.

Expansion of time Technique of film editing that draws out some events or actions to create or increase tension.

Experience economy Transformation of experiences into saleable products (commodification), often seen as the next step for the marketing of entertainment and media products.

Experimentation Trying out or testing new ideas or methods, especially in order to discover or prove something.

Exposition The central argument

Exposure Amount of light creating an image in the camera and the subsequent apparent brightness.

Eyelines Imaginary line drawn from a person's eyes to the focus of their attention; what they are looking at.

Fake news False information knowingly presented as factual by borrowing news conventions.

Field of view (FOV) The visible angle at one point in time.

File footage Pre-recorded video library images supplied by others.

Film noir American movie genre associated with the 1940s and 1950s; moody and bleak, unsettling films with dark, shadowy themes about life and crime in the underworld of big cities foreshadowing a device by which

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the early introduction of a seemingly unimportant element discreetly hints at a later development in the story.

Firewall Hardware and software barriers to limit access to computer networks based on authorisation, or subscriptions in the case of paywalls.

First act Initial section of a story that typically establishes the protagonist, their main problem, and goal.

First cinema Mainstream commercial cinema such as Hollywood production.

First-person shooter (FPS) Games using player point-of-view as a character controlling a weapon.

First-person view (FPV) As if seeing from a drone or game character.

Flats Theatre and film term for walls built for a set.

Flood-spot Control to adjust the intensity of lights by moving a bulb within a parabolic reflector.

Fly on the wall When the filmmaker attempts to hide their own presence when recording events. The purpose is to avoid any direct effect upon unfolding action.

Fly-through Shots moving through openings, executed digitally or with trick sets, cable shot or drones.

Focus puller Crew member responsible for calculating depth of field and determining the desired point of focus or executing an accurate focus pull.

Foil Narrative character who, by way of contrast, highlights the strong, positive characteristics of the protagonist.

Foley Studio recorded sounds to replace or enhance location recordings of objects and incidental noise.

Foley artist Sound studio worker operating microphones with objects and materials to re-create 'spot' sound effects.

Follow focus One subject is kept in focus regardless of movement or effect on the rest of the shot.

Follow shots Camera view from behind that maintains the subject in the shot while moving, such as game views; also a drone pre-set mode.

FOMO Fear Of Missing Out; strategy for consumer motivation and action.

Foreshadowing Device by which the early introduction of a seemingly unimportant element discreetly hints at a later development in the story.

Fourth wall Division between the audience and the fictional world on the screen or stage. The idea comes from the traditional indoor theatre stage which presents three walls to the audience, with the fourth being the open space under the proscenium arch through which the audience watches.

Frames per second (FPS) Film speed

Frequency Regularity of audience exposure to a media product.

Frictionless purchase Buying a product with minimal technical or other barriers.

F-stop Calibrated settings of focal ratio according to a formula of focal length and diameter that determine the amount of light passing through the lens.

Gaffer Person in charge of the electrics on set, often the owner of the lighting equipment and contributor to its creative placement.

Gain Electronic amplification of the picture signal to increase the apparent sensitivity to light and boost dark images.

Gels Coloured transparencies to alter lighting.

Generation People born and living at about the same period of time, or the time taken for a population to be born, grow up and have their own children – generally assumed to be about 25–30 years.

Generative AI Artificial intelligence capable of generating its own material.

Genre Category or type made up of repeated sets of codes and conventions.

German Expressionism Style of film production that emerged in Germany after the First World War and lasted until the mid 1920s; typically featured horror narratives, eccentric, bizarre characters and performances, and distorted sets and *mise en scène*.

Globalisation Worldwide interlinking of communications (and trade) networks.

Gobo Stencil for casting shadows, technically placed on the light itself, as for stage productions.

Graphics interchange format (GIF) Efficient for sharing animations.

Graphic match Two images edited together where the content of the pictures have similarities of a graphic or image-based nature. These could be of shapes in the picture content, scenery, lighting design or character actions.

Green-lighting Granting of project approval, especially for next creative stage or funding.

Green-washing Giving the impression of environmentally sustainable aspects through promotional material.

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Greyscale Range of tone (or value) from black to white without any hue.

Grifflon Large fabric suspended in a trampoline-type frame, usually with a black and reverse white side.

Grips General rouseabout in production (from circus) deals with equipment to support lighting rigs and equipment to support the camera, such as tripods, dollies and cranes.

Hair light Illuminating hair from above or behind.

Hand-double Actor to film close-ups of hands instead of main talent.

Haptic visuality In reference to celluloid film, is the 'look and feel' related to the surface texture of the film, which in turn affects the general aesthetic in the image produced. Some people argue that this is the 'grain' of the image.

Haptics Simulated sense of touch to accompany media.

Hays Code 20th century censorship rules applied to Hollywood.

High key Lighting with bright fill and key lights, bringing low contrast softlighting, often from a physically high position.

HMI light (hydrargyrum medium-arc iodide) Gas arc light with no filament producing daylight colour temperature just under 6000 Kelvin and dangerous ultraviolet. Tungsten electrodes are energised in mercury and metal halide gas using an alternating current.

Hollywood Physical location in California; also the institutions and systems of filmmaking that evolved there.

Homage Demonstration of respect or dedication to someone or something, often by reference, allusion or imitation.

Hook Concept or image to snare audience attention.

Horizontal integration media Industry diversification through 'sideways' expansion; for example, a movie company's spreading its activities into other leisure industry areas such as holiday resorts.

Hybrid texts Texts that use combinations of genre features from several different genres.

Hybrid Something made from the combination of two (or more) different elements.

Hybridity Blending of elements from different or opposing genres or movements. The result of this combination is a 'hybrid text'. For example, animation combined with documentary.

Hue The pure colour aspect of an object or light source.

Hyper-reality The 'more-real-than real' creations of media technologies or media institutions (e.g. Disneyland).

Icons Signs that visually resemble the object or action they refer to.

Ideation The formation of an idea.

Identify To put yourself in the place of.

IMAX Extremely large format motion picture film.

Implied texture Visually simulated texture which does not correspond to the actual tactile feedback.

Incident light rays Light emitted directly from the light source.

Innovation Act of introducing new ideas; being original and creative in thinking.

Intellectual property Copyrighted material that is the result of creativity.

Intertextuality Process by which one text makes references to other texts to create more complex meanings.

Inverse-square law Formula for calculating various forms of radiation according to the distance from the source.

Isometric/open world Game genre that presents an aerial view of diagonals at 30 degrees or similar, and no single prescribed player path.

ISO (International Standards Organization) An agreed measurement of sensitivity to light which replaced the previous American standard for film (ASA).

Italian neo-realism A film movement of the mid 1940s to mid 1950s that set out to reveal the often harsh everyday realities of life in postwar Italy using natural, often unscripted dialogue, non-professional actors and documentary-style location shooting. Common themes are poverty, oppression, injustice and desperation.

J-cut Overlapping sound edit where the next scene is preempted by sound before the picture is seen.

Jib arm Small crane arm, usually mounted on a tripod.

Jingle Tune or song lyrics associated with a product or ad campaign.

Jump cut Sudden cut between shots, often used by realist directors to remind the audience that the film is a construction and to encourage viewers to make their own judgements on the film's 'reality'.

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Juxtapositioning To place two images or objects side-by-side to create an effect, often a contrasting effect.

Key concepts Essential areas of study in Media Studies around the world, originating with the British Film Institute in the 1980s.

Keystone correction Skewing of rectangular video into a trapezoid to correct for projecting that is not from 90 degrees to the screen.

Landscape A frame orientation where the width is greater than the height.

Large language model (LLM) A form of artificial intelligence trained on a large amount of language data.

L-cut Overlapping sound edit where the previous scene audio trails over the following one.

LED (light emitting diode) Type of light using an electrical component that produces energy-efficient bright light.

LED panels LED TV display technology.

Leitmotif Sound or melody that is associated with a particular character.

Lenslet Micro lenses on the sensor of a light field camera, allowing direction information about light to be captured.

Letterbox Horizontal space above and below a wider aspect ratio image playing on a horizontally narrower screen.

Lidar Laser technology used to measure object distances in order to construct a 3D model.

Light field Photography systems which capture extra light information and allow post-shoot adjustment.

Light meter Device for measuring appropriate exposure at points within the set.

Localisation Grouping together of clusters of people with similar interests that could be local, or worldwide but with a narrow set of interests in common.

Log line A one-sentence concept or story proposal used for pitching to media production institutions.

Low-key lighting Low-intensity key light, mounted low, which casts shadows across the faces of the actors and areas of the set

Machine learning Computer programming using feedback from previous results to predict and select future responses. Accuracy of prediction dramatically increases with data volume and repetition of scenarios.

Magenta Red-purple colour, when combined with cyan and yellow produces white light.

