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INTERACTIVE TEXTBOOK INCLUDED

Media Reframed

VCE UNITS 1–4



Hugh Mason-Jones
Ben Hoban
Lauren Humphris
Lisa Blumenstein
Nick Booth
Vic Tietze
David Caust

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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About the authors

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Ben is a teacher of VCE Media and History and has been teaching both subjects at Cheltenham Secondary College since 2009. He is the Leader of E-Learning at the college and a passionate advocate for innovative learning and digital literacy. Outside of education, Ben has been widely published in design, pop culture and action sports media and is a skateboarder who is old enough to know better.

LAUREN HUMPHRIS

Lauren is an experienced teacher of both VCE Media and English at St Joseph's College, Geelong. She has taught Media since 2005 and is a strong advocate for media education and literacy for all students. Lauren has been a VCAA assessor for both Media and English as well as serving on exam panels. Outside of teaching, Lauren is also a freelance writer, contributing to several websites and blogs.

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Lisa is a teacher of Media, Art and Visual Communication Design and has taught at Mentone Girls' Secondary College since 2012. She has taught VCE Media for the past seven years and has had students successfully display their work in the Season of Excellence – Top Screen and Top Designs. Her Media students have exhibited their photo and film work in numerous events and film festivals and on television such as White Night, Head On, Little Big Shots and ABC3. Lisa's passion for photography includes street photography, landscape and portraiture and at the time of writing she plans to present some of her work later this year in her own exhibition.

NICK BOOTH

Nick studied Cinematography in San Francisco and has been teaching VCE Media and English in Melbourne for the last 12 years. Having worked on a number of documentary and narrative films, Nick is an ardent educator of the video production process and of well-crafted visual composition. His favourite films include *Goodfellas*, *The Godfather Part II* and anything Tarantino.

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Overview of Outcomes and School-assessed Coursework

The VCE Media Study Design implemented in 2018 outlines the following areas of study and the relevant School-assessed Coursework that must be undertaken in the course.

UNIT 1 MEDIA FORMS, REPRESENTATIONS AND AUSTRALIAN STORIES: ASSESSMENT CHART

Area of study	Outcome	School-based assessment tasks
1 Media representations	Explain how media representations in a range of media products and forms, and from different periods of time, locations and contexts, are constructed, distributed, engaged with, consumed and read by audiences.	• audiovisual or video sequences • radio or audio sequences • photographs • print layouts • sequences or presentations using digital technologies • posters • written responses • oral reports.
2 Media forms in production	Use the media production process to design, produce and evaluate media representations for specified audiences in a range of media forms.	• audiovisual or video sequences • radio or audio sequences • photographs • print layouts • sequences or presentations using digital technologies • posters • written responses • oral reports.
3 Australian stories	Analyse how the structural features of Australian fictional and non-fictional narratives in two or more media forms engage, and are consumed and read by, audiences.	• audiovisual or video sequences • radio or audio sequences • photographs • print layouts • sequences or presentations using digital technologies • posters • written responses • oral reports.

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UNIT 2 NARRATIVE ACROSS MEDIA FORMS: ASSESSMENT CHART

Area of study	Outcome	School-based assessment tasks
1 Narrative, style and genre	Analyse the intentions of media creators and producers and the influences of narratives on the audience in different media forms.	• audiovisual or video sequences • radio or audio sequences • photographs • print layouts • sequences or presentations using digital technologies • posters • written responses • oral reports.
2 Narratives in production	Apply the media production process to create, develop and construct narratives.	• audiovisual or video sequences • radio or audio sequences • photographs • print layouts • sequences or presentations using digital technologies • posters • written responses • oral reports.
3 Media and change	Discuss the influence of new media technologies on society, audiences, the individual, media industries and institutions.	• audiovisual or video sequences • radio or audio sequences • photographs • print layouts • sequences or presentations using digital technologies • posters • written responses • oral reports.

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UNIT 3 MEDIA NARRATIVES AND PRE-PRODUCTION: ASSESSMENT CHART

Area of study	Outcome	School-based assessment tasks
1 Narrative and ideology	Analyse how narratives are constructed and distributed, and how they engage, are consumed and are read by the intended audience and present-day audiences.	One or more of the following: • a written report • an essay • short responses • structured questions • an annotated visual report • an oral report • a presentation using digital technologies.

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Area of study	Outcome	School-based assessment tasks
2 Media production development	Research aspects of a media form and experiment with media technologies and media production processes to inform and document the design of a media production.	Assessed as part of the School-assessed Task (see page xii for more on this)
3 Media production design	Develop and document a media production design in a selected media form for a specified audience.	Assessed as part of the School-assessed Task (see page xii for more on this)

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UNIT 4 MEDIA PRODUCTION AND ISSUES IN THE MEDIA: ASSESSMENT CHART

Area of study	Outcome	School-based assessment tasks
1 Media production	Produce, refine and resolve a media product designed in Unit 3.	Assessed as part of the School-assessed Task (see page xii for more on this)
2 Agency and control in and of the media	Discuss issues of agency and control in the relationship between the media and its audience.	One or more of the following: • a written report • an essay • short responses • structured questions • an annotated visual report • an oral report.

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Students are required to gain key knowledge within each area of study and be able to use key skills in relation to that knowledge. This is demonstrated through the use of both internal and external assessment. The overall assessment (study score) is calculated in the following manner:

UNITS 3 & 4 ASSESSMENT CONTRIBUTION CHART

Unit	Assessment	Contribution to study score
3 & 4	School-assessed Coursework (internal)	20%
3 & 4	School-assessed Task (internal)	40%
3 & 4	End-of-year examination (external)	40%

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The School-assessed Task

Assessment for VCE Media includes a School-assessed Task (SAT). For this assessment teachers will provide to the VCAA a score representing an assessment of the student's level of performance in achieving Outcomes 2 and 3 in Unit 3, and Outcome 1 in Unit 4, according to criteria published annually online by the VCAA.

The School-assessed Task for Units 3 and 4 will contribute 40% to the study score.

SAT ASSESSMENT CHART

Outcomes	Assessment tasks
Unit 3 **Outcome 2** Research aspects of a media form and experiment with media technologies and media production processes to inform and document the design of a media production.	• A research portfolio and accompanying documentation examining aspects of the selected media form. • Production activities with accompanying documentation that demonstrate a range of skills in the use of media technologies and production processes relevant to the student selected media form.
Outcome 3 Develop and document a media production design in a selected media form for a specified audience.	• A media production design based on the selected media form identified in Unit 3, Outcome 2.
Unit 4 **Outcome 1** Produce, refine and resolve a media product designed in Unit 3.	• A media product developed from the media production design produced in Unit 3.

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The end-of-year examination

The level of achievement for Units 3 and 4 is also assessed by an end-of-year examination. All the key knowledge and key skills that underpin the outcomes in Units 3 and 4 are examinable.

The examination will contribute 40% to the study score.

The examination will be completed under the following conditions:

- Duration: two hours.
- Date: end-of-year, on a date published annually by the VCAA.
- VCAA examination rules will apply. Details of these rules are published annually online.
- The examination will be marked by external assessors appointed by the VCAA.

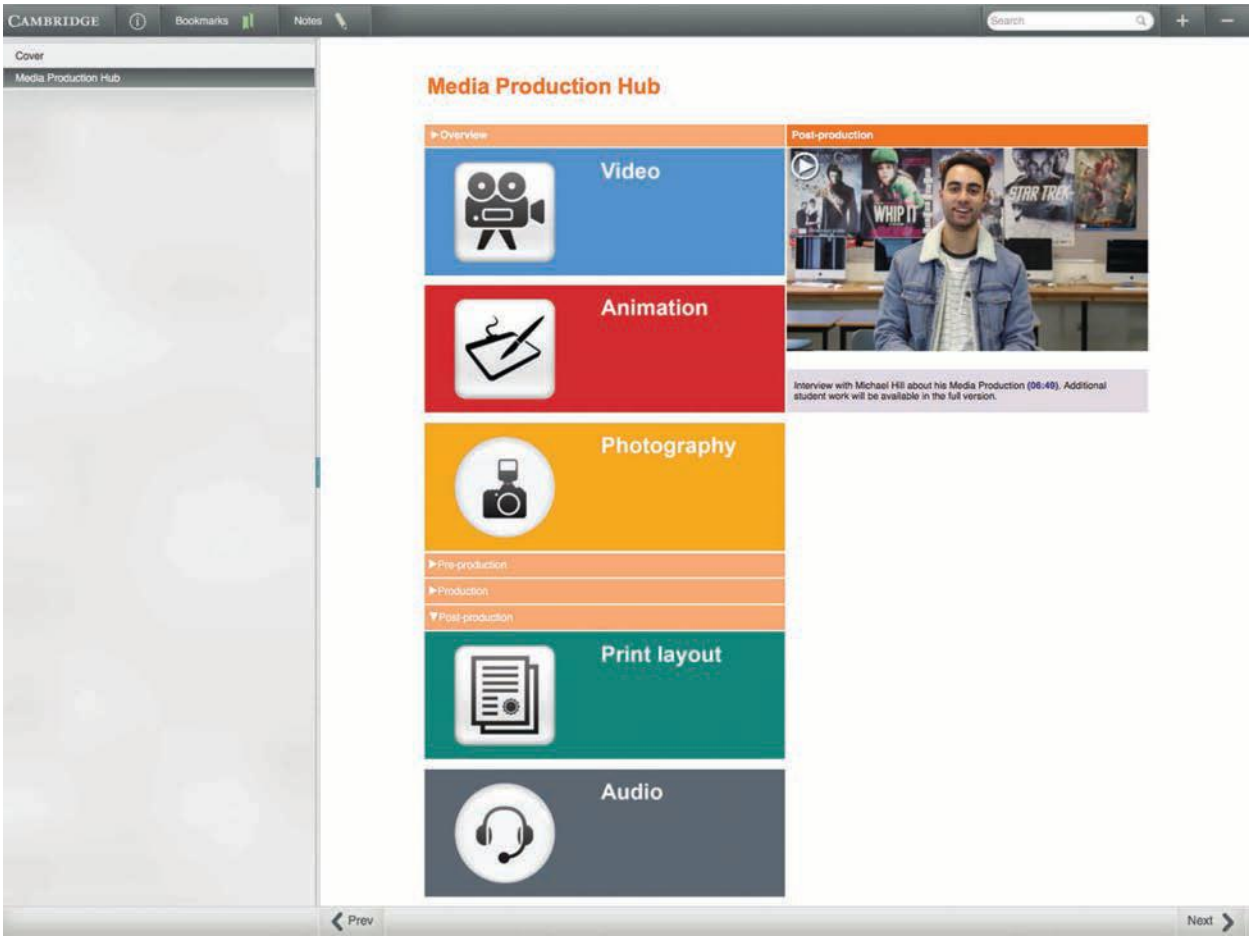
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Media Production Hub

The Interactive Textbook edition of *Media Reframed* includes access to the Media Production Hub.

This digital resource features:

- a range of examples of former VCE Media student productions, across different media forms, including:
  - video (including narratives, documentaries, music clips and animations)
  - photography
  - print layout
  - audio
- examples of student pre-production work across various media forms, including storyboards, scripts and media production designs
- tips for the shooting process
- reflective video interviews with former VCE Media students about their experiences through the media production process and lessons learned.



To access a list of websites and links related to this book, go to: www.cambridge.edu.au/mediareframed

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PART 1 UNIT 1
Media forms, representations and Australian stories

I never paint dreams or nightmares. I paint my own reality.

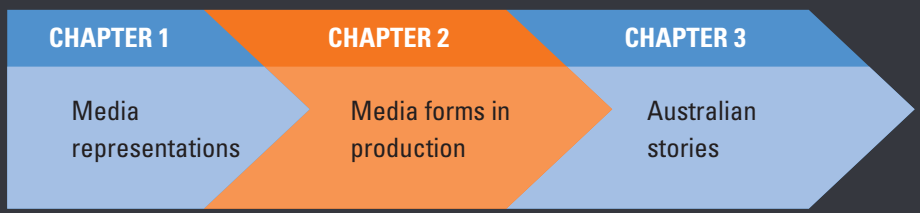
— Frida Kahlo

OVERVIEW

The images we see in the media have been constructed, read and interpreted over centuries. From the early days of the printing press and photography, media makers have been constructing versions of reality for society to examine and interpret for themselves. As society has developed, the technology available to media producers has made for more detailed and intricate representations of reality. With those developments, the audience has matured in the way it views itself and makes sense of the images, sounds and ideas expressed in the media. Even today, as you look across the words and images included within this book, you bring with you centuries of practice in determining meaning. You will use your personal, family and broader cultural experiences for each image you look at, each visual clip you deconstruct and every media product you will make.

Welcome to Unit 1 of VCE Media! Across this unit, you will learn how media messages are made and understood by audiences all around the world. You will learn about the codes used to determine meaning and the conventions by which audiences interpret them. You will examine how your understanding of Australian society has been constructed and represented back to itself as well as the role you are actively playing in the creation of a new Australian identity in the media. You will, of course, become the creator yourself and employ the knowledge of centuries of media creation to represent your own version of the world.

WHAT'S AHEAD





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CHAPTER 1 AREA OF STUDY 1

MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS

You see us as you want to see us – in the simplest terms, in the most convenient definitions. You see us as a brain, an athlete, a basket case, a princess and a criminal. Correct? That's the way we saw each other at 7:00 this morning. We were brainwashed.

— Anthony Michael Hall, *The Breakfast Club* (1985)

OVERVIEW

The Greek philosopher Plato once told a story of three men who had been chained to a wall in a cave. The men had been imprisoned there since birth and behind them a fire would project shadows on a wall. The three men spent their days inventing characters and stories to accompany the shadows, which had come to represent their only reality. Eventually, one of the men escaped the cave to find that the world was not represented by shadows at all. VCE Media is a place where you will become enlightened to the representation and construction of the very messages and stories you have spent so many years consuming. You will become educated in the ways in which the media has been used to represent countless realities and learn how to craft your own. But beware: like the man who escaped the cave, beyond this point there is no going back!