Mainstream Considered normal, with beliefs and ideas that are accepted by most people

Main unit Primary filming unit dealing with main actors and scenes.

Marketing funnel Advertising model to describe driving the audience from product ignorance to a desired action.

Marks Pre-determined places for actors to stand to suit camera focus, lighting set up or stunt execution.

Match-cut Strong similarity of size, shape, movement and placement of visual elements in consecutive shots. (see Graphic match)

Mattes A section of photograph or video which has an additional layer of image applied to mask the original, creating an illusion through the combination of pictures.

McCarthyist Unfair persecution or investigation in the manner of a 'witch-hunt' that refers to the conduct of US Senator Joe McCarthy's 1950s public hearings into communism.

Meaning Importance or significance of something – in this case, of a sign, code or convention.

Media processes Stages of media production for a media text in each media form, beginning with the idea and moving through to final distribution.

Media texts Products of the media.

Mediation The way the media puts together representations of people, places, ideas and events.

Mentor-antagonist Character who causes problems for the protagonist but eventually teaches them to begin a process of personal growth.

Micro lens arrays Combinations of lenslets on the camera picture sensor and in some TV technology.

Mise en scène Includes all the elements that together produce the look and feel of a shot, including set, costume, make-up, acting, props and colour.

Misinformation Incorrect facts spread deliberately or in ignorance.

Mobile journalism Journalism using mobile phones.

Monochromatic Images using shades and tints from a single hue, also commonly describing black and white in photography.

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Monopoly Market dominated by a single service provider or seller.

Montage A sequence of shots that are discontinuous in the context of either time or place.

Montage (Soviet) Theory developed by Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein that demonstrated how the juxtaposition of separate shots with different meanings could create a third meaning.

Motif Object, image or idea that recurs in a film or book.

Motivated move The camera is visually prompted by on-screen movement or composition.

Narrative genre Type of media text that uses storytelling codes and conventions such as plot, character and setting.

Narrative How the storyline is communicated to the audience. Narrative is the way of telling the story.

Naturalisation Process whereby something is repeated often enough that it eventually comes to be seen as a normal or natural portrayal.

ND (neutral density) Filter to darken the image without any change in the colour.

Negative green Use of magenta to neutralise the reflected green from studio wall bounce.

Negative space Areas around shapes and forms without points of visual interest.

Niche audience Audience segment that is very specialised in terms of interests.

Nollywood Successful film production region dubiously named by combining Hollywood and Nigeria.

Non-diegetic Outside the world of the story and available to the audience but not available to the characters.

Non-diegetic elements Anything the audience can hear or see that is not directly from the world of the story (such as orchestral music used to heighten emotion).

Non-diegetic sound Sound from outside the world of the movie that cannot be heard by the characters, including soundtrack, narration and voice-overs.

Non-recoverable source One-off search or generative results constructed from point-in-time inputs.

Nudged Pushed to a purchase, subtly or subconsciously.

Objective camera angle Implying a third person or unseen observer with connotation of witness, or stationary cameras without acknowledged presence during filming.

Objective truth Truth that is not affected by any human bias. It is arguable that there is no such thing as objective truth in film.

Objective view *See objective camera angle.*

Oligopoly Market dominated by a few service providers or sellers.

One-liner *See logline.*

Oppositional Used in relation to readings that are 'against the grain' or opposite to what the creator intended.

Orbit shots A circular tracking shot filmed off the ground, primarily by drone, with the subject in the centre.

Outdoor campaign Billboard and bus stop ad placement beyond electronic media.

Outline A short description of a media proposal.

Overshot Extremely high camera angle giving a bird's-eye view of the subject.

Over-the-shoulder shot Almost a first-person view; the framing keeps some of the character in shot while showing their perspective.

Over-removal Deletion of public comments that over-cautiously limits contentious material, especially by self-censoring platforms.

Panning shot From 'panorama', meaning to sweep the camera from one side of a scene to the other.

Panorama modes Capture of entire horizon in a continuous 'ribbon' image.

Paparazzi Photographers who profit from candid images of high profile individuals.

Parallax motion Apparent speed differences in objects close and far from the camera, from a particular point of view.

Parallel sound Music or sound that is parallel in meaning to the image or conveys a similar message to that in the image. Also called synchronous sound.

Passive footprints Digital history of users acquired without their knowledge or explicitly asking for permission to accumulate data.

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Peripheral vision The edge of sight surrounding the central vision.

Personal computers (PC) Consumer level devices capable of different functions due to running software programs.

Photonarratives Creation of a story through sequencing of photographs.

Pick-ups Shots which require an unplanned return to a previous set-up or location.

Pillarbox Vertical space either side of an image to allow a smaller video to play within a wider screen.

Pipe dolly Camera dolly that uses plastic plumbing pipes for tracks and skateboard trucks.

Pitch An extended presentation of an idea for media production.

Pitch deck Visually supported presentation of proposed production elements that is often the basis for the show bible.

Pixel The smallest unit of the image including the device to capture or display a digital image.

Platform Medium, site or service that operates as means of delivering media content to audiences.

Platformisation The gradual shift of the internet towards commercial platforms.

Plot Part of the story that happens on screen.

Podcast Downloadable audio files of episodes or story installments.

Point of view (POV) From whose perspective a story is told.

Point-of-sale advertising Purchase messages at the moment of audience need or during payment for other items.

Polysemy Capacity of signs and symbols to have many meanings.

Portrait A frame orientation from painting where the height is greater than the width and referred to for recent media as vertical format.

Practical effects Physical effects performed in front of a camera, visible to a live audience without digital modification.

Practicals On-set lamps needed for filming light which are also in shot as props.

Presence Sense of being there in the story.

Primary sources Original product/experience being investigated e.g. film, game, TV show, multiplatform production.

Product shot Advertising featuring end use or packaging as it appears to the consumer.

Pro-filmic event Also known as the 'event as filmed', this is the recording of the real-world event.

Projection mapping Pre-distorted video designed to match a specific, inconsistent presentation surface.

Promptography Coined to describe photographs generated by manipulating AI inputs.

Propp's narrative theory Vladimir Propp identified seven character functions that commonly appear in folk tales.

Protagonist Leading character in a narrative. The term, originally associated with Greek drama, is based on the Greek *proto*, meaning first or leading, and *agonistes*, meaning one who is engaged in a struggle.

Pull (or rack) focus The point of sharp focus changes from one object to another.

Reach Raw measure of audience numbers exposed to a media product.

Realism Film style that aims to portray life as it really is and presents on screen what is supposed to be the actual experiences of the characters.

Real world Also known as the historical world. This is actual life. Many argue that it is not possible to represent the real world because the camera is of a symbolic order.

Reflected light rays Light bounced back off an object, determining how brightly it will 'read'.

Reflector Any surface deliberately placed to bounce light from its source in another direction

Register Different range or scale that has quite different tones or qualities from others. For example, communication can be organised in different registers such as language, or music, or visual signage.

Regulation Process of control or a rule set by government authorities.

Relationship line Chain of events (sometimes secondary) in a narrative that, according to Linda Aronson, complements the action line and allows the audience to explore the emotional relationships between characters.

Release form Used for actors, locations and images, it gives permission for the reproduction of images of such things in various media platforms.

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Remediation Process of representing the codes and conventions of one media platform on another.

Representations Objects in screen space 'represent' or come to 'stand for' other objects usually in real life. Representations are often regulated to ensure they do not make incorrect suggestions.

Resolve To use understandings about the key concepts, and the contexts of production and use, to give technical and creative purpose to a media product.

Rhythm Sound or movement that is regularly repeated as a pattern.

Rim light Lighting an object from a position above and behind to define the outline from the background.

Ring light A flattering soft light surrounding the camera lens.

Runners On-set and production office job of couriering for the assistant directors.

Rushes Raw footage from the camera, pre-editing.

Sail cloth Large-format diffuser cloth for lighting.

Saturation Intensity of a particular colour within the light spectrum and an adjustment function.

Screen Australia Federal government agency that supports Australian screen development, production and promotion.

Screen geography The apparent direction and layout of forms and spaces as it appears to the audience.

Screen space Actual space of the screen itself. What is presented by the camera.

Scrim Translucent material used to diffuse lighting.

Script Pre-production document that specifies dialogue, action and some visual elements, according to specific discipline conventions.

Seamless Describes classical Hollywood invisible editing – the audience is distracted from noticing cuts by changes in size, position, or continuity of movement.

Secondary sources Are written/created about, or in response to, the primary sources e.g. articles, reviews, textbooks, video essays.

Second unit Camera team for multi-camera scenes or cutaway footage and small scenes.

Segue In sound editing, a smooth transition from one sequence into another. The term comes from an Italian word meaning 'to follow'.

Selection Chosen and limited inclusion of material.

Semiotics Study of the signs and symbols of communication.

Setting Time and place of a narrative.

Sfumato Blending of colours and edges developed in painting that approximates a soft focus 'smokiness'.

Shooting ratios Relationship between the raw amount of filming and finished screentime that can be constructed from it.

Shooting schedule Sequence and times of filming sessions according to priorities of the production.

Shooting script Range from lists of shots in order of filming to annotated scripts content and directorial and technical notes.

Shot Usually the time span between when the camera is turned on and when it is turned off again; sometimes taken as being from the time the camera is turned on until the camera is moved to a new position.

Show bible Context and guiding scenario for a series which evolves as episodes are added.

Showrunner Producer, especially for episodic TV, who has overarching story universe knowledge and creative control.

Shutter speed The amount of time the image making device is exposed to incoming light. Often digitally simulated rather than literal.

Sign Basic unit of semiotic communication and anything that refers to something other than itself – for example a rose can signify (or be a sign for) love.

Signifier Part of the sign that we can see (or hear, or touch); signs that may also carry connotations.

Silences Points of view that are omitted or not heard.

Silk Large format diffuser, often in a trampoline-style frame to cover actors in direct harsh sunlight.

Simultaneous time The act of cross-cutting from one event to another in a different location to give the impression that the events are occurring at the same time.

Sink dolly Bench-top camera moved past close-range objects (as in a kitchen) using only a cloth under the camera body to allow smooth movement.

Six degrees of freedom (SDoF) Player or viewer movement along the x, y and z axes, and rotation in each of these directions.

Slider Table-top dolly device for small cameras.

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Snoot Tube around the outside of a light to direct a beam with minimal spill.

Social activism Act of fighting for a change in society.

Social triangle Triangular area of a face between the two eyes and the mouth; experiments tracking the eye contact of people in conversation have shown this region to be the main focus of eye movements.

Sound bridge Sound used to link one scene to another. Sound can continue on into the next scene or begin before the scene has changed.

Soundscape Sound or combination of sounds that forms an immersive environment.

Soviet montage Russian film movement of the 1920s that developed the montage technique of editing.

Spectacle In film, generally a moment of narrative intervention, when story 'pauses' in order for the viewer to appreciate something of an aesthetic nature. How this is executed differs greatly.

Speculative fiction Stories dealing with nonexistent content, such as the future, the fantastic, or a supernatural scenario.

Spheres of action Roles that characters play within general areas of story action – from Vladimir Propp's Morphology of the Folk Tale.

Spun Fibrous translucent heat-resistant material for diffusing lights at the barn doors or light body.

Stars Performers who are featured in a range of media texts other than the original, and whose fame feeds back into further fame and future performances.

Steadicam Gyroscopic camera mount that smooths out camera movements by using weights and counterbalances to allow the camera to 'float' on a mechanical arm.

Stereoscopic Having the illusion of depth by creating slightly different images for each eye.

Stereotype Oversimplified, clichéd image, repeated so many times that it establishes a pattern.

Still A term used by crews so as not to confuse photography with moving-picture recording of shots.

Stippling Small dots with appropriate spacing to create a tonal effect.

Stop motion animation Technique where physical manipulation of an object makes it seem that it moves on its own; often used to animate objects; shot frame by frame, with the object moved incrementally each frame, the illusion of movement is created when the frames are played back as a sequence.

Storyboards Sequential visual representations of edited shots and accompanying information.

Story world Setting, characters and plot events that form part of a larger narrative. A story world can be shared across several media platforms.

Story All of the events that happened, including those that are not depicted on screen.

Strike Dismantle a set or camera set-up.

Stripboard System of allocating logical grouping of scenes for filming.

Stunt double Trained crew who dress to impersonate the acting talent during high-risk action scenes.

Stylistic intent Purpose or intention driving the artist's stylistic choices.

Subjective camera angle Framing and movement that implies the audience is witnessing from a particular viewpoint, and the camera is not a passive observer.

Subtractive lighting Using cutters as negative bounce boards to absorb light and control modelling on the subject.

Sun-gun A light mounted on a camera, particularly for news gathering.

Superimposition Laying one image over another, often in post-production, so that both images are still visible.

Suspension of disbelief Process by which audiences agree to suspend their critical faculties in order to believe in an unlikely story.

Sweding Remaking a movie shot-by-shot as fans on a limited budget with cheap effects and consumer-level technology.

Symbolic code System of signs that may refer to cultural meanings beyond the screen texts and create associations for the audience. Symbolic codes include costume, props, the body language of actors, objects and visual symbols.

Symbols Sign that does not resemble the thing to which it refers; signs that do not visually resemble the object or action they refer to.

Take Version of a shot or scene produced each time it is filmed.

Take-down notice Issued to internet service providers against material (usually on-line) by a copyright owner

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or by government agencies for content that breaches Australian law.

Technical code System of signs that are embedded in the text at the time of production and created using the technology of production; including shot sizes, camera angles, camera movement, framing, editing transitions, etc. A way of using production techniques from the recording and manipulating process itself that conveys meaning through repeated use.

Technology panic Fear that grips society when a new technology is introduced.

Theremin Russian musical instrument, patented in 1928, played by motioning hands in the air through an electro-magnetic field and used in sci-fi theme music and by rock band, Led Zeppelin.

Thesis Central proposition or idea.

Third-person view Camera or game player perspective is from a detached, unseen observer.

Three-act structure Traditional narrative structure based on the three stages of orientation, complication and resolution.

Three-column script Pre-production plans arranged into aligned video, audio and duration, according to discipline specific convention, such as news and documentary.

Three-point lighting Standard studio set-up of fill, key and backlight.

Tilt Vertical pan whereby the camera pivots either up or down while mounted on a tripod.

Tilt-shift lens A feature to allow the rear lens image to intersect the recording surface at other than 90 degrees, creating a single line of sharp focus.

Tone drop-out Photographic effect of removing the number of gradations of grey tones.

'Top-down' shots A preferred term for drone operators using extremely high-angle shots looking straight down.

Tracking shot Film shot in which the camera is moved along the ground sideways, forward or back; originally moved along tracks.

Traditional Long established.

Transition Generally used for more complex joining of shots beyond a basic cut; most carry the effective meaning of a significant change in time or location.

Transportation Process by which a viewer becomes 'lost' in a story.

Treatment Summary of a media production written in present tense prose with specific requirements.

Triadic Colour schemes using any three equally spaced colours on a colour wheel, such as the primaries.

Triangulate Principle from trigonometry allowing an unknown point to be located from exact distances to three other known points in a two-dimensional plane.

Tri-dolly Clip-on dolly castor for a tripod.

Troll farms Internet workers organised and deployed to spread negative information and target individuals, often in authoritarian state-sponsored factories.

Trolling Deliberate posting of offensive or derogatory content designed to upset others.

Trucking shot A type of tracking shot that moves sideways and implies moving to follow an object.

Tungsten A metal used in lighting filament that produces a warm colour temperature of 3200–3400 Kelvin.

Turning point Point at which a decisive change occurs in the progress of the cause–effect chain of the narrative, leaving the characters with a new set of problems to solve. Turning points are usually the outcome of a climax.

Two-shot Shot with two characters in the frame, usually a dialogue shot where both characters can be seen in conversation.

Uncanny Valley Refers to the dip in a graph of how appealing an object is as it gets closer to human likeness. As a character is anthropomorphised it is more appealing, but when a character is almost human, audiences find the effect uncanny and the character loses its appeal.

Universal film leader A numeric countdown to the starting frame.

Unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) Ranges from remotely piloted models to self-guiding military aircraft.

Unorthodox Opposite to what is accepted as 'normal' or traditional.

User experience (UX) The experience the user has with the product and the technology.

User interface (UI) The designated on-screen operating tools by which the user and the computer interact.

Vanishing point In perspective images, the point on the horizon line at which parallel lines appear to converge.

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Vertical format A frame orientation where the height is greater than the width, known as portrait.

Vertical integration Expansion of a company's investment interests into other companies whose products are either up or down the chain of production.

Video insets A smaller moving image video shot superimposed within another video framing.

Video walls Large video screens or joined monitors that can function as an individual image or combine aligned segments.

Viral Spreading rapidly due to high levels of audience engagement.

Virtual camera Viewpoint within artificial digital environment, or camera position that is generated from data of actual camera positions.

Virtual reality (VR) When a person's view of the real world is replaced via headset by a simulated environment that can be photorealistic or computer generated.

Virtual tour A tour using virtual reality.

Vlog A personal social media site or channel where video logs (video blogs) are posted.

VLOS (Visual line-of sight) In relation to drones, close enough for accurate flying using the operator's naked eye.

Voice-of-God commentary Form of narration that is common in documentary. This is a voice that commentates action without being seen.

Voiceprints Digitised aspects of speech recognisable as an individual.

Volumetric depth Images that allow the viewer to move into the scene and realistically observe a 3D perspective change.