FIGURE 1.1 (above): Today, smartphones are used to take photos and record videos of our daily lives, as we represent a version of our lives to the world. Pictured is pop star Selena Gomez with some of her many fans.

OUTCOME 1

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

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

KEY KNOWLEDGE

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

KEY SKILLS

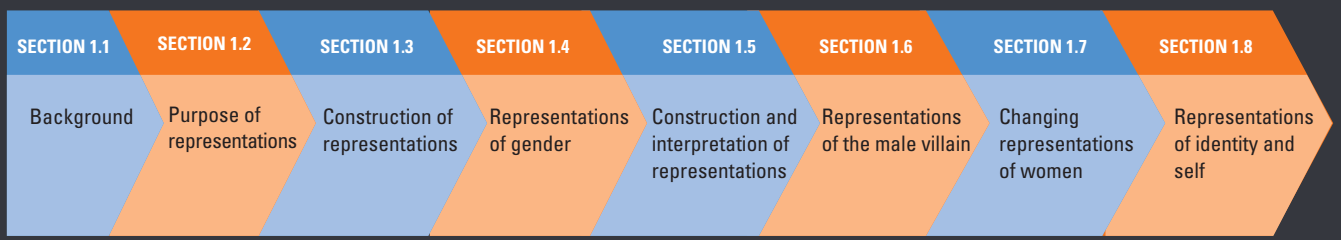
- describe the nature and form of representations within media products and forms from different periods of time, locations and contexts
- analyse the media codes and conventions used to construct media products and meanings in different media forms from different periods of time, locations and contexts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

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KEY TERMS

- representation
- media products
- construction
- selection and omission
- audience
- media codes
- media conventions
- stereotypes
- realism

WHAT'S AHEAD



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1.1 Background

The way we make sense of the world through the media is based on how we communicate complex ideas and messages. The building blocks of this communication are found through the way in which we communicate concepts such as people, places, locations, objects, animals, institutions and organisations. Unless we witness something ourselves, how we understand the world is through how the media presents it.

representation the ways in which the media portrays particular groups, communities, experiences, ideas or topics from a particular ideological or value perspective

purpose the intention of the author

media products consumable media, such as literature, film, television or games

As a **representation** is a media reflection or re-presentation of reality, made for a specific audience to achieve a specific **purpose**, how we view the world can be quite different to the reality. Just how a representation is assembled depends on how we understand the world and those depicted in the media. Examining these re-presentations of reality can reveal a lot about the society that created them. We can also find out a lot about ourselves and how we believe we should be depicted.

Ever since people have been creating **media products**, they have aimed to construct representations in particular ways. One of the first aims was to create a representation that was as realistic as possible. The early cricket radio broadcasts that covered the matches Australia played in England in the 1930s are examples of this attempt at realism. The radio commentator would read the ball-by-ball deliveries that had been sent to them via cable and tap a pencil on the desk near the microphone to simulate the ball being struck. The effect that this had upon the audience was to make them feel like they were listening to the actual match.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What is the media?
2. Does the media present us with reality?
3. Define the term 'representation' in your own words.

Similarly, the news broadcasters of the 1950s and 60s were some of the most trusted voices of their time. Familiar news 'anchors' like Walter Cronkite from the 1960s could pass judgement on the news of the day to an audience of millions and sway public and political opinion with their representations of the daily news. Media producers will *represent* the subject in a certain way to the audience. Who the audience feels a connection with and who they support is all due to the way in which the author has created the representation.



FIGURE 1.2 Depending upon which documentary the audience watches, the audience will receive different messages about lions.

1.2 Purpose of representations

No matter how credible a representation seems, it is not just a window onto the world; all representations are constructed with a particular purpose in mind. The author creates a product to reveal and reflect certain key pieces of information that they want the audience to understand. Consider a nature documentary about lions in Africa. There have been many documentaries made about the lives of lions; however, the manner in which the author wants to construct the representation depends upon how the audience will view them.

For instance, by making continual use of lions attacking other animals, even humans, the filmmaker can focus on the idea of lions being ferocious killing

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machines. On the other hand, they may create a documentary that contains many images of the lions bonding together as a family and protecting their young, even being hunted by humans. Depending upon which documentary is being watched, the audience will receive different messages about lions. Both are representations of lions; however, the difference between the two is the purpose of the filmmaker.

In every representation, the background and intention of the author can influence the reading of the media product. However, the audience will bring their own background, understanding and knowledge of the product being read, which can, in turn, create a new understanding. For instance, you may have experienced the horror of lions close up and it could influence your appreciation and reading of the media product. What is important, however, is the attempt by the author to 'position' you to think and feel a particular way.

Selection and omission

As representations are constructed from reality, it is impossible to include everything that reality has to offer. What is left out is referred to as **omission** and what is left in is the **selection**. For instance, if you were representing a school in one shot, it would be impossible to include the whole school in that image. Choices need to be made and information to be included needs to be selected. There are certain things that could assist in immediately identifying it as a school. The information included would depend on *how* the author wanted to portray the school.

omission what was chosen to be excluded

selection what was chosen to be included

Similarly, decisions need to be made about what the author is going to leave out of the representation. As not all information can be included into the one representation, less important information is often left out to ensure the representation is more easily understood. In your school, there may be parts that you are familiar with that don't look like a school at all. In this case, if the author was to include them it may add confusion to the representation, rather than assist its construction.

ACTIVITY 1.1

Examine the following image:

1. Outline what has been selected and what has been omitted.
2. Explain how the audience creates meaning from the image.



FIGURE 1.3 What does this image tell us by what has been selected and omitted?

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ACTIVITY 1.2

As has been established, it is impossible to include everything within a shot in a particular scene; however, it is still important that the location be identifiable.

1 For each of the following locations, identify what you would place in the shot in order to help the audience identify the location.

2 What could you leave out that wasn't important to its identification?

- office
- train station
- gym
- café
- library
- building site
- farm



FIGURE 1.4 Understanding audiences is a key for media producers.

Audience

As with all media products, representations are made with a specific audience in mind. Understanding the audience is essential for the author to ensure that the representation fulfils its purpose. Knowledge of the audience is therefore vital. For example, knowing what the audience likes and dislikes are two basic things that an author needs to know in order to create a representation for a particular audience. Also, knowing the level of knowledge an audience has about the media is also important, particularly their understanding of codes and conventions.

Media codes and conventions

Codes and conventions are tools used by the author to create (or encode) representations; likewise, the audience uses codes and conventions in order to understand (or decode) representations.

Codes are the building blocks of the construction. **Media codes** can be technical, written or symbolic. Technical codes can include the use of camera, editing, lighting, sound, acting, or a combination of these elements, sometimes known as **mise en scene**.

When these codes are used in ways that help an audience understand a representation, they are known as **media conventions**.

Conventions are the set of accepted rules or ways that media producers create meaning. Using media codes, the structure of a story, its characters and **genre** can be communicated through common conventions, as can the way the audience understands the effect of specific events or the way time passes in a story. An understanding of conventions dictates how codes are used in order to create meaning. By using conventions, an author ensures that the representation they make is understood by the intended audience because they are used to, and expecting, certain events and behaviours.

For example, we arrange our letters into understood words, sentences and paragraphs to create meaning. If we misspell a word or don't construct a sentence

media codes technical, written or symbolic codes used by the author to create representations

mise en scene literally, 'put in the scene' (French), refers to all the theatrical elements necessary in composing a scene to be filmed: props, sets, lighting, sound effects, costumes, make-up and actors' placement (blocking)

media conventions when media codes are used in ways that help an audience understand a representation

genre a way to categorise different types of stories, characters and plot structures.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 Who are media 'creators'?

2 Why is it important to consider the media creator's purpose in constructing representations?

3 How might an understanding of a target audience change the decision-making of a media creator?

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correctly, meaning can be lost, as the way in which we've used the codes isn't accepted or understood. This is the same with representations; if an author doesn't construct it in an understood way, it can be difficult for audiences to understand what is meant.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. How do media creators construct representations?
2. How do audiences 'read' or understand media representations?
3. What are some typical genres?

Symbolic codes

Symbolic codes are where a visual object or a piece of audio possesses greater meaning than just the literal. Symbolic codes can be broken down into the following categories:

- symbols
- iconic signs
- index signs.

Symbols carry meaning of which the audience needs prior understanding in order to interpret them, otherwise these symbols are meaningless. Symbols like Mars (male), Venus (female), signs of the zodiac, or even symbols for peace or Mercedes-Benz all require prior understanding as the symbol itself doesn't carry any suggestion of associated meaning; these symbols are reliant upon the audience possessing additional information to create meaning.

symbols a sign, shape or object that is used to represent something else

In this case, when using symbols, the author must ensure that their intended audience has an understanding of the symbolic code being used. If they don't, meaning will be lost and the representation will not have been communicated effectively. However, these kinds of symbols can be used strategically to increase the authenticity of the representation.

ACTIVITY 1.3

1. In pairs, research and list a collection of 10 different symbols.
2. Create two copies, one with the meanings next to them, the other with the meanings removed. See which pair can find the most obscure symbols that no one knows the meaning for.
3. After you've swapped symbols, as a class negotiate five symbols for which you are all going to research the origins. What meaning does each carry? Why does it carry that meaning? How old is it? Who uses it?



Iconic signs are pictographs that are the most basic representation of the original object. As these don't rely on any additional information being possessed by the audience, they can be interpreted without prior knowledge. For instance, the male/female figures on toilet doors to indicate the gender designation don't require specialist knowledge to **decipher** their meaning. Similarly, with speed humps or other traffic signs, iconic signs can be decoded without prior knowledge being needed.

Index signs are the most common symbolic codes used in the construction of representations. Index signs refer back to prior understanding of the **connotative** meaning that society has for things such as objects, colours, expressions or clothing. For example, a red rose is not just a colourful, fragrant flower; it is also Western society's symbol of love and romance. Similarly, a character wearing a baseball cap may be wearing it to keep the sun off, but if it was being worn backwards, additional meaning is added to the character.

iconic signs pictorial symbols for a word or phrase

decipher to understand or interpret

index signs society's symbolic meanings behind certain objects, colours, expressions, etc., that help us understand representations

connotative the meaning that the audience attaches to the people, objects and things we see in the image

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ACTIVITY 1.4

A mother watches her children explore a museum about hygiene in Japan. Explain how much knowledge is required for these children to understand the symbols used here.



FIGURE 1.5 A mother and her children at the toilet exhibition at the National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation in Tokyo.

The context in which these index symbols are used is also important in creating and interpreting meaning. A photo frame with a picture of a couple on a shelf in a bright, sunny room communicates quite a different meaning from the same photo, but in a cracked frame, on the floor in a dimly lit room. While in both cases there is the literal meaning of a photo frame either being on a shelf or knocked onto the floor at different times of the day, there is also the connotative meaning that can be read into the image about the nature of the relationship or the wellbeing of the couple.

ACTIVITY 1.5

Use as many symbols as possible to create a page about one of the following topics:

- love
- hate
- death
- life
- peace
- greed
- anger
- friendship
- honesty
- childhood
- danger.

Make sure you use as many things that symbolise the idea as possible.

Once you've included them, swap with another person and classify each of their symbols into 'symbols', 'iconic' or 'index' signs.

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ACTIVITY 1.6

Working in pairs, examine the following images and note down the symbols used.



FIGURE 1.6 A USSR World War II propaganda poster from 1941; a Chesterfield cigarette advertisement from an American magazine, 1939; and Bear and Bull statues outside the Frankfurt Stock Exchange, Germany

- How many can you interpret?
- What information would someone need to understand their meaning?

Written codes

As we as a society respect the written word, written codes are incredibly powerful in **anchoring** the meaning of a representation through the use of text within the world of the representation (**diegetic**) or through a caption outside the world of the representation (**non-diegetic**). By using written codes, an author can remove any confusion that may be caused through an element of the representation that could produce multiple meanings. In television or movies, text is often used at the beginning of a scene to indicate the time and location in which a scene is set. As an audience, we do not question this, thereby demonstrating the power of written codes.

anchoring the process of attaching a meaning to an image through the use of text

diegetic within the world of the story or narrative; from the Greek term *diegesis* (meaning 'recounted story')

non-diegetic outside of the world of the narrative

ACTIVITY 1.7

Look at Figure 1.7. At the moment, it could be communicating many different things. Your job is to come up with as many anchors for it as possible to shift the meaning of the image as much as you can.

Find your own image online and see how you can alter the meaning by applying different captions.



FIGURE 1.7 Caption this image!

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ACTIVITY 1.8

Fonts are great! There must be a font for every available emotion there is.

Using the fonts on the computer and any you find online, find an appropriate font for each of these emotions:

- happiness
- sadness
- anxiety
- love
- hate
- friendship
- desire
- jealousy
- envy
- respect
- kindness
- creativity.

After finding that font, write the emotion using the font and justify why you believe that font is the best for that emotion.

Technical codes

Technical codes are the codes of construction. While each medium has unique technical codes and conventions for their use, there are some which are shared by all. For instance, a close up is always going to be used to bring the audience's attention to a specific object or expression, while a low angle is often used to suggest power and significance.

montage an edited sequence in a film that compresses story time, usually to show the development of a character, most often accompanied by non-diegetic music

In the construction of audio/visual representations, technical codes include: camera angles, shot sizes, camera movement and editing conventions. Some examples of editing conventions are **montages**, cutaways, reaction shots, the construction of settings, acting and movement, the timing and use of sound, the size, placement and font of credits, subtitles or captions and the use of filters or effects.

In visual representations (print or photography), technical codes include: cropping, the use of captions, drop caps, columns, size, colour and placement of font, or the use of filters or effects.