Volumetric haptics Simulated sense of touch in the physical 3D space, such as ultrasonic effects on air.

VR 180 Virtual reality format that provides a background in front of the view, but not behind.

Warp stabiliser A digital filter to 'average out' camera movement to simulate a Steadicam effect.

Webisode Episode that is part of a series distributed for online viewing as 'Web television'. The format is available for online streaming as well as downloads and may or may not have been aired in a television broadcast.

Wet weather cover Contingency plan (usually indoors and scheduled for the end of a shoot that can be brought forward) if fine weather exterior scenes cannot be filmed.

White balance Programming of the camera to calibrate colour according to the hue of light.

White space Graphic arts term for negative space between text or visual elements.

Wide shots Sometimes used to describe extreme long shots (ELS), especially without figures; also, slightly wider than a standard long shot (LS).

Widescreen A standard TV format using an aspect ratio of 1.78:1, known as 16×9.

Writers' room Meetings to brainstorm story elements before scripting, especially in episodic TV.

Zeitgeist Spirit or mood of the times as shown in beliefs, ideas and attitudes.

Zip-zoom Very fast zoom where most of the image is blurred except for the start and finish.

Zoom shot Shot that magnifies or enlarges its subject rather than moving closer.

9780170484176

INDEX

4W1H technique, 331
30-degree rule, 85, 326
180-degree rule, 85, 327
360-degree cameras, 76
360-degree shots, 76
360-degree-sphere modes, 65

ACMA *see* Australian Communications and Media Authority
ACMI *see* Australian Centre for the Moving Image
acting, figure placement, 69
action line, 234
ad campaigns, 275
additive colour, 96
Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, 267
advertising, 275–6
age groups, representations of, 192–6
  age, 195–6
  youth, 192–5
agenda setting, 19
AI *see* artificial intelligence
Aliens, 172
allegory, 241
amateur photography, 139
American Prometheus, 220
American shot, 51
amplification, music video, 258
analogue media, 134
analysis, 388
anamorphic distortion, 58
anecdotes, 169
animations, 281
  defined, 274
  features, 274–5
  representations in, 180–1
  types, 274
antagonist, 234
  characteristics of, 234
anthropomorphised, 130
AR *see* augmented reality
arcade video games, 57
arc shot, 61
artificial intelligence (AI), 329
  arts as, 333
  and creative arts, 331–4
  emerging guidelines, 335–6
  ethical referencing in student productions, 335–6
  legislation and government concern, 334–5
  and mind, 329–30
  in movies, 332
  practical effects, 335
  types, 330–1
  use of, 336
art installations, 283
artistic intention, MAP, 13–15, 32
aspect ratio, 57–8
asynchronous sound, 89
Attention, Interest, Desire, Action (AIDA), 37
audience engagement, 32
audience expectation, 150
  codes and conventions of genre, 150
  factors influencing, 150–2
  narrative image, 150–1
  stars, 151–2
audiences, 5, 6, 14–15, 385, 389, 390
  accessing media texts, 14
  background as context, 156–7
  belief in story world, 147–8
  characters, identification with, 148
  cinematic stances, 159
  contexts and, 152–7
  desensitising, 73
  empathy, 157
  end user, 15
  engagement, 146
  experience, 157
  genres and, 251
  media artists communicating, 15
  narrative text reading, 159–60
  with platform codes and conventions, 296–7
  presence, 149
  'reading' practices, 249
  'read' texts, 157–60
  realism, 148–9
  techniques for engaging, 295–6
  transportation, 148
audio medium
  as blind medium, 138
  features, 138–9
  radio and podcasts as, 138
audio mixing, editing, 375
audio productions, 281–2
audio-sharing sites, 379
augmented and mixed reality, 74
augmented reality (AR), 77–8
Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), 180
Australian classification board, 116–18
  classification by internet, 117–18
  film and game categories, 117
Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), 118, 327
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), 120
Australian content rules
  advertising, 119
  documentaries, 119
  drama, 118–19
  free-to-air television, 118
  overall quotas, 118
Australian ethical framework, 335
Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS), 300
Australian media organisations, 112–15
  funding, productions, 114
  government development, 114–15
Australian productions, defining, 119
The Australian Wars, 185
authentic casting, 189
authentic producers, media institutions and, 187
authentic representation and casting, 189
authentic storytelling and representations, 177–9
Avatar, 56

Babakiueria, 186
back focus, 57
back to camera position, 69
barn doors, 316
Batman Begins, 55
Bechdel test, 175–6
  limitations of, 175–6
  reasons for films failing in, 175
Ben-Day dots, 96
big close-up (BCU), 49
binary oppositions, 47
blogs, 15
blurred realism, 167
body image stereotypes, 27
bots, 334
Breakfast at Tiffany's, 179
broadcast audience, 2
BUFTA Film festival, 379
bullet-time, 61
Bullitt, 256
bumper ads, 277

cable shot, 64
call sheets, 346
call-to-action, 276
camera angle, and narrative, 53–5
camera codes and conventions, 49–71
camera lenses, 55
  changing focus, 57
  depth of field, 55–7
  types of, 55–6
camera movement, 59–66
camera POV, 231
camera script, 309
Campbell, Joseph, 228, 229
canted angle, 55
Capricorn One, 72
carbon actor, 130
caricatures, 163
Casablanca, 219
case choice, 387
case studies
  body paragraphs, 388–9
  conclusion, 389
  introduction, 387
  primary and secondary sources, 387
  production contexts, 388
  structure and content, 387–9

9780170484176

target audiences, 388
writing, 387–91
cast, 256
causal agents
human characters, 221
human society, 221–2
natural events as, 222
non-human characters, 222
cause and effect, 221–3
causal agents, 221–2
classical causal progress, 222–3
conflict, 222
cel animation, 274
character, 233–8
changes in, 236
development, 235
motivation, 236
unchanging, 236–7
character arc, 303
character development arc, 235, 236
character images, 311
character outlines, 309
features of, 309–11
character point of view
objective, 232–3
subjective, 233
characters, 246–7
creating, 235
flat and rounded, 238
and graphic space, 69
identification with, 148
interaction, 247
relationships between, 238
characters and stars, feature of trailers, 255
Chat GPT 4, 329
choreography, of animation, 275
CinemaScope, 58
cinéma vérité, 64
cinerama, 74
cine-theatre, 75
circular plot progression, 243–4
Citizen Kane, 56
city council areas, 321
Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), 324
civil rights movement, 208
claymation, 274
Cleverman, 118
clickbait, 121
client brief
defining, 292–3
using, 293
client, defining, 292
client *vs.* stakeholder, 292
cliff-hanger, 303
climactic action, 255
climax, 221
climaxes and turning points, 227
clipshow reality, 272–3
close-up (CU), 49, 52–3
close-up, feature of trailers, 255
closing or resolution stage, 226–7
closing technique, 226
denouement, 226–7
narrative possibilities in, 226
open closure, 227
codes, 45
camera, 49–71
language, 44–8
media encoding and decoding, 45–6
new media, 78–80
symbolic, 45, 46
technical, 45, 46
types of, 45
codes and conventions
genres and, 249–52
representations, 162–3
sound, 86–90
The Cog, 223
colour, in *mise en scène*, 69–70
comic trap, 271
commercial media, 113
'commons,' origin of name, 339
communication, modes of, 33
community
advocating for, 35
celebrating, 34–5
context, 35
engagement, 17
local communities, 33–4
online communities, 34
overview, 33
purpose, 35
school communities, 33
standards, 321
trust, 179
commutation, 47
companionship, audio medium, 138
company logo, 256
complementary colour, 96
complications, 222
composition, 59
in *mise en scène*, 68
computer animation, 274
computer-generated imagery (CGI), 82, 167, 334
defined, 128
evolution of, 128–9
conceptual videos, 257
condensation, of animation, 275
conflict, cause and effect, 222
congruency, 284
connotation, 45
content creation industry, 11
content realism, 167
contested authorship, 334
context, 6, 14, 44
considering other, 298
of design thinking, 16–18
usage of, 6
context of production, 384
continuity editing, 56
American montage, 83
classical Hollywood, 82–3
cross-cutting (simultaneous time/parallel editing), 83–4
contrapuntal sound, 89
contra zoom (dolly zoom) shot, 63
conventional films
action lines in, 241
relationship lines in, 241
subplots in, 240
conventional movie genres, 260
documentaries, 268
film noir, 262–3
gangster movies, 265–6
horror, 263–4
road movies, 266–7
romantic comedies, 267–8
science fiction, 260–2
westerns, 264–5
conventions, 47
new media, 78–80
convergence, 78, 105–6
cool media, 134
copyright, 336, 338–9
Copyright Act 1968, 338
corporate advertising, 276
corporate displays, 284
costume and make-up
mise en scène, 68–9
counterpoint/disruption, music videos, 258
counter-stereotypes, 164
Cox, Damian, 159
crab, 61
crane shot, 62
crash-zoom, 63
crawling titles, 377
creative arts, artificial intelligence and, 331–4
Creative Commons licence
conditions of, 340
creative ownership, types of, 338–9
disadvantages, 339
overview, 338
types of, 339
creatives, 276
creativity, 337
credits, 377
cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD)
in games, 218
positioning characters, 180
representations, issues in, 179–80
representations of, 176–81
cultural integrity, 179
cultural role, of media, 1–2
cultural stereotypes, 26
culture jammers, 163
cutaway, editing, 85
cut-ins, editing, 85–6
cyclorama, 76

data sets, 329
Davis, Mark, 157
decision trees, 298
decoding, 46
deepfake media, 333–4
deep fake technology, 131–2
deep focus, 56
deep swap, 333
define, of design thinking, 80
define stage, design thinking, 16
degree of hardness, lighting, 70

demographic information, on audiences, 276
denotation, 45
denouement, 226–7
depth of field, 55–7
  deep focus, 56
  selective focus, 56–7
descriptive ethics, 20
descriptive realism, 167
design
  elements, 94–6
  fourth dimension, 101–3
  principles of, 96–101
design interaction, 127
design thinking, phases of, 80
design thinking process, 16–18
  define stage, 16
  empathise stage, 16
  feedback stage, 17
  ideate stage, 17
  prototype stage, 17
determined technology, 125
development or complications stage
  narrative possibilities in, 225–6
development stages, 288–9, 291
  idea generation, 291–3
  investigating, 289
  research, 289
Devereux, Eoin, 162
dialectical montage, 82
dialogue, defined, 87
Diamonds are Forever, 170
diegesis, 220
diegetic, 390
diegetic sound, 89
diffusers, 316
digital actors, 129–32
digital asset, 77
digital billboards, 283
digital composite shot, 65–6
digital defocus (miniature effect), 57
digital distribution, 379
  audio-sharing sites, 379
  social media distribution, 379
  streaming, 379
  video-sharing sites, 379
digital games, 155–6
  and movies, 247–8
  and story, 245–7
digital graphic art, 279
digital illustrations, 278–9
digital installations, 283–4
digitality, 2
digital media, 134
digital photography, 280
digital rights management (DRM), 338
digital signage, 75
digital vanity, 213–14
directionality, lighting, 70–1
disability representations
  common issues with, 188
  stereotypical, 189–91
discontinuity editing, 255
discretionary spending, 276
disequilibrium, causal progress, 222
disinformation, 121
Disney, 111
dispersal, 3
displays, 283
disruption, 222
distribution, 17–18
  defined, 379
  digital, 379
  forms of, 379–81
  platform, 380–1
  school and community, 380
  social media, 379
  stages, 290
disturbance events, 222
divergence, 106
diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), 342
documentaries
  features of, 268
  types of, 268
doll-house view, 74
dollying shot, 61–2
dolly zoom shot, 63
domestic comedies, 197
dominant centres of attention, 68
Don't Look Up, 121
Doom, 248
The Dressmaker, 201
drive-in cinema, 154
drone shots, 64
The Dry, 376
Dutch angle, 55
dynamic media, 134

early authentic representations, 183
early screen recordings, representations, 182–3
ease of use, audio medium, 139
echo chamber, 121
economic power, counter-stereotypes, 164
economic role, of media, 2
edit decision list (EDL), 375
editing
  adding titles, 375
  as continuity, 56, 82–4
  cutaway, 85
  cut-ins, 85–6
  cutting rules, 85
  defined, 81
  juxtaposition of shots, 81
  post-production, 374–6
  transitions, 84–5
effective pitch, creation, 301–2
effects adding, in editing, 375
Eisenstein, Sergei, 82
Eldagsen, Boris, 334
electronic press kits, 394
  features of, 395
elements and principles of design, 94–103
elements of design
  colour, 96
  form, 95
  line, 94
  point or dot, 96
  shape, 94–5
  space, 95
  texture, 96
  tone (value), 95–6
elevator pitch, 301
Elysium, 234
emotional realism, 167
empathise stage, design thinking, 16
empathy map, 16
empathy, of design thinking, 80
encoding, 46
Encoding–3.5 theory, 158
end credits, 377
end user, 15
engagement, 147
engaging with narratives
  benefits of, 146–7
  process of, 147
environmental storytelling, 247
environment, for games, 247
environment images, 312
environments and settings, pre-production, 311–12
environment, social and governance (ESG), 342
episodic stories, 270
equipment safety, 318–20
eSafety Commissioner, 336
establishing shots, 50
The Eternals, 189
ethical dilemmas, 261
ethics *vs.* morals, 20–1
ethnographic recordings, 183
ethos, 40
evaluating factors, 388
experience economy, definition of, 127
export, editing, 376
exposition genres, 249, 250
expository genres, 249
exposures, 57
extended response, 390–1
external diegetic sound, 89
extreme close-up (ECU), 49, 53
extreme long shot (ELS), 49, 50
extremely high camera angle, 54–5
eye-level angle, 54
eyelines, 51, 59

fabrication, of animation, 275
Facebook ads, 277
face swaps, 333
fake news, 121–2
  evaluating, 121–2
  outcomes, 122
fake weapons and Queensland law, 322–4
family representations, 197–8
fear of missing out (FOMO), 276
feedback stage, design thinking, 17
female stereotypes, 174–5
feminism, 208
femme fatale, 263
field of view (FOV), 74, 77
The Fifth Element, 180
file footage, 329
FilmBunker, 395
FilmFreeway, 381
filming
  audiences and historical events on, 210
  classification, 256

community standards, 321
legally with drones, 324–6
legal obligations, 321
as medium, 135–6
narrative medium, 136
narrative *vs.* spectacle, 136
posters, 282
primary medium, 135–6
film music
attributes of, 91–3
cultural significance, 93
instrumentation, 92
lyrical content, 92
patterns of development, 92
tempo and volume, 92
film noir, 50, 51
characters, 263
features of, 262–3
plots, 263
film reviews
features of, 395
online, 395
purposes of, 395
Film, Television & New Media (FTVNM)
in 20th century, 3–4
in 21st century, 4, 341
in ATAR system, 4
development, 3–4, 288–9
digital game details, 306
distribution, 290
key concepts, 4–5, 305
key terms in, 5–6
legal obligations, 321
overview, 3
post-production, 289–90
pre-production, 289, 300–12
production, 289
scripts in, 307
storyboards in, 308
story details, 306
treatments, 305–6
units of study, 6–7
writing about media, 384
film trailers
conventions, 255–6
features of, 254–5
overview, 254
Final Fantasy XIII, 31
fire extinguishers, 316
first nations peoples, representations of, 182–7
first-person narrative
in film, 231
in novels, 231
first-person shooter (FPS), 72
first-person view (FPV), 72
first screen representations, 183
fish-eye lens, 65
flashback narrative, 244
flats, 75
flexibility, audio medium, 139
fly-through shots, 64
focus groups, 284
focus puller, 62
foils, 235
Foley, 281
follow focus, 57
follow shots, 65, 73
foreshadowing, 224–5
formal cinema contexts, 153–4
formulated docusoap, 272
forums, 15
4W1H technique, 331
fourth dimension design principles, 102–3
causality, 103
direction, 102
duration, 102
energy/intensity, 102
interactivity, 103
musicality, 103
simultaneity, 102
speed, 102
transition, 102–3
FOV *see* field of view
framing, 57, 77–8, 163
angle, height and distance, 57, 59
aspect ratio, 57–8
frame movement, 57, 59
on-screen and off-screen space, 57, 59
Frankenstein (Shelley), 259
French New Wave, 67
frequency, 276
frictionless purchase, 276
frozen medium, 140
full-front position, 69

gaffer tape, 316
Game of Thrones, 188
games
CALD in, 218
cause and effect in, 246
effect of movies on, 248
historical events in, 210–11
game shot types, 72
gaming platforms, representations for, 30–1
gaming representations
female hero, 216–17
male hero, 217
and representation of gender, 216–17
representations in, 216–18
gangster movies
characters, 266
features of, 265
plots, 265–6
gels, 316
gender
1930s–1940s, 171
1950s–1960s, 171–2
1970s–1980s, 172
1990s–2010s, 172–3
2020s, 173
changes in, 170–1
female hero, 216–17
feminist era, 172–3
games and the representation of, 216
male hero, 217
pre-feminist era, 171–2
representations of, 170–6
stereotypes, 173–4
gender stereotypes, 26–7
general AI, 330
generative AI, 330–1, 332–3
generative AI tools, 27
genres, 6, 249
and audiences, 251
definition, 259
features, 250
and industry, 251–2
larger, 249
smaller, 249–50
and stories, 259
Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, 171
German Expressionism, 55, 69
Giannetti, Louis, 69
gimbal, 64
gimbal shot, 64
global and local, new media characteristics, 3
globalisation, 107
global media organisations
Netflix, 109–11
online distribution, 108
YouTube, 108–9
The Godfather, 69
Graphic Interchange Format (GIF), 285
The Great Gatsby, 93
green-lighting, 302
green-washing, 276
greyscale tone, 95
grips, 61
group productions
areas of faulty process, 348
choosing, 346
ensuring successful group, 348
formation methods, 347
size, 347
stages, 346–7
Guardians of the Galaxy, 92

handheld shot, 63–4
haptics, 77
Hardball, 189, 197
hard-boiled cynical male, 263
Harrington, John, 288
head credits, 377
hero's journey
Campbell, Joseph, 228, 229
Vogler, 228–9
high camera angle (HCA), 54
High Noon, 265
homage, 339–40
home theatre rooms, 128
hook, 303
hook element, 276
horror
characters, 264
features of, 263–4
plots, 264
hot media, 134
'how-to' ads, 277
hue (colour), 96
human emotion, 42

human environments
cities, 199–200
places of work and learning, 202
small towns, 201–2
suburbia, 200–1
transport vehicles, 202–3
The Hunchback of Notre Dame, 190
hybrid texts, 249
hyperlink, 78
hyper-reality, 166
hypertext, 2, 78