Sound codes

In an audiovisual representation, an audience expects sound to accompany the moving image, as sound codes are used to enhance the realism or emotion within the construction. Sound codes consist of dialogue, sound effects or soundtrack and can either be *diegetic* or *non-diegetic* in nature. When we view a character talk to another character or interact with an object, we expect to hear appropriate voices or noises. If this dialogue or audio effects are not consistent with our expectations, we become distracted and begin to question the authenticity of the representation, with our attention being brought to the construction rather than the intended meaning.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What are some mediums/forms of media?
2. What is the difference between a technical and a symbolic code?
3. Is the music at the start of your favourite movie or TV show diegetic or non-diegetic? (Tip – can the characters hear and react to the music?)

When watching movies, we also expect non-diegetic codes to be used. If a character begins narrating a scene, we understand the convention that the story is being told from their **perspective**. We also understand that the audio code of the soundtrack is used to indicate the mood of the scene. For example, when the leading lady and leading man are about to kiss for the first time, we understand that there isn't a string orchestra setting up, about to play the love theme. We understand that the director has used the sound code to communicate to the audience that the two characters are in love. Likewise, with television sitcom, the laugh track is used to indicate where there is a joke and where the audience is expected to laugh.

perspective the person from whose point of view the story is being told

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1.3 Construction of representations

A simple way to understand how a representation is constructed and read can be found in Figure 1.8. An author will create a representation and it will be read by an audience after the codes and realism are read and decoded. This can often be referred to as a 'life cycle' of a representation.

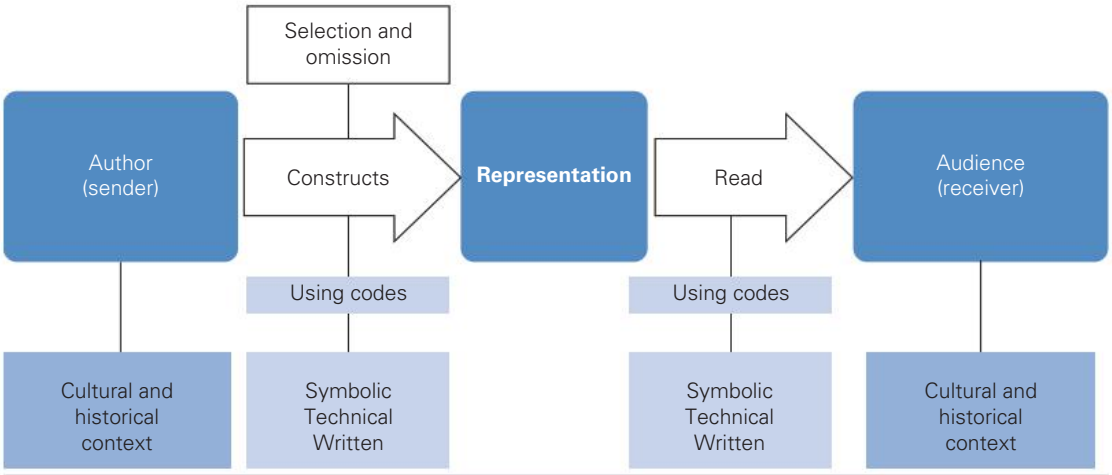


FIGURE 1.8 The life cycle of a representation

Stereotypes

stereotype an overly simplistic representation

An oversimplified version of a representation is called a **stereotype**. These can often be quite negative as they don't give a detailed, accurate portrayal of the truth. These representations are mostly used in advertising. Stereotypes operate on many assumptions that a society makes towards a certain social group. They can be highly dangerous and cause a significant amount of damage to not only how a group is perceived by others, but also how a group perceives itself.

Through stereotypes, audiences can gain an understanding of social groups that may have a basis in reality, but are not applicable to all.

If we take the stereotype that all teenagers are lazy and untrustworthy, audiences who are not teenagers could potentially discriminate towards them, based upon an understanding built on stereotypical representations. However, teenagers who are constantly exposed to these stereotypes could begin to perceive themselves in a negative way and believe that the stereotype is what society expects from them. This too could have a significant negative impact on audiences.

Stereotypes play a significant role in media products that do not require the audience to develop a complex understanding. In advertising, for example, an author may have only 30 seconds of TV time to grab your attention to communicate meaning. And that is quite long compared with some alternatives: you may be able to skip a YouTube ad after five seconds, or the advertisement may be travelling past on the side of a bus. Wherever the ad appears, the advertiser must grab your attention and communicate ideas about a product immediately. Stereotypes are therefore an easy way to communicate meaning quickly and can be used by advertisers to influence people to buy their products.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. How could stereotyped representations lead to real-life problems?
2. Why are stereotypes used in media products?

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ACTIVITY 1.9

Use the image here to deconstruct a stereotype.

1. Deduce what Australian stereotype this image reflects.
2. Identify all symbolic and technical codes of this representation that make it a stereotype. Consider selection and omission, acting, camera cropping and angles, colour, text and symbols.
3. Assess whether this is a positive or negative stereotype. From the list of codes you have made above, which codes contribute most significantly to this?
4. In what kind of advertising would such an image appear? Explain your answer.

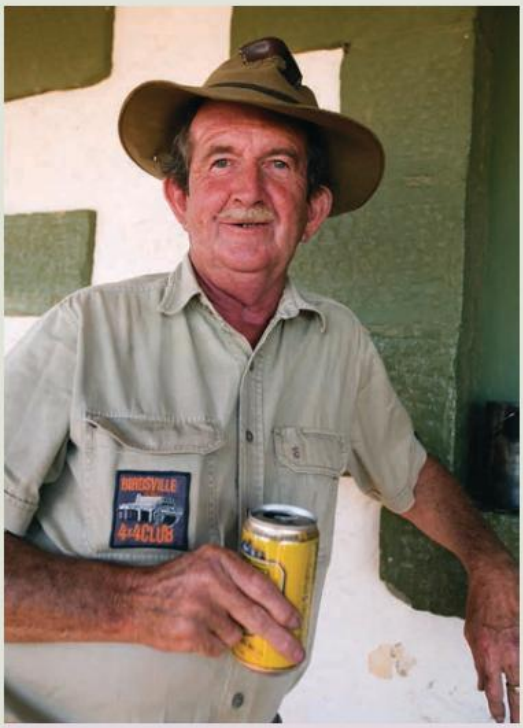


FIGURE 1.9 A stereotypical Australian man from the bush

Realism

The reality of a representation is influenced by the point of view of the author and the experiences of the audience. The level of knowledge possessed by both the author and the audience will determine the perceived level of realism contained within a representation.

For example, an author may have an understanding of social groups in the western suburbs of Melbourne and use this understanding to create a representation. To her it is realistic, from her point of view. The realism also depends upon the experiences of the audience. If the audience is from the eastern suburbs and has never spent a significant amount of time in the west, to them, the representation may appear realistic. However, the experiences of someone living in the west may differ to those of the author and they may perceive the same representation as being unrealistic.

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ACTIVITY 1.10

Look at the following image:



FIGURE 1.10 An image that is both familiar and unrealistic – a woman looks at a sunset using a tablet

1. Assess how realistic it is.
2. Recall whether you have seen this happen in real life.
3. Identify whether any parts of the image are familiar to you.
4. Explain what makes you believe that this image properly reflects reality.
5. Identify and describe what it is about this image that makes you believe that it is not real.

1.4 Representations of gender

The following section goes through popular representations and stereotypes of gender found in the media. What we've included are examples of extreme stereotypes rather than realistic representations. By exploring these and discussing how they are used, it will allow you to understand the purpose that an author has in using one of these characters.

Representations of men

The way men are represented in the media depends upon the medium and genre that is being constructed. There are some representations that seem to exist only on TV and others that seem to only exist within the world of movies. All representations are created for a specific purpose and for certain audiences. Activity 1.11 includes just a few common representations of men, how they are usually characterised, where they are usually found and how they are usually constructed. This is by no means a definitive collection of stereotypes; however, they are the building blocks of many others.

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ACTIVITY 1.11

Working alone or in groups, you should carefully examine the following stereotypes in a variety of **media forms**. Examine your favourite films, TV and online serials to see how many of these male stereotypes you can find. For each one, explain the use of sound and symbolic codes used in their construction. The first one is filled in as an example for you.

media form the type of technology or physical object that delivers media narrative

Stereotype	Description	Symbolic codes	Sound codes
Tradesman (Tradie)	The Tradie is usually found on a construction site. He might be the builder, the plumber, the electrician or the gardener. Generally, the Tradie is not fussed by much, there's nothing he likes more than finishing a hard day on the job and enjoying a couple of beers.	*Easily identified through his costume, which usually consists of stubbies shorts, a blue singlet, a work belt, a pair of Blundstone boots and sunnies. It's an outfit for hard working outside for long periods of time. Food choices are usually a chocolate milk and meat pie at 'smoko' break.*	*The Tradie can be introduced and reflects many of the values within many classic rock bands, such as AC/DC or Guns N' Roses. His dialogue is straight and to the point, no unnecessary long speeches, with phrases such as 'no worries', 'righto' and 'she'll be right'.*
Hopeless Husband/ Boyfriend	The Hopeless Husband is usually found in or around the home or flat. He is either the husband or boyfriend of a much smarter woman. The Hopeless Husband means well; however, his role is to not understand simple, everyday tasks or products, therefore requiring his partner to laugh at him (along with the audience) and come along to save the day.		
Action Hero	When the world is being held to ransom by some Evil Villain, he is your man. Highly trained, the Action Hero is able to infiltrate any dangerous location in order to save the day.		
Evil Villain	This antagonist usually possesses slightly different goals to that of normal people; the Evil Villain is bent on world domination at any cost.		

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Stereotype	Description	Symbolic codes	Sound codes
Father Figure	The Father Figure appears in family situations and is used for many purposes. As he is older, he can be called upon to give fatherly advice to his children or those he cares about. This advice usually revolves around life lessons or problems that another character is facing. The Father Figure, however, is also usually quite set in his ways, which can be used to create much tension within a story.		
Nerd	The Nerd is the man who is interested in scientific, pop culture or computer pursuits, bordering on an obsession. His mind is a complex and powerful aspect of his character, often allowing him to understand the intricacies of complex ideas and stories. He has an appreciation for all things that are clever, intelligent and non-physical, as the Nerd usually lacks the coordination or the physique, not to mention interest, to participate in contact sports, or any sports for that matter.		

TABLE 1.1 Male stereotypes

Representations of women

When we watch, engage and listen to the media we are constantly faced with portrayals of women. They are 'representations' of women and not the women themselves.

Throughout history the portrayal of women in the media has changed to reflect changing attitudes in society. The representation of women in the media is different in different cultures and countries, depending on what the particular society's values are.

Real women are also 'represented' in the media, such as celebrities and politicians. Although these women are not characters (fictional representations), when we see, hear and read about them we are only even getting a small part of the information about them.

In advertising, women are used to market products that are perceived to be interesting to them and certain values and stereotypes are shown in these advertisements. Cleaning products and cosmetics are some such products. In these ads we sometimes see the woman depicted as the person who cleans the house or the bathroom and feels under pressure to do so, as some sections of society assume that homes are predominately cleaned and maintained by women.

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FIGURE 1.11 Both vintage and modern advertisements often feature depictions of women cleaning.

ACTIVITY 1.12

1 Can you find a household cleaning product ad for men, using a man as the main character?
2 If so, describe how it differs from the ads with women.

Cosmetics ads use attractive women to encourage their audience to buy cosmetics by supporting the value that women should be beautiful and young-looking, and if they are not, they are less valued in society. The advertisers infer through their attractive characters (sometimes well-known celebrities, which tends to add another level of authenticity to their statements) that their products will make the people who buy them look/feel this way.



FIGURE 1.12 Advertisements for cosmetics products usually feature models or endorsements by celebrities.

Also we 'see' only what the author of the media product wishes us to see. In a newspaper we might see an unflattering photograph of a celebrity combined with a caption (text) that infers that she is not as attractive as normal or that her life is out of control because she is not maintaining the façade of beauty.

As such, simplified representations of women abound. Media producers and authors often use stereotypes of women to position them within a product and to influence the audience's reading of them. Depending on the nature of the media product, these representations, like those of men, can be positive as well as negative.

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ACTIVITY 1.13

Using the same technique as earlier, work in a team to deconstruct the following stereotypes of women.

Stereo-type	Description	Symbolic codes	Sound codes
Housewife	The Housewife is rarely seen outside her territory: the home, the supermarket, the school. She spends most of her time cooking and cleaning and maintaining a perfect home environment for her husband/children. She is always there to solve 'home' problems and provides hugs and support for family members.	*She wears dresses and pale colours and drives family vehicles such as station wagons and vans. She wears a wedding ring and gets her hair done professionally.*	*The Housewife talks a lot about her kids and her house and she is surrounded by the noise of gossiping neighbours and a happy-go-lucky soundtrack that suggests happiness.*
Single Lady	The Single Lady is looking for a man to settle down with, and her biological clock is ticking so she is also looking for a man to start a family with. Her friends are mostly partnered up and are starting families and look at her with sympathy for her plight. She is often fixed up on blind dates, or her life is a series of false starts with unsuitable suitors.		
Working Mother	The Working Mother has to balance her home life and work life and she is constantly torn between the two worlds. Usually she needs to pretend at work that her family life does not exist to be taken seriously by male co-workers. She is often challenged by her work for not showing enough commitment and by her family/children/husband for not putting in enough time in the home.		
Powerful Woman	As opposed to the Working Mother, the Powerful Woman has little or no family to speak of. She dresses for business and means what she says. She often takes on masculine characteristics and is expected to be less emotional than other women. She needs to be twice as good as any man at her job/work/role to get respect. She is often shot with a low angle to demonstrate her power. She is rarely the romantic lead as this would involve showing emotion.		

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Stereo-type	Description	Symbolic codes	Sound codes
Female Superhero	Like most superheroes she spends half her time as a normal member of society with a job/family/life and then the rest of her time fighting crime/saving the world etc. Few people know her secret identity and the Female Superhero is usually one of a group of superheroes. She is seen to be fragile and in need of protection in her normal life by her friends/family/boyfriend who don't know who she is. Most superheroes are given one special power above their usual extra strength and speed and agility.		
Queen Bee	The Queen Bee is the leader of her group of popular and wicked friends in a school or workplace setting. She has gained her position of power through taking other people down. She is usually dating an attractive male character who is also the dominant character in his group. She is superficial and judges people on their outward appearance and economic status. Her 'friends' are close to her because they want to become her/take her place when she falls down the social ladder, or because they are scared of her.		
Girl Next Door	The Girl Next Door has spent her life being 'friends' with people. She is friendly and reliable and helps out with babysitting and homework. She has friendships with boys and girls but is not seen as a love interest. She is usually plain looking and has a transformation into a beauty after taking off her glasses.		
Damsel in Distress	The Damsel is constantly getting herself into trouble and needs someone else to help her out. She is very feminine and girly and inexperienced with the world – she constantly needs saving.		

TABLE 1.2 Female stereotypes

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ACTIVITY 1.14

Find at least four representations of different women and then discuss the representations created. You can look at advertising, the news, websites, comic books, movies, etc.

For example, you could look for:

- a mother
- a woman in a position of power
- a female superhero
- a young girl/child.

Where did you find the representations?

How old are they?

What are they saying about women?

1 Compare the images and discuss each shot's angles, framing and colour. Are they negative stereotypes? What is your understanding about these women?

2 Present your images to the class, and ask them to briefly interpret the images before you discuss your own findings.

1.5 Construction and interpretation of representations

The construction and interpretation of representations depends heavily upon time and place. To determine the role and position of characters within a traditional three-act Hollywood **narrative** we draw on cultural and historical understandings that have developed over time. The development of media institutions like film and television have coincided with the tumultuous events of the 20th and 21st centuries. Since the popularisation of cinema, the globe has experienced two world wars, the invention and use of nuclear weapons, space travel and the internet. The media has the power to reflect and represent interpretations of seismic shifts occurring within society. The 1967 film *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* (dir. Stanley Kramer), a love story between a black man and white woman, tackled race relations in America at a time when the American civil rights movement was in the midst of its arguably most violent and chaotic period.

narrative story structure

However, two years later, the same nation transcended what was thought humanly possible when Neil Armstrong was the first human to walk on the moon in 1969. Billions around the globe crowded around television sets to see his first steps. Films like *The Deer Hunter* (1978, dir. Michael Cimino), *Apocalypse Now* (1979, dir. Francis Ford Coppola) and *Platoon* (1986, dir. Oliver Stone) provoked national discussion within American and Australian society about their involvement in the Vietnam conflict (1954–75) and altered the way men and women were represented.

While iconic films such as *Puberty Blues* (1981, dir. Bruce Beresford) constructed an iconic representation of teenage life on Australia's beaches in the late 1970s, the growth of Australia's diverse migrant population that followed this era has been satirised and celebrated in television shows such as *Acropolis Now* (1989–92) and the more recent *The Family Law* (2016–), which employed varying degrees of positive and negative stereotypes.



FIGURE 1.13 The 1967 Hollywood film *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* reflected changes in American society at the time of production.

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protagonist the main character in a story or a play

antagonist a character opposed to the hero/main character/protagonist; usually a villain whose actions create the dramatic conflict and tension

Regardless of the era, film and television as well as many other media formats have represented people from an interpretation of the era in which it was created.

The most popular method of placing these representations in context, in cinema especially, came via the 'three-act narrative'. Typically, these types of films centre around a **protagonist** – the leading character or characters upon whom the story is focused. In the first act, we meet our characters, the setting in which we find them and the challenges they may face. In some cases, the protagonist encounters a crisis that he or she must resolve in the second act. The crisis is often created by the **antagonist**. The final act usually focuses on the resolution of the crisis created at the end of the first act.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Do media products reflect the times (social and historical context) in which they are produced?
2. What is a narrative?
3. In your favourite film or TV show, who is the protagonist? Who is the antagonist? Are there more than one of each?

ACTIVITY 1.15

Think about this idea for a film:

ACT 1: Introduction

Girl meets Boy. Girl is a genuine and honest character, but must pretend she is 'something she is not' to attract Boy. Girl and Boy fall in love.

ACT 2: Crisis

A 'Jealous Villain' disrupts the relationship and forces the two apart. 'Jealous Villain' threatens to reveal the truth. Girl tries unsuccessfully to win Boy back.

ACT 3: Resolution

Girl realises that honesty and truth are the only way to reignite the love with Boy. Through a series of well-planned actions, Girl proves her love to Boy and defeats 'Jealous Villain'.

You've seen it before, haven't you?

1. Research and identify three films you have seen that employed the formula mentioned above.
2. Explain how each film employs this method to follow, alter or subvert this 'three-act narrative' formula.
3. Assess how any or all of the stereotypes you found in Activity 1.11 and 1.13 fit into these narratives.

1.6 Representations of the male villain

Male representations of the Action Hero in stories like Batman, Superman, James Bond or Ip Man must defeat an Evil Villain to resolve this crisis to achieve their goals. This of course involves a series of high-intensity battles, outrageous physical feats and selfless sacrifice. Good must always triumph over evil.

The construction of the evil male villain has shifted dramatically over time. Historically, the male villain has been the representation of an outsider who does not fit into contemporary society: rogues, vengeful characters and misunderstood geniuses who have been wronged by the world. Friendless or surrounded by like-minded outcasts, the motivation of the male villain could be anything from Freddy Kruger's senseless violence to the calculating motivated supervillains of spy films like *Dr. No* (1962, dir. Terence Young). The male villain can threaten the happiness or even the life of the protagonist, or in the case of the Mastermind Villain the very existence of humanity. In the case of Christopher Nolan's Joker, they may wish to see the world burn!

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FIGURE 1.14 In action films like the James Bond series, the hero usually faces off against a supervillain character. Pictured left is Sean Connery as Bond and (right) Joseph Wiseman as Dr No in the first Bond film (1962).

ACTIVITY 1.16

1. Identify male villains from four films you have watched. What were their motivations?
2. There is often a connection between the antagonist's motivation to disrupt the protagonist and their exclusion from mainstream society. Describe how this is represented in each of your four characters through technical or symbolic codes.
3. Where and when were the films made? Discuss how this might have played a role in constructing the representation.

The Eurocentric view

So if the villain cannot fit into mainstream society, what exactly is mainstream society? If you examine Western and Hollywood cinema over the past century, it can be easily described as a **Eurocentric** version of what is safe and normal. Eurocentrism describes an old view of the world that considers predominantly Anglo-Saxon and European culture at the centre of the world and places everyone else as inferior.

Eurocentric reflecting a tendency to interpret the world in terms of European or Anglo-American values and experiences to the exclusion of a wider view of the world

AMAZING FACT

'Hollywood cinema' refers to the types of films made by the American film industry – the dominant form of mainstream fictional film in the world. 'Hollywood' is a location in Los Angeles, California, where film studios produce movies and other media.

This view is not exclusive to cinema. It is an attitude developed over centuries in European and Western cultures like the United States, England and Australia. Take the following excerpt from 'The White Man's Burden' by English writer Rudyard Kipling.

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Take up the White Man's burden –

Send forth the best ye breed –

Go send your sons to exile

To serve your captives' need

To wait in heavy harness

On fluttered folk and wild –

Your new-caught, sullen peoples,

Half-devil and half-child

Written in 1899, Kipling encouraged his fellow British to take on (what he believed to be) the noble and ultimately moral cause of civilising the rest of the world in the name of reshaping non-white cultures in the mould of Britain. While not specifically stated within his poem, Kipling represented an idea that non-white cultures needed to be saved from themselves and would only benefit from the introduction of European ideas, practices and technology. For example, when the British Empire began to establish itself in India during the 1700s, it attempted to enforce the mandatory teaching of English and encouraged the teaching of and conversion to Christianity in a country with thousands of years of Hindu and Islamic traditions. In this sense, it is often referred to as 'cultural imperialism': the act of one culture imposing its values, identity and practices on another.

The other

Kipling's view of non-Europeans is clear. Those 'half-devil, half-child' people of the uncivilised world were inferior and, thus, sat outside of the mainstream, civilised society – unless of course they were able to conform. Kipling's notion of this outsider creates an individual that is different, wild, untamed and out of step with the 'dominant' culture. This view is often used to cast the majority against the minority.

Western literature and cinema utilised this view to create the 'other' as a character who challenges the dominant and normal. For cinema in particular, the 'other' is a lesser person, something to be treated with scorn, suspicion, ridicule and fear. Using Kipling as a stepping stone, it may be someone who is of a different race, gender, culture, religion, social class, sexual orientation or nationality.

Consider the monster created by scientist Henry Frankenstein in the 1931 film version of the Mary Shelley book, *Frankenstein* (dir. James Whale). Obsessed with bringing the dead back to life, Dr Frankenstein wants to create life that can exist in his own subjective, Eurocentric view of what is normal and safe. In many ways, he is trying to impose a set of values upon a raw, uncivilised being. However, the monster the scientist creates is hideous and does not understand how to behave within the rules and boundaries of the society around him. Due to its inability to conform, Dr Frankenstein commits to destroying his monster. Desperate to survive, be loved and understand those around him, the monster accidentally kills a young girl, turning the local villagers against him, leading to his death. The monster's inability to meet the expectations of the dominant culture made him a focus of fear and ultimately an object of hatred.



FIGURE 1.15 The monster in *Frankenstein* (1931), played by Boris Karloff, is a well-known male villain.

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As *Frankenstein* shows, this role of the 'other' in Hollywood cinema was therefore often taken by the 'villain'. A film which plays on this idea is *Edward Scissorhands* (1990, dir. Tim Burton). In the film, Johnny Depp plays a creature who has, like Frankenstein's monster, been created by a scientist in his workshop. However, we quickly learn that Edward is kind-hearted and simply misunderstood. While Edward is initially accepted into the community because he is 'extraordinary', he quickly runs foul of the local community as his understanding of social and cultural norms is undeveloped. His communication is limited and is extremely awkward in large social gatherings. His hands make normal human functions difficult and dangerous.

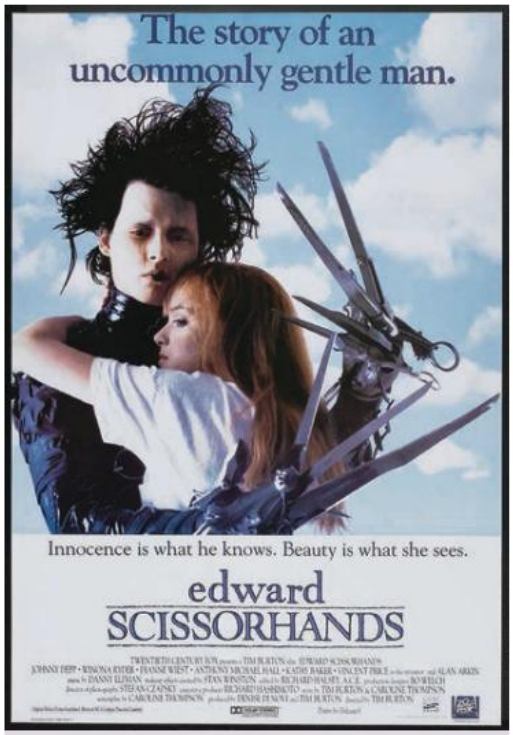


FIGURE 1.16 A poster for the movie *Edward Scissorhands* (1990)

Deconstructing the other

The film's poster (Figure 1.16) creates a strong contrast between normal society and Edward the 'other'. By examining and deconstructing the representations evident on the poster, we can see how the author of this image has been able to create this meaning. The symbolic code of costume has been used to place Edward as 'the other'. Wearing primarily black against the bright whites and blues of the background presents a dark contrast against the positive sentiment of bright blue sky. Stylised acting and make-up combine as Edward (Johnny Depp) casts his eyes downward, and furrows his brow in a concerned and troubled expression. His unkempt hair and patchwork costume creates the connotation that he does not conform to the normal American teen stereotype so heavily represented in the film. The scissors, of course, present a jarring image of a not only troubled but potentially dangerous character. Holding him closely is Kim (Winona Ryder), dressed in white t-shirt with rich red hues in her hair. The warm tones in her complexion contrast heavily with the pale white face of Edward. Clearly there is a deliberate attempt to use the symbolic code of colour to place Edward as the cold, colourless outsider.

Movie posters are created to promote a film to new audiences and they must express the ideas of the story in a simple way for the audience to understand. Therefore, simple common codes and conventions must be used to create meaning.

ACTIVITY 1.17

Collect examples of films that represent the outsider. Find the promotional posters of three and deconstruct the use of codes and conventions on each and present your findings to your class.

The villain and ethnicity

The identity of the 'other', like our decoding of representations, is heavily influenced by historical events. When you consider Kipling's interpretation, it is clear that non-Europeans can often be cast as the outsider.

In Hollywood cinema, the 'other' was often a reflection of a collective fear of those who appeared to challenge the dominant society. With the

FOCUS QUESTION

For what purpose might a media creator use the representation of the other/an outsider?

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development of media narrative forms like television and film, much of the 20th century was locked in a struggle of ideas. In 1917 the Russian Revolution saw the birth of Communism. Essentially a different way to structure a society and country, Communism sent shockwaves through the established European superpowers as it saw the poor challenge the rich. Soon after, the dictator Adolf Hitler and his far right Nazi Party rose to power with ideas of world domination and racial discrimination.