IARC classification tool, 117–18
icons, 45, 285
idea generation, 291–3
approaches to inspiration, 291–2
key aspects of, 291
media artists, drawing inspiration from, 291
responding to client, 292
ideate stage, design thinking, 17
ideation
defining, 291
of design thinking, 80
I, Frankenstein (Beattie), 67
illustration, music video, 258
image-based logos, 285
IMAX, 75
implied texture, 96
inauthentic casting, 179–80
industry
engagement, 17
genres and, 251–2
infotainment ads, 276–7
Instagram, 29
Instagram ads, 277
institutional advertising, 276
institutions (industries and organisations), 5, 6, 385, 389
intellectual property (IP), 334, 338
interactive shots, 76–7
interactive technologies, 281
interactivity, 2
internal conflict, 222
internal diegetic sound, 89
intersectionality, 169–70
intertextuality, 250–1
inter-titles, 377
intimacy, audio medium, 139
invisible remediation, 106
In Without Knocking, 224
I, Robot, 332
isometric/open world association, 74
isometric view, 73–4
iteration, of design thinking, 80

Jaws, 56
J-cuts, overlapping sound, 375
Jedda (Chauvel), 182
jib arm, 62
jingle, 276
journalism, 139
jump cut, 85
juxtaposition of shots, 81

keystone correction, 75
King Kong, 68
Kuleshov effect, 81, 255
jigsaw woman experiment., 82
soup bowl experiments, 81
White House experiment, 81–2

The Lady in the Lake, 232
La La Land (2016), 268
landscape, 58
languages, 5, 6, 385, 389
codes, 45–6
conventions, 47
denotation and connotation, 45
moving-image media, 44–8
signs, 44–5
large language model (LLM), 329, 330
cultural impact of, 330
larger genres, 249
large-screen formats, 74–6
The Last Dance, 21
L-cuts, overlapping sound, 375
LED panels, 75
The Legend of Hercules, 234
leitmotif, 91
length of takes, 50
lenslet, 76
letterbox, 58
lidar detector, 74
lifestyle reality, 272
light field photography, 76
lighting
codes of, 71
degree of contrast, 71
features of, 70–1
mise en scène, 70–1
lighting safety, 317
LED lights, 317–18
limited third-person narrative, 231
linear plot progression, 243
lines and diagonals, 59
Linked In, 277
live-action film, 281
local and community, social issues, 22
local communities, 33–4
location and sets, *mise en scène*, 68–9
logging, footage, 374
log lines, 300
logos, 40, 284
branding and marketing, 284
combination, 285
creating, 286
dynamic, 285
high recognition assets, 285–6
types, 284–5
long shot (LS), 49, 51
long take, 50
low camera angle (LCA), 55

Mabo, 52
make-up, 68–9
male stereotypes, 174
'many-to-many' media, 1
marketing funnel model, 276
marks, 62
Mass Effect: Andromeda, 245
mass media, 2
Mastering the Media (Dwyer), 4
Matrix, The, 332
mattes, 72
McCarthyist, 261
McQuail, Denis, 1
meaning, 47–8
media
approaches to experimentation, 297
authenticity and keeping records, 298
common representations in, 25
considering other contexts, 298
decision trees, 298
defined, 1
encoding and decoding, 45–6
influence on, 22
mood boards, 297–8
purpose of, 1–2
regulation and constraint, 21
social values, attitudes, beliefs and, 19–22
media artists, 291
Media Arts in Practice (MAP), 288–90
21st century skills, 341
types of production, 278–83
media arts in practice (MAP)
artistic intention, 13–15, 32
audiences/users, 14–15
community, 33–5
content creation industry, 11
context, 14
elements of design, 11
key practices in, 11–13
media languages, 11
media techniques, 13
media technologies, 13
media texts in, defining, 11
modes, 13
overview, 10
personal viewpoints, 19–24
persuasion, 36–42
purpose and context in, 13–15
representations, 24–32
style, 11–12
symbols, 12–13
units and options, 19
vocations and industry, relationship, 10–11
media gathering, editing, 374
media institutions
and authentic producers, 187
convergence, 105–6
divergence, 106
globalisation, 107
laws in other jurisdictions, 122
outcomes from laws, 123
overview, 105
regulating authorities, 120–3
regulation of, 115–23
remediation, 106–7
media languages, 11
media processes, 6
media production, 329
media production stages, 287
development, 288–9
distribution, 290
post-production, 289–90
pre-production, 289, 300–12
production, 289

media technologies, 7, 13
media texts, 5, 11, 15
mediation, 165
Media Ways and Meanings (Stewart), 4
medium close-up (MCU), 49, 52
medium long shot (MLS), 49, 51–2
mediums, 6
medium shot (MS), 49, 52
mentor antagonists, 234–5
metamorphosis, 274–5
metaphor plot lines, 241
micro lens arrays, 76
micro-moments, 296
mid-shot, 52
mini three-act structure, 254–5
minor-character subjective point of view, 233
mise en scène, 67, 390
  acting–figure placement, 69
  colour, 69–70
  composition, 68
  lighting, 70–1
  location and sets, 68–9
  look of film, 67–8
  motif in, 68
  setting, 68
misinformation, 121
mixed distribution
  audience and social impact, 112
  context, 112
  Disney, 111
  effects of, 111
  overview, 111
mixed reality, 77
Moana, 180
mobile phone, 155
modes, 13
monochromatic colour, 96
Monroe, Marilyn, 171
montage, 56
mood boards, 297–8
motif in *mise en scène*, 68
Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), 254
Motion Picture Production Code (Hays Code), 116
Moulin Rouge!, 57
movies
  artificial intelligence in, 332
  effect of games on, 248
moving-image media, 1
  advertising and persuasive, 275–7
  features, 5–6
  language codes and conventions, 44–8
  music in, 90–3
  processes, 6
  texts or products, 5–6
  traditional history and, 209–11
moving-image productions, 280–1
multimedia, 78, 79
  elements, 79
multiple-character subjective point of view, 233
multiple-narrative films, 240
  advantages of, 241
  disadvantages of, 241
multiple points of view narrative, 244
multiple story lines, 240–1
The Mummy Returns, 128
music, 88
  defining characters, 91
  establish historical context, 91
  functions of, 90–1
  ironic commentary on scene's visual information, 91
  in moving-image media, 90–3
  represent space, 91
  shape mood, 91
music videos
  features of, 257–8
  overview, 256–7
  types of, 257
  visualised work in, 258
My Octopus Teacher, 21

narrative, 219
  analysis, 163
  benefits of engaging with, 146–7
  enigma, 151, 254
  equilibrium, 222
  genres, 249
  image, audience expectation, 150–1
  music videos, 257
  realism, 167
narrative point of view
  in novels, 231
  in television and film, 231–2
narrative progression, 246
  hero's journey and, 228–9
narrow AI, 330
narrowcast audience, 2
national and international, social issues, 22
natural environments
  beaches, islands and oceans, 204
  bush, forest, woods, 203
  outback and wilderness landscapes, 203–4
naturalisation, 166
negative space, 95
Netflix, 109–11
  areas of operation, 110
  audience and social impact, 110–11
  classification tool, 118
  context, 110
neurodiversity, representations of, 191
new media, 1
  basic units of, 78
  characteristics, 2–3
  characteristics of software in, 143
  codes and conventions, 78–80
  definition, 2
  features of, 142–3
  as medium, 142–3
  platform aesthetics, 143
  shot types and purposes, 74–8
A Nightmare on Elm Street, 264
Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), 31
non-diegetic, 390
non-diegetic elements, 220
non-diegetic sound, 89
non-narrative genres, 249
non-narrative music videos, 257
non-recoverable source, 336
normal movie lenses, 56
normative ethics, 20
no voice-over, 255