Communism and Nazism challenged the power of Eurocentric ideas. So what does this mean for representation? The other? Or even villains? Naturally, anyone who challenged the established order created by these Western, Eurocentric nations was seen as the other. Anything that threatened the values held by dominant Western cultures like the United States or Australia was seen as a threat, something to be feared and cast out.

The Nazi

In the 1940s the growth of far right-wing Fascist governments in Italy and Germany challenged the democratic freedom of American and European life. Nazi rule proposed **authoritarian** government control, the persecution of minorities and, ultimately, genocide. The devastation of World War II and the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime created an easy target for Hollywood cinema to vilify as the 'other'. Nazi ideology centred on the violent expansion of their territory and way of life and, thus, threatened the freedom and existence of Eurocentric and American ideas.

authoritarian demanding that people obey completely and refusing to allow them freedom to act as they wish



FIGURE 1.17 The poster for *Casablanca* (1942). In the film, made during World War II, Major Heinrich Strasser (Conrad Veidt; pictured top right) is established as one of Hollywood's first onscreen Nazi villains.

For Western societies like America, the German national obsession with an authoritarian leader such as Adolf Hitler sat in great conflict with the established egalitarian values of democracy. The war was so great that over 16 million young American men were committed to fight in the conflict while those at home were mobilised to work and contribute to the war effort. In American, European and Australian history, the fight against Nazi Germany remains as one of the greatest and most violent struggles of ideas in human history and, as such, the role of the Nazi German as the villain holds great currency in the collective memory of many nations.

As early as 1942's *Casablanca* (dir. Michael Curtiz) the Nazi German soldiers occupying defeated French territory in Morocco were cast as the villains attempting to dominate and destroy the happiness of the main characters. Presented in imposing and intimidating uniforms, the 'jackbooted' Nazi German features heavily as an object to be feared and despised. From the ignorant but dangerous characters in the Three Stooges' *You Nazty Spy* (1940, dir. Jules White) to the sly, sadistic and dangerous Arnold Ernst Toht (Ronald Lacey) in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981, dir. Steven Spielberg), the Nazi German was consistently utilised as a past and present threat to normal society. In *American Beauty* (1999, dir. Sam Mendes), there are no Nazi characters; however, the villainous representation of the angry and abusive father of the teenage love interest Ricky (Wes Bentley) is symbolised by the father's collection of Nazi memorabilia.

Even with the threat of Nazi domination as a thing of the past, these villains returned from the dead as merciless, flesh-eating zombies in 2009's Norwegian film *Dead Snow* (dir. Tommy Wirkola).

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ACTIVITY 1.18

Examine the image here from the film *Dead Snow*. Explain the combination of symbolic and technical codes that create this villain:

1 Discuss the use of:
   - symbols
   - camera
   - acting
   - costume.
2 Explain how the author has employed selection and omission to create the representation.
3 Clarify how this representation reflects stereotypes of Nazi villains.



FIGURE 1.18 A depiction of a Nazi zombie from the Norwegian movie *Dead Snow* (2009)

The construction of the Nazi representation is reinforced by symbolic codes. The swastika, the national symbol of Nazi Germany, is ever present on the arm of the villain. The cold, emotionless Nazi has no empathy for the protagonist and is bent on the destruction of dominant Western culture and values. For Western audiences, the representation of the villainous Nazi is so frequent in cinematic history that it is almost synonymous with their understanding of the 'other'; although, given the defeat of Germany at the conclusion of World War II, the Nazi is often viewed from a position of safety for audiences. However, the emergence of a new global superpower in 1945 created an even more enduring villain to fear in Western cinema.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 How have media creators historically represented the Nazis in media products?
2 Is this an extension of the representation of the other/outsider?

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CASE STUDY 1.1

Arnold Ernst Toht: *Raiders of the Lost Ark*

Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981, dir. Steven Spielberg) gave cinema one of the most lasting visions of the villainous Nazi in Arnold Ernst Toht. Acting as a roadblock between Indiana Jones and his quest to recover a lost relic, Toht epitomised a number of common conventions for villains. He appears, regardless of the scorching heat or freezing snow, in crisp tie and white shirt with a black trench coat and wide brim hat, a nod to the feared Nazi secret police, the Gestapo. Behind the wireframe glasses, Toht is emotionless, sadistic and willing to endure pain to reach his own goals. In order to record the location of the Lost Ark, Toht forces his hand into a fire to retrieve a medallion and burns its markings into his own hand. When talking to those around him, he appears to be perspiring and impatient. Toht is not a character who is aware of or cares about others. His lack of humanity is only emphasised by the bold and moral decisions of the hero, Indiana Jones. Toht, like so many other representations of Nazi 'henchmen', provides us with a clear example of the dehumanising effect Western cinema has had on the representation of Nazis.



FIGURE 1.19 Major Arnold Toht (played by Ronald Lacey) in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*

CASE STUDY 1.2

Hitler: *Downfall*

Paradoxically, the most famous of all Nazi villains, Adolf Hitler, is rarely incorporated into the construction of these representations. Perhaps it is due to his distinctive appearance that is at odds with the typical representation of a physically imposing Nazi villain. One exception to this rule is the 1940 comedy by Charles Chaplin, *The Great Dictator*.

Hitler was and remains an instantly recognisable figure in any representation of World War II. In the 2004 German film *Downfall* (dir. Oliver Hirschbiegel), Hitler was seen as a shivering, shattered and hunched-over shell of a human, a weak character who had lost control over his once vast empire. Gone were the common tropes of the perfectly pressed military uniform with its signature swastika across the upper arm seen in other, older representations.



FIGURE 1.20 Bruno Ganz as Adolf Hitler in the 2004 German film *Downfall*

This construction of Hitler was articulated by an emaciated figure who appeared cold and draped in an oversized winter army jacket. The manic discipline of the Nazi villain is all but absent. In this instance, the location where the representation was constructed is crucial. German authors *and* audiences approach such representations from a vastly different standpoint to those in Western cinema. Having reconciled their own past, this German representation of Hitler (created 70 years after his death) as a frail, imperfect and ultimately human villain highlights the importance of understanding the time and place in the construction and deconstruction of representations.

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ACTIVITY 1.19

1 Find as many representations of Nazis as you can. They have been used in cinema, television and other media forms like **propaganda** posters and comic books and graphic novels.

2 Choose four and deconstruct their representation using:
- symbolic codes
- written codes
- technical codes.

3 For each representation, explain how the codes work together to define the character as a villain or an other.

propaganda information or media messages used to promote a political cause or point of view

The Communist

Just as cold and emotionless as their Nazi counterparts, the representation of Russian Communists in American popular culture has endured well beyond the collapse of Communism in 1991. What started as the idea of a group of workers and thinkers for the radical restructure of Russian society generated an enduring image of a worthy and sustainable adversary for Hollywood. The end of World War II in 1945 saw the emergence of two superpowers: the democratic and capitalist United States and Communist Russia. In what essentially boiled down to two versions of what normal and safe society should be, the two nations faced off in a Cold War for the better part of 45 years, with developments in nuclear weaponry leading to a period of significant global tension.

The expansion of American products and consumerism was reflected in Russian government propaganda which constantly referred to the American 'capitalist pig', while Western pop culture developed an almost fanatical hatred of the Communist. Supported by decades of anti-Communist messages from the media, politicians and education, the Russian Communist was easily cast as the villain in countless representations. Fit, dressed in black or military garb, he carried a thick accent that mocked the complexities of the English language. The Communist was a battle-hardened villain who reflected a Western perception of a cold and emotionless life within Communist society. Unlike the defeated Nazi, fear of Russian villains lasted up to and well beyond Communism's collapse in Eastern Europe in 1991. This villain was typified not only by the standard measures of evil, but also by his genius, cunning and physical prowess.

As the Cold War raged, so did Hollywood's incarnation of the Communist villain. While the USA waged war across Vietnam against a Russian-backed force, the image of a ruthless and merciless Vietnamese foe drove countless American heroes like John Wayne, Chuck Norris and Rambo to defend American democracy against fictitious heartless killers. The Russian Communist was caricatured with a bulging chest, waistline and cold expression all pressed into a military uniform. 1984's *Red Dawn* (dir. John Milius) typified this Cold War fear of the Communist villain, as Russian forces invade a small American town.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 Are Communists still represented as the outsider/other?
2 Create a list of the most recent examples from the last five years.
3 Explain the purpose of each Communist villain in each media product.

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ACTIVITY 1.20

1 Examine this image from the film *Red Dawn*.
2 Explain how the image employs symbolism to cast the Russian Communists as the villains.



FIGURE 1.21 A still from *Red Dawn* (1984)

CASE STUDY 1.3

Boris Badenov: the fool

As with the Nazis at the height of World War II, the Communist villain was often a target of ridicule and derision at the peak of Cold War tensions in the 1960s. Boris Badenov, the 'world's greatest no-goodnik', consistently attempted to thwart the noble efforts of cartoon characters Rocky the Squirrel and Bullwinkle the Moose in the American cartoon *Rocky and Bullwinkle* (1959–64). Short, rotund, dressed in the symbolic code of black and deathly pale, Boris constantly rubbed his hands together as he planned his next attempt at killing 'moose and squirrel'. In a nod to American perceptions of Communist Russia, Boris took orders from the rarely sighted 'Fearless Leader'. While Boris was never a genuine threat to the heroes, his constant desire to pursue crime and chaos, as articulated in his comically broken English, made him a villain to be mocked, rather than feared.



FIGURE 1.22 Villains Boris Badenov and Natasha Fatale attempting to kill the heroes of *Rocky and Bullwinkle*

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General Orlov: the Cold War villain

The trials and tribulations of British spy James Bond were often a manifestation of Cold War fears as the hero was invariably pitted against a non-European, Russian or quasi Communist supervillain bent on the destruction of the world. 1983's *Octopussy* (dir. John Glen) pitted Bond (Roger Moore) against a snarling Russian, General Orlov (Steven Berkoff), who had gone 'rogue' from his own Communist state. A character that is intertwined with criminal behaviour and a megalomaniac complex, Orlov is seen wearing Russian military garb and draped in symbolic medals and commendations. Clearly a competent leader, Orlov presents a capable and aggressive challenge to Bond. Wild-eyed and imposing, the maverick villain represented a Cold War fear of the Russian state and the perceived chaos taking place behind its borders. Representations like Orlov were common throughout the Cold War and symbolised a constructed reality of the Russian military.



FIGURE 1.23 General Orlov (Steven Berkoff) at the end of *Octopussy*

Ivan Drago: the inhuman monster

Few villains better personified the American perception of the 'evil empire' of Communist Russia than Ivan Drago, Rocky Balboa's rival in *Rocky IV* (1985, dir. Sylvester Stallone). Drago (Dolph Lundgren) is a character who, on appearances, is more machine than human, a boxer with a 100–1 record and a decorated military past. One montage sequence in particular casts Drago as the undefeatable construction of Communist Russia. Seen training for his next fight, Drago trains in a white and red Communist government tracksuit, measured and monitored by Russian military advisors and a series of computers. Drago is presented as a carefully crafted machine, built for fighting. Later in the film, Drago is seen to be given 'injections' to help him defeat the hero, Rocky (Sylvester Stallone). The square-jawed Drago is rarely fazed by the world around him, glistening with sweat and ready for battle, constantly snarling on his singular mission to be the world champion. The inhuman villain is of course in stark contrast to the hero Rocky Balboa, a perennial underdog who represents the American dream of the self-made champion. The construction of Drago represented a fictional frontier of Cold War conflict. A 'machine' built by the Russian government, Drago had no motivation beyond the defeat of Balboa.



FIGURE 1.24 Ivan Drago (Dolph Lundgren), villain of the boxing film *Rocky IV*

Hans Gruber: the terrorist

Representation of the Communist villain managed to predict and eventually transcend the fall of Communism

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in Europe. In *Die Hard* (1988, dir. John McTiernan), Hans Gruber (Alan Rickman) leads a band of East German Communists in a terrorist raid on a corporate Christmas party in a Los Angeles high-rise. While the raid is supposedly part of Gruber's ideological goal of punishing corporate greed, it masks a more devious attempt at the theft of millions of dollars from the corporation. The subtext of Gruber's flawed and devious ideology highlights a growing American sense of superiority over what was, at the time, a crumbling Russian and East German state. Gruber himself is cold, calculating, immaculately dressed and a clear representation of the dangerous and highly capable Communist villain. Sinister, non-diegetic audio codes are present in his low, slow and calculated vocal inflections as he intimidates his victims. Backed by equally fit, well-dressed and highly trained terrorists, Gruber seems impervious in his quest to steal millions; however, he is challenged by one man, a lone policeman, John McLaine (Bruce Willis), who fights against the odds to thwart Gruber.



FIGURE 1.25 Villain Hans Gruber (Alan Rickman) in *Die Hard*

Ivan Vanko: the unhinged criminal

While the *Iron Man* franchise does depart from the idea of an underdog hero fighting against villainy, Ivan Vanko (Mickey Rourke) in *Iron Man 2* (2010, dir. Jon Favreau) certainly represents the old-world fear of Communism and the new-world perception of the chaos that followed its demise. Rather than draw on ideological motivations, Vanko, who grew up in a poor family, is merely a product of his environment as his origin story states he was sent to Siberia, the Russian 'outback', for perceived crimes. With a rugged exterior, prison tattoos and unkempt hair, Vanko's representation plays on the notion of the untrustworthy and vengeful Russian in a new historical context. Despite the distance between Russia and its Communist past, Vanko's red clothing is a clear reference to the historically symbolic power of the colour red in Communist history.



FIGURE 1.26 Ivan Vanko (Mickey Rourke) in *Iron Man 2*

ANALYSIS

1. Find and examine audiovisual clips of all five villains mentioned above. For each villain, explain how codes and conventions have been employed to convey meaning:
   - sound codes
   - technical codes
   - symbolic codes
   - written codes.
2. Distinguish which representations you believe to be the most and least realistic. What reasons can you give for your response?
3. Explain the consistent themes found within each villain.

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The changing face of 'the other'

As we have learned throughout this chapter, historical events have played a significant role in the shaping of villains. An audience's understanding of a media product depends heavily on both the representations constructed by the product's author, and the understanding, position and prior knowledge of the audience. The author has the power to cast the lion as the villain; however, in a short period of time the author can create a new representation that highlights the former villain as the hero.

As Kipling articulated earlier in this chapter, Eurocentric views and events played a significant role in the construction and interpretation of 'the other'. Anyone unable to conform, like Frankenstein's monster or Edward Scissorhands, is cast as an outsider to be feared, derided and defeated. However, as the world has become increasingly interconnected in the post-World War II era, many of these perceptions of the other have been challenged and reconstructed.

CASE STUDY 1.4

Fu Manchu (1929)

Fu Manchu was a frequent representation of evil genius. Originally a feature of novels, Fu became the focus of a number of films in the 1920s that reflected a simplified and negative stereotype of Chinese people. Fu used murder, deception, secrecy and poisons to achieve his goals:

> Imagine a person, tall, lean and feline, high-shouldered, with a brow like Shakespeare and a face like Satan, ... one giant intellect, with all the resources of science past and present ... Imagine that awful being, and you have a mental picture of Dr. Fu-Manchu, the yellow peril incarnate in one man.
>
> – *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu*, Sax Rohmer

In 1931, the Chinese embassy in America complained to the US government that the representation of Fu in films like *The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu* (1929, dir. Rowland V Lee), and Chinese people as a result, was negative and racist.

However, as China's place in the world changed, negative representations of Chinese men began to appear less and less in popular media. While many would argue that this was replaced by simplistic representations of Chinese men with martial arts skills, the manifestation of the Chinese as the sum of American fears has decreased.

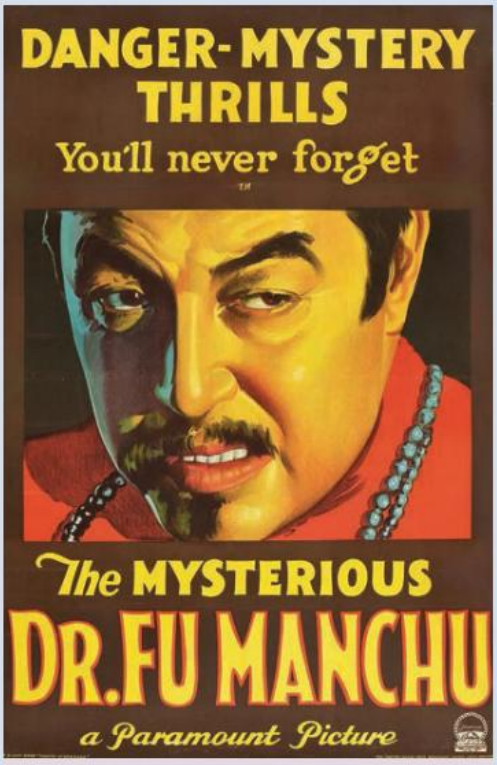


FIGURE 1.27 Movie poster for *The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu* (1929)

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CASE STUDY 1.5

***Red Dawn* (2012)**

Since the dark days of Fu Manchu, a lot has changed in the relationship between Hollywood and China. A political and economic heavyweight, China now stands globally as an important trading partner for the USA and a major consumer of Hollywood and American television productions. Naturally, the prevalence of negative stereotypes of Chinese people, especially as villains, has decreased to some extent in line with the growing importance of China to the rest of the world. A more recent example of this shift is evident in *The Martian* (2015, dir. Ridley Scott) where the Chinese government comes to the aid of NASA to save a stranded American astronaut. However, a more cynical view would draw the obvious connection between financial concerns and the construction of representations. In essence, some media producers are now steering away from using some nationalities as villains to avoid insulting a large group of potential customers.

Take the 2012 remake of the film *Red Dawn* (dir. Dan Bradley). As we found out earlier, the 1984 version of the film, created in the midst of Cold War tensions between America and Russia, did not shy away from negative stereotypes of Russians. However, when the producers of the remake were adding the final touches to the film, which featured the Chinese army invading America, concerns over the possible poor reception it would receive in China led the the post-production digital alteration of every Chinese emblem, logo and flag in the film to that of North Korea, which in 2012 posed significantly less of a threat to the film's success. Arguably, the producers of the film were motivated by the financial impact such a negative representation of the villain would have, rather than any moral or ethical concern.

The obvious question is, who can Hollywood cast as the villain now?



FIGURE 1.28 Jed Eckert (Chris Hemsworth) fighting North Korean troops in the 2012 version of *Red Dawn*

CASE STUDY 1.6

***American Sniper* (2015)**

As we have seen throughout this chapter, historical events have often shaped the representation of the villain in popular Western media. In the history of America, there are few events more significant than the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. While not directly referenced in the film *American Sniper* (2015, dir. Clint Eastwood), the event played a significant role in the creation of the Arabic villain in modern media. This is not necessarily a new concept in Hollywood cinema. In 1985's *Back to the Future* (dir. Robert Zemeckis), Marty McFly (Michael J Fox) was chased by a rabid group of machine-gun wielding Libyans and in countless other features the Arab has been depicted as a terrorist, a religious fanatic or a devious oil baron. In his book *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, Dr Jack Shaheen analysed the representation of Arab people in over 1000 films. Shaheen found that 932 depicted Arabs in a stereotypical or negative



FIGURE 1.29 Chris Kyle (Bradley Cooper) in *American Sniper*

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light and only 12 had a positive depiction. Unfortunately, America's two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in the past 20 years have breathed new life into the Arabic villain stereotype.

In Clint Eastwood's 2015 depiction of American military sniper Chris Kyle (played by Bradley Cooper), he creates what some have argued was an 'Us vs Them' narrative and, in turn, continues the trend of negative representations of Arabic people and culture in mainstream Hollywood cinema. In one scene, Kyle is seen to shoot a young child as he attempts to throw a grenade at American soldiers. After the child is shot, his mother runs to his side, and rather than grieving for her child, she picks up the grenade and attempts to throw it again. She too is shot by Kyle. Eastwood then cuts to a flashback of Kyle shooting his first deer as a child. The symbolic comparison between Arabic people and barbaric and animalistic behaviour is repeated throughout the film. Most of Kyle's victims are faceless Arabic men; however, the villain he battles against is known only as Mustapha, or 'The Butcher', who kills Americans and Iraqis alike in order to achieve his ends. The film was heavily criticised by groups such as the American-Arab Anti Discrimination Committee for its singular depiction of Arabs as the 'other' and its Eurocentric view that justified Kyle's quest to protect his family and pursue victory for the American forces. What makes this film different, in comparison to previous representations of villains in American cinema, is that the image of the villain – 'The Butcher' – is blended with an entire community of people. In one scene, when Kyle is talking to a superior officer, he hears that 'The city has been evacuated. Any military age man who is still here is here to kill you.' In this sense, the representation of the villain has come to include almost any non-American male character within the entire film.

ANALYSIS

1 Find and examine audiovisual clips of all the villains mentioned above. For each villain, explain how codes and conventions have been employed to convey meaning:
   - sound codes
   - technical codes
   - symbolic codes
   - written codes.
2 Distinguish which representation you believe to be the most and least realistic. What reasons can you give for your response?
3 Explain the consistent themes found within each villain.

Villains in gaming

FOCUS QUESTION

Is the villain or antagonist in your favourite movie or TV show a stereotyped representation?

Any discussion of ethnic stereotypes in modern media production is not complete without examining the role they have played in the construction of reality in gaming. As an industry, since 2016 gaming has generated over $94 billion dollars in revenue per year. The gaming industry is quickly overtaking the size and influence of cinema and television not only in America, but globally as well. 2010's *Call of Duty: Black Ops* took over $650 million in its first five days of sale, which set a new record for the sale of any game, film or book in the same time period.



FIGURE 1.30 The loading screen of an online game in the *Call of Duty* series

With the development of video gaming has come the inclusion of dense narratives, complex representations of fantasy worlds, as well as those based in reality or a perceived version of real life. Major action films share a lot in common with violent gaming. They follow a common narrative of good vs evil, a hero against a villain. First person shooter games are notorious for their depiction of a one-man army against the enemy hordes standing in the way of the hero and the salvation of the world.

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The world of gaming, much like that of television and cinema, draws from a wide and diverse set of narratives; however, some of the most popular games have drawn from history to represent villains. *The Call of Duty* series has constructed a number of 'near future' narratives that cast Russian and former Communist villains as devious, barbaric monsters who are bent on the destruction of America. Characters such as Vladimir Makarov, Nokita Dragovich or Imran Zakhaev all present the challenge for the player to overcome.

Take Imran Zakhaev in *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* (2007). In one cut scene from the game, he announces his intention, which in many cases outstrips a direct stereotype created in Hollywood cinema:

> Our so-called leaders prostituted us to the West … destroyed our culture … our economies … our honor. Our blood has been spilled on our soil. My blood … on their hands. They are the invaders. All U.S. and British forces will leave Russia immediately … or suffer the consequences.

Despite the fictitious scenarios of the game, it creates a clear reference to events of the past to create the representation of reality within the game. Zakhaev is a former Russian arms dealer, criminal and leader of an 'Ultranationalist' party in Russia whose plan is to return his nation to its 'former glory'. The employment of Cold War history, codes and conventions are obvious. The role of the player is to attack Zakhaev's army and ultimately kill the villain himself. Gaming's growth in popularity can be linked with technological advancements as its representation of reality has gradually improved in quality. The common pursuit of such villains in countless games therefore creates a common perception of good and evil. The connection between playing such violent games and the impact on players will be explored later in this book.

FOCUS QUESTION

Is the villain or antagonist in your favourite video game a stereotyped representation?

ACTIVITY 1.21

Examine the construction of the following game villains:

- **Nikita Dragovic** – *Call of Duty: Black Ops* (2010)
- **Vladimir Makarov** – *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3* (2011)
- **Pagan Min** – *Far Cry 4* (2014)
- **Shao Khan** – *Mortal Kombat* series
- **Kane** – *Command and Conquer* series
- **M Bison** – *Street Fighter* series

For each villain, complete the following:

1. Describe the construction of the villain using technical codes.
2. Identify what symbolic codes are present.
3. Discuss how written and sound codes have been employed to support the representation.
4. How realistic is the representation? Interpret if it borrows from historical events or merely suggests a connection between the villain and his nationality.

1.7 Changing representations of women

Background

As you saw earlier in this chapter, the construction and interpretation of a representation depends heavily on the values of the author and the society that created it. Since the birth of the feminist movement in the 1960s, the argument towards the representation of women in **mass media** has been clear: 'It matters who makes it'.

mass media media forms that reach large numbers of people

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The argument then concludes that, in the construction of countless representations in the history of popular media, those who 'make it' are usually men. This section of Chapter 1 will explore the consequences of such an idea. When drawing comparisons to that of men, the role of women in media, the workplace and society is one that is fraught with imbalance. Since the fight for the right to vote by the Suffragettes in the late 19th century in America, Britain and Australia, women have striven for equality and acceptance in what is perceived by many to be a male-dominated or 'patriarchal' society. These societal structures have affected the lives of women since the dawn of civilisation; however, the nature of such structures has come into sharp focus in recent years and this chapter will highlight the challenges, implications and role of media representations of women.



FIGURE 1.31 Women's Suffrage march in New York in the 19th century

The damsel in distress

In the 1933 incarnation of *King Kong* (dir. Merian C Cooper), Ann Darrow (Fay Wray) was the helpless victim of the monstrous King Kong. A larger-than-life gorilla, captured from an exotic jungle in Africa, is brought to America by an opportunistic filmmaker. Kong turns rogue and terrorises the city of New York. Darrow becomes the object of affection for the confused ape and, helpless as she is, Darrow becomes Kong's captive. Darrow is represented as a woman incapable of saving herself, and she becomes what countless representations have reproduced across the long history of mass media: a damsel in distress. No monster movie was complete without one. They were the objects of desire that needed to be obtained by the villains of the story. The damsel is always beautiful, helpless and at the mercy of villainous men. Only heroic men can resolve the damsel's dilemma. Screaming and wailing, Darrow is rescued by a man, John Driscoll (Bruce Cabot), a love interest who states in the film 'women just can't help being a bother'.



FIGURE 1.32 Kong holding the heroine played by Fay Wray in *King Kong* (1933)

The history of the damsel in distress is essential to understand how media representations of women have evolved over time. Not limited to 'monster' films, women have often played a secondary role to men in media products, whether they be literature, film, television or current incarnations in video games. Most great narratives are driven by a protagonist, a character whose actions drive the story forward. In traditional Western media products these roles were often played by men. Women were thus relegated to a secondary, supporting role. Women were, apart from being evaluated for their beauty, essentially helpless without a dependable male present, portrayed as childlike, vulnerable and innocent. Essentially, the damsel in distress represents a depiction of women created by patriarchal men who saw the value of women as second-class citizens; an object of desire that was incapable of determining its own fate.

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ACTIVITY 1.22

1 Examine this promotional image from the 1933 film *King Kong*.
2 Explain how codes have been used to make the female character appear 'in distress' in relation to the male one.



FIGURE 1.33 A promotional image for the movie *King Kong* (1933)

deconstructed simplified or stripped back; reduced

The notion of women as weak and incapable characters in fictional media products has no doubt experienced challenges in the past few decades. The work of feminist movements and media producers of all genders have worked to destabilise this pattern of female objectification. However, it does not take long to find examples in contemporary media that support the idea that women are seen to be objects that are **deconstructed** and valued not for their character, resilience, intelligence or talent, but only their beauty.