Obama, Barack, 334
object animation, 274
objective camera angle, 64
objective views, 72–3
objective voice-over, 87
observational docusoap, 272
off-screen space, 59
omniscient third-person narrative, 231
180-degree rule, 85, 327
one-liner, 300
one-sheet, 300
'one-to-many' media, 1
online communities, 34
online distribution stages, 108
on-screen representations, 183–7
  crisis and crime, 184–5
  life on country, 183–4
  mixed heritage, 185–6
  mystical connections, 185
  one foot in each world, 184
  protecting country, 184
  social unity, 186–7
  tracking skills, 185
  violent retaliation, 186
on-screen space, 59
open closure, 227
opening/orientation stage
  ending opening, 224
  exposition/showing stage of, 223–4
  first disruption technique, 224
  foreshadowing, 224–5
  narrative possibilities in, 224
Oppenheimer, 220
oral history, representations, 169
orbit shots, 65
originality, definition of, 337
outlines, 300–1
overlapping sound, 90
over-removal effect, 122
overshot, 54
over-the-shoulder shot, 73

panning shot, 60
panorama modes, 65
paparazzi photo, 346
parallax motion, 77
parallel plot lines, 241
parallel sequential narrative, 244
parallel sound, 89
paratext, 254
pathos, 39–40
performance music videos, 257
peripheral vision, 75
personal computers (PCs), 73
personal protective equipment (PPE), 315

personal safety, 316–17
personal viewpoint, 19–24
  comment and critique selection, 22, 24
  ethical perspectives, 20–1
  ethics and bias, 20
  identifying society issues, 22
  social values, attitudes and beliefs, 21–2
  types of social issues, 22
persuasion, 36–42
  audience demographics and types, 38–9
  human emotion, 42
  key elements of, 36
  marketing funnel, 37
  perceived value, 38
  promoting event, 41
  promoting product, 41
  promoting service, 41
  purposes, 40–2
  raising awareness and, 41
  strategies, 39
  techniques, 39–40
  working with a client, 38
photography
  features, 140–1
  good art, 141
  good news, 141
  as index sign, 140–1
  as medium, 139–42
  sports, 141–2
  as traces, 140
  as witness, 141
picturising, 300
pillarbox, 58
pitch deck, 301–3
  structure for, 302–3
pitches, 301–2
pixel, 58
pixelated aesthetics, 129
platform culture
  definition of, 27
  key aspects of, 27–8
platform distribution, 380–1
  emerging issues, 381
platformisation, 380–1
platforms, 6
  aesthetics, 143
  audiences, creating for, 276–7
  convergence, 106
  influencers, 30
  variation, 276–7
Pleasantville, 238
plot, 219–20, 245–6
podcasts, 281–2
  as audio medium, 138–9
poetic images, music videos, 258
point-of-sale advertising, 275
point-of-view (POV), 72–4, 231–3
  doll-house view, 74
  isometric view, 73–4
  objective views, 72–3
  third-person view/follow shot, 73
political power, counter-stereotypes, 164
political role, of media, 1
polysemy, 45
portrait, 58
Postman, Neil, 2
post-production stage, 289–90
post-production techniques, 374–8
  editing process, 374–6
  getting production to right length, 376–7
  titles, 377–8
  well-being in, 320
post-project evaluation, 349
  questions for, 349
pre-production formats, 300–12
  character images, 311
  character outlines, 309–11
  environments and settings, 311–12
  one-liner (log line), 300
  outlines, 300–1
  pitch decks, 302–3
  pitches, 301–2
  scripts, 306–7
  shooting scripts, 309
  show bibles, 303–5
  storyboards, 307–9
  treatments, 305–6
pre-production stage, 289
pre-screen media representations, 182
prescriptive ethics, 20
principles of design, 96–101
  alignment, 99–100
  balance, 97–8
  contrast, 101
  emphasis/focus, 100
  movement, 99
  proximity, 97
  repetition/consistency, 98
  rhythm, 98–9
  scale/proportion/hierarchy, 100
  unity/harmony, 97
  variety, 101
print media, 280
production
  contexts, 6, 394
  copyright and referencing, 336–40
  film reviews, 395
  management, 21st century skills and, 341
  post-production stage, 289–90
  post-production techniques, 374–8
  pre-production formats, 300–12
  pre-production stage, 289
  promotional texts, 394–5
  stages of media production, 287–90
  too long video, 376–7
  too short video, 377
production legality
  community standards, 321
  fake weapons and Queensland law, 322–4
  filming and taking photographs legally, 321
  filming legally with drones, 324–6
  talent and locations, 326–8
production tasks, MAP
  audio productions, 281–2
  film posters, 282
  moving-image productions, 280–1
  promotional media, 282
  short-form video content, 282–3
  still image productions, 278–80
product shot, 276
professionally generated content (PGC), 109
profile position, 69
project execution, 341–2
project folder, 374
projection mapping, 75
project management, 341–9
  21st century skills and, 341
  benefits of, 342–3
  call sheets, 346
  challenging factors, 349
  completion, 348–9
  constraints, 342
  decomposition/chunking, 343
  production schedules in, 344–5
  risk management, 344
  role of media artist in, 343
  sensitivity approach, 342
  time management, 344–6
  using checklists and templates, 344
  wet weather cover, 345
  working with people, 346–8
project planning, 341
promotional media, 282
prompt engineering, 331
  strategies for, 331
  techniques, 331
prompt-generated content, 335
Propp, Vladimir, 237–8
  narrative theory, 237–8
protagonist, 231, 233–4
prototype, of design thinking, 80
prototype stage, design thinking, 17
Psycho, 55, 60, 68, 340
psychographics, 294
public service media, 113
public transport, filming, 321
pull focus, 57

quarter turn position, 69
Queensland Certificate of Education, 3, 10
Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA), 341
Queensland drone regulations, 325–6
Queensland Fire Department, 319
Queensland law, fake weapons and, 322–4
Queensland Weapons Act 1990, 322, 323
questioning colonial representation, 182

rack focus, 57
radio, as audio medium, 138–9
rapid shot changes, music videos, 258
reach, 276
Real Images: Film and Television (McMahon & Quin), 4
realism, 56, 148–9, 166
  and representations, 165

reality game shows, 272
reality shows
  definition, 272
  features, 273
  settings, 273
  types, 272–3
real life, and representations, 167–8
referencing, 339–40, 390–1
register, 227
regulating authorities, media, 120–3
regulation
  censorship, 116
  classification, 116
  overview, 115–16
relationship line, 234
release form, 327
remediation, 106–7
report genres, 249
representations, 5, 6, 385, 389
  of 20th century, 207–8
  academic social analysis, 169
  of age groups, 192–6
  of alternative identities, 214
  analysing, 162–3
  anecdotes and oral history, 169
  in animations, 180–1
  as realistic, 166
  attention and visibility, 213
  authentic storytelling and, 177–9
  background characters, 188
  Bechdel test, 175–6
  case for diverse, 181
  changes in, 170–1
  comparing with reality, 168–9
  counter-stereotypes and, 164
  critical literacy and, 205–6
  of cultural and linguistic diversity, 176–81
  early screen recordings, 182–3
  of events, 209–11
  exploring, challenging and/or referencing existing media, 31–2
  of family, 197–8
  feminist era, 172–3
  of first nations peoples, 182–7
  in gaming, 216–18
  for gaming platforms, 30–1
  of gender, 170–6
  gender and violence, 31
  of ideas, 206–7
  of ideas and events, 205–11
  of LGBTQIA+, 198–9
  in media, 24–7
  of neurodiversity, 191
  of neurodiversity and disability, 187–91
  one-dimensional stories, 188
  on-screen, 183–7
  overview, 161
  of people, 169–70
  of places, 199–204
  of political figures, 214–15
  pre-feminist era, 171–2
  pre-screen media, 182
  questioning, 162
  realism and, 165
  and real life, 167–8
  satirical political, 214–15
  selection, construction and omission, 162
  and selfie, 212–13
  and social attitudes, 25
  in/for social media, 27–30, 211–16
  and social values, 25
  statistics, 168
  stereotypes and, 163–4
  types of, 161–2
  underrepresentation, 188
  of violence, 217–18
  visible *vs.* invisible disabilities, 188
  work in, 162–3
research
  with data storytelling, 295
  shaping questions for, 294–5
Revenge of the Nerds (1984), 30
rising action, 227
rising tension, 227
risk management, 342
  matrix, 314–15
  process, 315–16
  project management, 344
risk, reducing, 315–16
road movies
  characters, 267
  features of, 266
  plots, 266
role, format, task and constraints (RFTC) framework, 331
romantic comedies
  characters, 267–8
  features of, 267
  plots, 267
Romeo + Juliet, 338
The Royal Tenenbaums, 69
Rudd, Kevin, 186
rule of thirds, 59
Run Lola Run, 84, 225