FIGURE 1.34 Male passersby watch a billboard advertisement being erected above the Winter Garden Theatre and Cafe Zanzibar, New York, 1944

Many media commentators have argued that women have been deconstructed into objects.

Representations of legs, thighs, bodies or faces are elements of a human's body, rather than that of a complete human being. Across contemporary media you can and will find countless examples where women are objectified and broken into parts, rather than a whole. The overt sexualisation of women in media has led to a distorted representation of the role of women in society. Over time, this has created challenges for societies looking to introduce new representations of women in the media and for the means by which women see themselves in the mass media.

Consider the impact the media has on young and impressionable audiences. A 2008 study of female leads in G-rated films, those targeted at children, found that nearly all leading female characters were valued for their appearance and were focused on winning the love of the lead male character. Clearly, female representations have long been controlled and constructed by those with the power to create them.

FOCUS QUESTION

Why might the deconstruction of representations of women in the media be a problem?

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'It matters who makes it'

A 2011 San Diego State University study found that women made up only 18% of the producers, directors, writers, cinematographers and editors of the top 250 grossing films of that year. Women have made significant inroads in the media industry; however, the limited impact on a male-dominated industry has been difficult to ignore. A French study carried out in 2000 found that, due to the higher than normal representation of women employed in the French news media, there was 5–9% more coverage of issues that directly affected women. Other regions around the world, with lower numbers of women employed in the news media, fared much worse. Over the last two decades, audiences have been inundated with superhero films based on male comic book heroes. By 2016, only two of those films were directed by women.

Clearly, women have not had the opportunity to author enough work to address this imbalance in the representation of women. As authors, women have the ability to present and represent an authentic version of themselves. San Diego State University communications professor Martha Lauzen states that when women have more powerful and influential roles in creating media products, the audience get 'more powerful female characters on screen, women who are more real and multi-dimensional'.

It hasn't always been this way. In the 1920s when the American film industry was in its infancy, there were more female directors and screenwriters than there were male. However, as the industry and other media forms like advertising, radio, print and television became more profitable and those who held much of the power in the media industry learned the selling power of sex, women were objectified more often.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Why does it matter 'who makes it'? Do you agree/disagree?
2. Is the writer/director/producer of your favourite movie or TV show male or female? What impact might this have had?

Fifty years of mass media later, a University of Illinois study by JC McNeil in 1975 examined the role of women in television sitcoms, dramas and soap operas. McNeil found there were seven characteristics that dominated the representation of women on television at the time:

JC MCNEIL'S WOMEN IN MEDIA

- Female characters are fewer in number and less central to the plot.
- Marriage and parenthood are considered more important to a woman's life than to a man's life.
- Television portrays the traditional division of labour in marriage.
- Employed women are shown in traditionally female occupations, as subordinates to men and with little status or power.
- TV-women are more personally and less professionally oriented than TV-men.
- Female characters are more passive than male characters.
- Television dramatic programming ignored the existence of the women's movement.

The representation of women in the media, in 1975, was clearly defined by those who authored it. Overwhelmingly, it was men. As McNeil found, women were consistently represented as secondary characters to their more driven male counterparts.

So what has changed since 1975? A little and a lot. It depends on what you're watching. A number of strong female-driven narratives like Lena Dunham's *Girls* (2012–) have brought a definitive focus back on the authenticity of women creating their own representations. However, when director Joss Whedon, author of the cult hit *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003), was once questioned why he writes narratives with so many strong female characters, he responded: 'Because you're still asking me that question'.



FIGURE 1.35 Series creator Lena Dunham (second from right) and the other lead actors of the *Girls* cast

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Women in advertising

Since the birth of advertising, those doing the selling have looked for every angle possible to reach their buyers. The sexualisation of women's bodies became a strong focus of advertisers during the 1950s and 60s. Many would argue that little has changed; however, it was the growth of the idea of the 'nuclear family' that not only stereotyped the role of women in society but cemented patriarchal views of the roles of men and women in Western society.

After the end of World War II in 1945, much of the Western world experienced strong economic growth, which led to an increase in the manufacturing and purchasing of consumer goods. The dark old days of rationing during the war were over and Americans, as well as Australians, were now concerned with the idea that the accumulation of wealth and material possessions led to happiness. Suburbs grew out of the major cities and a developing middle class had new expectations about what constituted a life well lived. In order to reach the goals of a house, a car, a smiling spouse and happy, well-adjusted children, there had to be order within society and this was reflected in the notion of the nuclear family. Conservative politicians and community leaders believed that a stable family unit was one of the cornerstones of a successful Western democracy, and for this family unit to be successful, each member of the family needed to conform to specified roles.

The husband's role was to work and provide for his family. The wife's role was to remain at home, keep it clean and tidy, cook for the family and raise the children. As such, it was common for advertisers of what was an exploding market in home consumer goods, like washing machines and domestic cleaning products, to represent women in these roles.

In this family unit, the father was the dominant authority, as represented by the TV show *Father Knows Best* (1954–60). Programs such as this promoted the values of a happy, nuclear family as the mother and father worked together to raise and educate their children; however, gender roles were reinforced as the son 'Bud' was consistently encouraged to pursue more masculine tasks like carpentry and the daughter 'Betty' was encouraged to do more feminine tasks like cleaning, especially for her brother. Within this show the representation of female characters simply served to reinforce the idea that women played secondary roles to men within the nuclear family.

ACTIVITY 1.23

Closely examine this cast photo, deconstruct the image and write down what you see.

Selection and omission

- Identify what has been included within this image and what you think has been left out.
- Explain why you think these decisions were made.

Technical codes

- Describe how the characters have been positioned within the shot.
- Assess whether there is a hierarchy of importance and deduce what this suggests about family roles.



FIGURE 1.36 A still from the television show *Father Knows Best* (1954–60)

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Symbolic codes

- Examine the clothing and facial expressions of the characters.
- Assess what this suggests about the family.

Realism

- Assess whether this image is realistic.
- Does it reflect a reality of a time past or present or both? Explain your answer.

CASE STUDY 1.7

Bewitched

Bewitched (1964–72) was a situation comedy that reflected the values of a nuclear family from the 1950s. It featured a newlywed couple, Darrin (Dick York, later replaced by Dick Sargent) and Samantha (Elizabeth Montgomery), who are attempting to establish their own nuclear family in the mould of so many who came before them. Darrin works for an advertising agency and Samantha remains at home, keeping the house clean and managing her meddling mother, Endora (Agnes Moorehead). The twist, that Samantha is actually a witch with magic powers, enabled the comedy to examine the roles of men and women in the nuclear family. In the first episode 'I Darrin, take this witch, Samantha', Darrin discovers that his new bride has magic powers and, uniquely, the power to clean the house instantly with a wiggle of her nose. After some soul searching, Darrin decides that he can accept that his new bride has magic powers, however, he requests that she must not use her magic powers and be a regular housewife. Samantha dutifully agrees. Throughout the series, Darrin, while something of a bumbling fool, is routinely present in a pressed suit with perfectly groomed hair. Samantha's magical abilities and great insights are undeniable; however, she conforms to her duty and routinely appears in a dress and pearls, the picture of composure and perfection.



FIGURE 1.37 A still from the television program *Bewitched* (1964–72)

Analysis

1 Examine this image carefully and note down all of the **denotative** elements you can see.

2 Answer the following questions:

- Do you consider this image to be realistic? Explain why/why not.
- What does it suggest that society in the 1960s saw as important within a family structure? Discuss, referring to the image.

denotative the basic objects, people and things you see in the image, not the meaning that is attached to them

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ACTIVITY 1.24

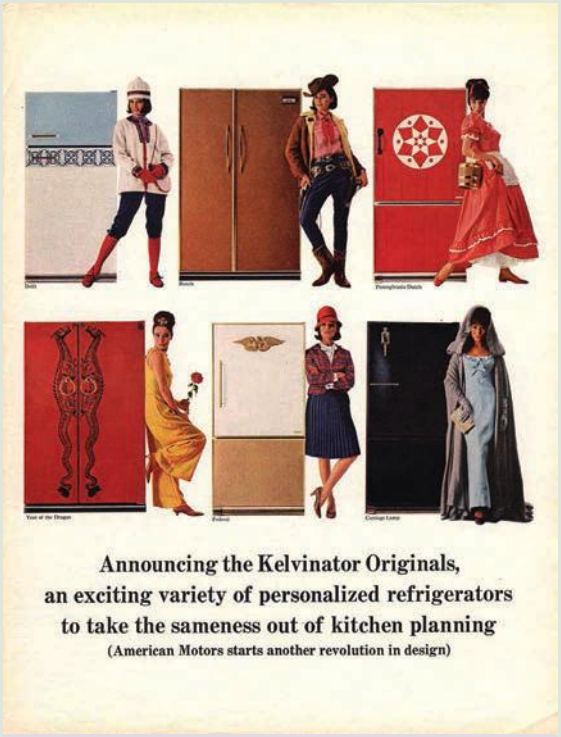


FIGURE 1.38 An advertisement for Kelvinator fridges from the 1960s



FIGURE 1.39 A 1950 advertisement for Squirt Soda



FIGURE 1.40 A print advertisement for Puritan Soap, 1953



FIGURE 1.41 A 1954 advertisement for Lux washing liquid

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For each of the images, examine their denotative and connotative content.

1 Identify all of the denotative elements that you can identify within the image.
2 What are the connotations of these images? Explain each as best you can.

Codes and conventions have been used to represent women within these images:

3 Explain how technical, written and symbolic codes have been employed.
4 Assess whether this representation would be considered realistic today. What reasons do you give for your response?
5 Interpret what it suggests about the author's view of women and their role in society.



FIGURE 1.42 Poster for the Hollywood comedy *Who was that Lady?* from 1960

The male gaze

Film theorist Laura Mulvey wrote in 1975 that women in film are typically the objects rather than the possessors of the 'gaze' that is used to analyse visual culture. Put simply, Mulvey believed that men were the primary producers of media at that time in history, in control of the camera and therefore the perspective that tells the story. In her essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', the 'male gaze' assumes that men are the watchers and women are the watched in popular media. The theory was initially applied to film; however, it can be transplanted and applied wherever males can or could be found as the primary producer of the content, such as advertising, television and fine arts.

If you carefully examine the representation of women in contemporary advertising, popular cinema, gaming or music videos, it does not take long to find examples of the male gaze. Advertising has a longer history with this than most. The male gaze has married the idea that if you use women to sell a product, you can also sell an idea that gets the girl. Or, buy a product so women can be the girl that gets the ideal man. The male gaze forces female audiences to view themselves through the eyes of the men who created the representation. Either way, women are turned into commodities that help get a product sold.

If you look back across the five images from the previous activity, you will be able to apply Mulvey's theory quite easily. The poster for the movie *Who was that Lady?* is a perfect example. The advertisement features a woman's body, with the face obscured by a curtain. The two male characters appear to be looking at the woman, while the tagline literally mentions 'leering' – meaning to look at someone in a sexually interested way. The title of the film also suggests that the identity of the woman should be determined by her physical features.

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ACTIVITY 1.25

1 Look over the images from the previous activity and apply your understanding.
2 Does the male gaze change the way the advertisement represents your original understanding? Explain your response to each image.

With this in mind, it is worth considering how women challenge this representation and the influence it has on other representations. Later in this chapter you will examine the role the male gaze has played not only in representations of women, but how it has impacted the way in which identity and self is constructed with new media technologies. However, one way to determine the influence of the male gaze over a representation is to conduct the Bechdel test.

The Bechdel test

The Bechdel test was developed in 1985 by cartoonist Alison Bechdel in an attempt to draw attention to gender equality in fictional cinema, and it can be applied to almost any feature film. To pass the test a film must have the following characteristics.

THE BECHDEL TEST

1 Two female characters
2 Who talk to each other
3 About something that is not a man



FIGURE 1.43 Cartoonist Alison Bechdel created the Bechdel test in 1985.

While it appears simple, almost half of the top 100 grossing films from 2015 failed the test. When you examine the films that failed, the reasons can be surprising. Some only had one female character, thus making it impossible to have a conversation with another woman, while others failed because, despite there being a number of named women in the script, they only ever discussed the men within the story. Cinema producers may argue that films that contain mostly male casts that have women in secondary roles, especially in blockbuster action films, are more likely to make money at the box office or that there is a limited number of women in writing, producing and directing roles in the Hollywood system compared to men. However, in the top 10 highest grossing films of 2015, only one failed the test – but 2015 was the exception that proved the rule. Why then, do so many films that fail the test get made?

The test was originally designed to examine film; however, you can look to other media forms for a challenge to the existing order of media production. Action and superhero films have often been guilty of not only failing the test but for having a firmly fixed male gaze. However, examples in popular television have emerged that not

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only pass the test but subvert the traditional male-oriented structure of media narratives we have examined in this chapter.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What is the Bechdel test?
2. Does your favourite movie or TV show pass the test?

2016's Netflix show *Luke Cage* featured an inner-city vigilante with supernatural powers. While the story is focused specifically on a male character, it is the relationships between the female characters of the series that highlight what you may not have noticed after so many years of male-dominated narratives. Misty Knight (Simone Missick), the lead detective on the trail of Cage (Mike Colter) and his enemies, is a clearly defined, talented and capable character. A key moment in her story arc appears late in the series when a new station chief, her superior, also a woman, is appointed and the two clash over her investigation techniques. None of the female characters are sexualised or objectified by the camera and the show seamlessly avoids classic superhero and police drama tropes by placing women like Misty Knight in roles that are fundamental to the plot. While it is a great step forward, superhero narratives still have a lot to answer for.

Gender in contemporary media

Women make up half of the population and thus half of the media audience. However, the male dominance of the creation of media products leads us to clear conclusions on how women are so disproportionately represented, at least in modern cinema. It is important that you carefully examine the role of these representations on the creation of identity. The prevalence of women in media products as secondary, overtly sexualised and objectified characters has a potentially negative impact on the positive intentions men and women usually have for themselves.