safety
  for lighting, 317
  and risk management, 314
safety on set, 316
  equipment, 318–20
  lighting, 317–18
  outdoor considerations, 318
  personal safety, 316–17
  useful items, 316
  well-being in post-production, 320
saturation, 96
school and community distribution, 380
school communities, 33
science fiction, 260–2
  common themes, 261
  features of, 261
  origin influences and context, 261–2
  stories and characters, 262
scientific principles, 261
scraping, 334
Screen Australia, 114–15
Screen Queensland, 115
scripts, 306
  format for news, documentary and advertising, 307
  formatting for dramas, 306–7
  in FTVNM, 307
scrolling credits, 377
seamless, 85
second-person narrative, in novel, 231
segue, 90
selective focus, 56–7
self-regulating authorities, media
  Ad standards, 120
  codes of practice, 119–20
semiotics, 44
series and episodic storytelling
  reality shows, 272–3
  situation comedies, 271–2
  soap operas, 270–1
series bible, 303–5
setting
  factors of, 239
  purposes of, 239
sfumato, 100
shape, 94–5
shared, new media characteristics, 3
sharp transitions, trailers, 255
She Came to Me, 188
shooting ratio, 86
shooting schedule, 345
shooting scripts, 309
shopping centres, 321
short-form culture, 282–3
short-form production, defining, 282
short-form video, 281
short-form video content, 282–3
shot
  for 180-degree, 74–6
  definition, 49–50
  length of takes, 50
shot sizes
  and narrative purposes, 50–3
  used in Australian films, 54
show bible, 302–5
showrunner, 103, 302
signifiers, 44–5
signs, 44
  denotation and connotation, 45
  types of, 44–5
silences, 162
silent films, 87
The Simpsons, 25–6
simultaneous time, 102
single-protagonist subjective point of view, 233
situation comedies, 271–2
  characters, 272
  features, 271
  plot, 271–2
  settings, 272
six degrees of freedom (6DoF), 76
Skyfall, 170, 377
slogan, 276
smaller genres, 249–50
Snapchat ads, 277
snapshots, 139

soap operas, 270–1
characters, 271
features of, 270
settings, 271
stories, 270
social attitudes, 21
representations and, 25
social beliefs, 21
social issues, types of, 22
social labouring, 348
social loafing, 348
socially constructed technology, 126
social media
distribution, 379
features, 212
representations in, 211–16
representing stereotypes in, 26–7
social media filters, 27
social media platforms, 15, 27–30
social, new media characteristics, 3
social triangle, 53, 100
social values, 21
representations and, 25
sound
elements in, 87–8
types of, 89
sound bites, 27
sound bridge, 90
sound editing, transitions for, 89–90
sound effects, 88
soundscape, 282
sound sources, 88–9
South Park, 164
soviet montage approach, 82
space, 95
A Space Odyssey, 260
specific genres, 249–50
speculative fiction, 260
spheres of action, 237
sports photographs, 141–2
stakeholder
client *vs.*, 292
defining, 292
types of, 292
standard pitch, 301
stars, audience expectation, 151–2
static media, 134–5
Steadicam shot, 50, 61
stereoscopic viewing, 76
stereotypes, 25–7, 163–4
marginalised groups, 27
and representations, 163–4
still image, 278
contexts of use for, 278
productions, 278–80
types of, 278
stippling, 96
stop motion animation, 274
storyboards, 307
drawings/images, 308
features, 307–8
in FTVNM, 308
storyboard text, 308–9
story (ies), 219
point of view in, 231–3
setting, 219
story sovereignty, 179
story world, 73
stripboard, 344
structuring time
narrative progression and temporal order, 243–4
temporal duration, 243
temporal frequency, 243
temporal order of events, 242
STUFFit film festival, 379
stunt double, 64
style, 11–12
subgenres, 250
subjective camera angle, 61, 72
subjective point of view, 233
subjective voice-over, 87
subscription television, 119
suburbia, human environments, 200–1
Sunset Boulevard, 263
supers, 377
surface realism, 166–7
suspension of disbelief, 166
Sweet Country, 69
sweetening, 375
symbol based logos, 285
symbolic codes, 45, 46
symbolic images, music videos, 258
symbolic interfaces, 78–9
symbolism and metaphor, of animation, 275
symbols, 12–13, 45, 285
symmetry, 68
synchronous sound, 89
synopsis, 302

tail credits, 377
take-down notice, 327
take, length of, 50
talent show reality, 272
tandem narratives, 244
target audiences, 293–4
target demographics, 293–4
team dynamics, 342
technical codes, 45, 46
technical production realism, 167
technological determinism, 125
technologies, 5, 6, 385, 389
analogue and digital, 134
and audience engagement, 126–32
components, 124
evolution of, 126–32
experience economy, 126–8
hot and cool media, 134
and medium, 133–43
overview, 124
theories of, 125–6
time-based and static media, 134–5
technology panics, 132
telephoto movie lenses, 56
television, 154–5
as medium, 136–7
roles in society, 137
television ads, 276
Terminator Genisys, 129
testing, of design thinking, 80
text based logos, 284–5
textual convergence, 105–6
Thelma and Louise, 226
theremin instrument, 261
thesis, 390
third-person narrative
in film, 232
in novel, 231
third-person view, 73
30-degree rule, 85, 326
three-act structure, 223–9
closing or resolution stage, 226–7
development or complications stage, 225–6
digital games and, 245–6
opening or orientation stage, 223–5
three-column script, 307
360-degree cameras, 76
360-degree shots, 76
360-degree-sphere modes, 65
three-quarter turn position, 69
TikTok, 28–9, 277, 379
engagement, 296
'like' and 'subscribe' features, 28–9
users as commenters, 29
users as followers, 29
tilt, 63
tilt-shift lens, 57
tilt shot, 63
time-based media, 134
Tintori, Antonio, 164
title card, 377
titles, 377–8
adding, 375
creating, 377–8
timing, 378
Tiwary, Ana, 179
tokenism, 180
top-down shots, 65
tracking shot, 60
traditional animation, 274
traditional media, 1
definition, 2
features, 2
transferable skills, 341
transition, fourth dimension design principles, 102–3
transitions, editing codes
cut, 84
defocus, 84
dissolve, 84
fade, 84
wipe, 84–5
transparency, and media production, 20
transportation, 148
treatments, in FTVNM, 305–6
trespass, 321
triadic colours, 96
troll farms, 334
trucking shot, 60–1
turning point, plot, 221
two-shots, 52

UI design, 79
UI/UX collide, 80
Uncanny Valley, 130–1
user experience (UX) design, 79, 80

user-generated content (UGC), 109
user interface (UI), 76, 78–9
  iconic interfaces, 79
  indexical interfaces, 79
  symbolic interfaces, 78–9

vanishing point, 74, 94
vertical formats, 58
Very Short Film Festival, 379
video game contexts, 30
video log, 281, 374
video-sharing sites, 379
video walls, 75
Vietnam War protests, 208
violence, representations of, 217–18
viral fake video, 334
virtual actors, 129–30
virtual camera, 65
virtuality, 3
virtual tour, 281
virtue categories, 310
visible remediation, 106–7
visual effects, 261
visual language, 94
vlog, 281
Vogler, Christopher, 228–9
voice, aspects of, 87–8
voice-over, 87, 255
voiceprints, 336
volumetric depth, interactive shots, 77
volumetric haptics, 78
VR, 77–8
VR 180, 76

want-to-buy moments, 296
want-to-do moments, 296
want-to-go moments, 296
want-to-know moments, 296
war films, invasion events in, 211
Warp stabiliser, 64
web-based media, 280
The Wedding Singer, 91
well-being in post-production, 320
westerns
  characters, 265
  features of, 264
  plots, 264–5
wet weather cover, 326
whip pan transition, 85
white balance, 96
white space, 99
wide-angle movie lenses, 56
widescreen, 58
Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA), 189
writers' room, 302
writing
  analysing media, 385–6
  case studies, 387–91
  context of production, 384
  contexts of use, 384
  evaluating media, 386
  under exam conditions, 391–3
  in FTVNM assessment tasks, 384–6
  key concepts, 384–5

X, 277

youth, social issues, 22
YouTube, 108–9, 296–7, 379
  algorithm, 109
  areas of operation, 109
  audience and social impact, 109
  comments feature, 15
  context, 108
  copyright issues, 108–9
  ownership, 108

zeitgeist, 207
  decade-by-decade, 207
  decades of 20th century, 207–8
  decades of 21st century, 208–9
The Zone of Interest, 385
zoom shot, 62–3

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ISBN 978-0170484176