As recently as 2016, an Australian motor vehicle repair chain was using highly sexualised images of women in an attempt to advertise its service. One ad in particular drew the ire of the Australian Advertising Standards Bureau (ASB): it depicted two 'attractive' women who sat in a car that had broken down on a train track crossing, seemingly unaware that a train was approaching. The two women do not speak, nor do they seem to be aware of how or why the car has broken down. The ASB deemed the ad demeaning to women (which forced the advertiser to withdraw the commercial), stating:

> However the board considered that the women [were] depicted as unintelligent in the way in which they [sat] passively, with blank faces, in the car on the train tracks and also in the way they [appeared] to not notice the oncoming train.
>
> This behaviour, in the board's view, [made] the women appear unintelligent and [presented] them in a stereotypical helpless female situation.
>
> In the board's view, the depiction of the women's reaction to their situation is a negative depiction of women and does amount to vilification of women.
>
> **Source:** Advertising Standards Bureau website, Advertising Standards Board Case Report 10/2/2016

ACTIVITY 1.26

1. Clarify what the ASB is or does.
2. Explain its role within the Australian media landscape.
3. Carefully examine the guidelines the ASB has on the representation of gender. Summarise any broader reasons you can find that explain the ASB's reaction to the commercial mentioned in the above section on gender in contemporary media.

Can women be heroes?

Since 2000, there has been an influx of superhero films in popular cinema. No matter the incarnation, origin story or reboot, the superhero has been the dominant force on screens for a decade or more. While the comic book universe is vast and, in many cases, a champion of women and strong, complex female representations, its popular cinema incarnations rarely feature women in such roles.

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While Lois Lane is a fierce and unrelenting reporter and Jane Foster is a brilliant scientist, they invariably end up as a swooning prop in the arms of a dependable male hero. Those women with superpowers who are depicted in positions of strength, such as Catwoman, Electra, Silk Spectre or Black Widow, often appear in tight, revealing outfits that are unrealistic when considering the bold action they engage in. Black leather catsuits are incompatible with agility. Many of these female characters use their beauty as a weapon and, as such, are valued by the author of the media product, not for their ability, but for their allure within the male gaze. Unlike their male superhero counterparts, they are not allowed to exist exclusive of their looks – in fact, they are often defined by their looks.

ACTIVITY 1.27

1. Examine the use of costume in this image from the film *Suicide Squad*.
2. Assess the role played by costume in the construction and reading of the Harley Quinn character.



FIGURE 1.44 Deadshot (Will Smith) and Harley Quinn (Margot Robbie) in *Suicide Squad* (2016)

2016's *Suicide Squad* (dir. David Ayer) is one such film that came under specific scrutiny for its representation of Harley Quinn (played by Margot Robbie), a psychiatrist turned psycho. Her normal persona, the straight-laced and conservative doctor, Harleen Quinzel, is replaced by a racier alter ego – Harley Quinn. Not only is this identity created by a seemingly inferior male character, The Joker (Jared Leto), but her previous professional attire is replaced with skimpy shorts and pig tails.



FIGURE 1.45 Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence) in *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 2* (2015)

The media is full of complex, well-developed female characters; however, it is easy to understand why they rarely appear in major superhero narratives when female audiences made up less than 42% of the top grossing superhero film of 2015: *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (dir. Joss Whedon). This statistic is a pattern that had been set by the two previous hits, *Guardians of the Galaxy* in 2014 (dir. James Gunn) and *Iron Man 3* in 2013 (dir. Shane Black). However, in 2015, women made up 51% of the total audiences in American cinemas.

Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence) in the *Hunger Games* series is one character that breaks this pattern. Not only

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were the series of books and films popular globally, they fit well into the special-effects driven, action film genre that has long been dominated by superhero films. Katniss is the lead character in the series. She is complex, courageous and conflicted. The series' directors did not sexualise the appearance of her character, nor did they cast a man in a role written for a woman. Katniss is a character who is admired for her physical skill and leadership qualities. However successful the series (it made $4 billion globally), these strong female characters appear to be the exception rather than the rule. Research in 2015 by the University of Southern California showed that in the 100 highest grossing movies from 2007 to 2014, just 30% of roles were played by women.

CASE STUDY 1.8

Female heroes

Closely research and examine the representation of the following female characters. You will need to examine the visual representations but also their role within the plot of the film/TV show.

Break into groups and choose one character to examine. For each character you must:

1 Examine the construction and representation of each image. Define it by the:
   - **a** Selection and omission
   - **b** Codes and conventions
   - **c** Denotation and connotation
   - **d** Has the representation been defined by the male gaze? Why/why not?

2 Explain the role of the character within the film/TV show by answering the following questions.
   - **a** Do they act as the protagonist? Describe how this character is motivated.
   - **b** What role do they play in resolving that narrative?
   - **c** Are they reliant on any male characters?
   - **d** Are there other female characters within the film? What role do they play?
   - **e** Does it pass the Bechdel test?



FIGURE 1.46 Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) in *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977, dir. George Lucas)

Princess Leia Organa – *Star Wars: Episode IV: A New Hope* (1977)

A leader of her people, Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) is a dominant character in the science fiction series *Star Wars*. As a strident revolutionary, Leia risks her life to steal the plans of the evil empire to build a deadly weapon of mass destruction. Insistent on leading her own escape from the villain Darth Vader (voiced by James Earl Jones), she comes into personal conflict with her rescuer Han Solo (Harrison Ford) over her assertive personality traits.



FIGURE 1.47 Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) in *Alien* (1979, dir. Ridley Scott)

Ripley – *Alien* (1979)

Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) leads a dramatic battle against an alien life form in deep space. As Ripley and her fellow crew members investigate a distress signal from a deserted planet, a mysterious life form enters their ship. One by one the alien attacks the crew and Ripley is left to lead them to safety. Clear and direct, Ripley is able to command the authority of her team in the face of impossible odds.

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Clarice Starling – *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991)

A rookie FBI detective on the trail of a serial killer, Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster) must employ the assistance of jailed psychopath Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins). Using her own physical and mental fortitude, Starling faces a race against time to stop the killer, Buffalo Bill (Ted Levine), from striking again.



FIGURE 1.48 Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster) in a publicity still for *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991, dir. Jonathan Demme)

Leslie Knope – *Parks and Recreation* – TV series (2009–15)

An earnest and enthusiastic public servant, Leslie Knope (Amy Poehler) leads the Parks and Recreation department of a small town called Pawnee. She begins the series as a mid-level bureaucrat, but as her confidence grows, so does her standing within the town. All of her heroes are women as she seeks to inspire her co-workers to higher goals.



FIGURE 1.49 Leslie Knope (Amy Poehler) – the central character in *Parks and Recreation* (2009–15)

Liz Lemon – *Thirty Rock* – TV series (2006–13)

Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) is the creator and producer on a fictional TV show called the *The Girly Show* when it is bought by a major TV network and renamed *TGS with Tracey Jordan* when a male network executive hires a male comedian to head its cast. Juggling the demands of a high stress occupation, a dysfunctional boss and personal life, Liz pursues the dream of 'having it all': money, family and happiness.



FIGURE 1.50 Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) in the TV show, *Thirty Rock* (2006–13)

Jessica Jones – *Jessica Jones* – TV series (2015–)

A private detective with superpowers, Jessica Jones (Krysten Ritter) fights battles for her clients, as well as against her tormentor, Kilgrave (David Tennant). Suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, which she appears to be self-medicating with alcohol, Jones has only a small circle of friends as she attempts to reconcile events of her past with her future.



FIGURE 1.51 Krysten Ritter plays the title character in *Jessica Jones*.

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Imperator Furiosa – *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015)

On the run from the film's villain Imortan Joe (Hugh Keays-Byrne), Furiosa (Charlize Theron) is a talented driver, an intelligent fighter and a survivor. Teamed with Max (Tom Hardy), she endeavours to rescue Joe's 'Five Wives' and take them to safety, across a barren wasteland. Pursued by an army of War Boys, Furiosa must endure physical and mental trials to achieve her goal.



FIGURE 1.52 Imperator Furiosa (Charlize Theron) from the *Mad Max*: *Fury Road* movie (2015, dir. George Miller)

Rey – *Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens* (2015)

Rey (Daisy Ridley) is a scavenger on a desert planet who dreams of finding her family, who apparently abandoned her as a child. Rey is pulled into the galactic conflict between the Resistance and the First Order when she meets a droid named BB-8 and a former Stormtrooper, Finn (John Boyega). Plucky and resourceful, Rey proves to be a talented starship pilot and has a mysterious connection to the Force – an energy field which gives Jedi warriors their power.



FIGURE 1.53 Rey (Daisy Ridley) with BB-8 in *Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens*

Wonder Woman – *Wonder Woman* (2017)

Diana (Gal Gadot), princess of the Amazons, was a highly trained warrior. When a pilot crashes and tells of conflict in the outside world, she leaves home to fight a war to end all wars, discovering her full powers and true destiny as the superheroine Wonder Woman.



FIGURE 1.54 Gal Gadot as the title character in *Wonder Woman* (2017)

Arya Stark – *Game of Thrones* – TV series (2011–18)

Arya Stark (Maisie Williams) is the youngest daughter of Eddard 'Ned' Stark (Sean Bean), a noble lord in the medieval setting of Westeros. While her older sister Sansa obediently follows the structured life of a noblewoman, learning to sew and act like a proper lady, Arya craves a life of adventure and action.



FIGURE 1.55 Arya Stark (Maisie Williams) in *Game of Thrones* (2011–18)

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Later in this chapter, you will closely examine the role these representations have had on the construction of identity for women, as well as men. It is essential to recognise the role various authors have played in constructing the codes and conventions that audiences have come to recognise, accept and employ in their decoding of media messages. With what you have learned here, it is simple to discern the role men have played in constructing recognisable representations of women. However, you must also accept that the media has some power in influencing its audience and, as such, it has the power to dictate how we, the audience, construct our own identity now that we have the means to do so.

1.8 Representations of identity and self

The ability to author representations is no longer the sole domain of a few media creators, as new technologies like smartphones, digital cameras and editing apps have given the power to create representations to the audience. The creation of identity by contemporary audiences has led to the reinvention of pre-existing ideas of stereotypes and values; however, many challenges still remain in constructing reality.

The 'selfie' of the smartphone era has redefined some of the values considered important within contemporary society. Millions of self-portraits are taken everywhere around the globe every day. From the mirror to famous landmarks or at significant events, millions of images are taken that have helped redefine what the audience and author consider to be important in a photograph. The author creating these images has presented a version of themselves to be shared with an audience. Within that, there is a version of reality that the author wishes to convey. In this reality, what is it that they consider important? The location or event? That they are popular, happy or otherwise? Or is it that the individual author is represented in it?



FIGURE 1.56 Millions of selfies are taken each day, with people depicting themselves reaching a milestone, expressing a mood, showing that they visited a landmark, or even meeting a celebrity. The craze has even hit the animal kingdom – here is a selfie a female macaque took after stealing a camera in Indonesia in 2011.

An author has the power to create a representation of themselves and their identity through careful selection, omission and the use of codes and conventions.

Celebrities and professional athletes rely on social media to build their own personal brand to sell an image to their fans and audiences. However, individuals now have the same power to present an idea of their ideal or 'true' self to their friends and followers. Within this, audiences now have the power to reflect what they value as true or important.

Recently, a major cosmetics brand asked teenage girls to take selfies with their mothers to discuss the role of beauty in contemporary society. The advertising campaign not only discussed beauty but attempted to examine the role digital media had in creating a 'true' representation of beauty for teenage girls. The girls were encouraged to take self-portraits that reflected their true selves, not those doctored, edited or cropped to represent a version they believed fit into society's existing value of beauty, and to celebrate this representation of

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their identity. While the advertisement for a cosmetics company was attempting to change the definition of beauty, it still upheld a decades-old value, consistent in advertising to women, that beauty is important.

Social media and the 'selfie' has the ability to create a representation for an audience of friends and followers that reflects our true identity, but also to potentially redefine how society understands and defines reality.

Digital technology is the essential element of this process of representation. Prior to smartphones and high-speed internet, most representations were created by large media corporations and governments, who had a vested interest in presenting ideas that were commercially or politically useful to those who constructed them. However, now that the audience has full control over how we are represented, it has created a huge shift away from the homogeneous stereotypes found in popular media representations like film and television.



ACTIVITY 1.28

The creation of representations is now in the hands of the social media audience. Odds are that you have one or more social media accounts that share images, videos and thoughts. All of these play a role in constructing the way your friends and followers understand, perceive and react to the identity you have created using these media tools.

1. What ideas do you place in your own self-portraits? Summarise the key themes – for example, friends, travel, wealth, beauty.
2. Are these representations a true reflection of reality? Why/why not? Explain your answer.
3. Explain the role you have in defining the reality that others see of you.
4. Discuss how you think traditional forms of representation have influenced the way you represent yourself.

Celebrities on social media are followed by millions of people. For example, Selena Gomez had over 122 million Instagram followers in 2017. With one photo, she can reach an audience larger than most media industry professionals can dream of. Ordinary users do not have the same audience; however, the speed with which they create, generate and distribute their own content means that millions, if not billions, have the capacity to craft their own representations.

Identity and realism

Digital technologies and social media platforms allow us to create candid and unrefined representations of our lives. As authors, we have the ability to craft and construct a reality we want our audience to see and perceive as true. It is sometimes difficult for audiences to interpret and determine the level of realism they see in social media, as it is not always bound by the codes and conventions of traditional media like film, television and advertising. In a cinema, an audience understands that it must 'suspend its disbelief' as an action hero hangs from a helicopter by one hand while shooting at villains in slow motion. We understand this is not necessarily a realistic reflection of reality; however, we are familiar with the conventions of these films and their characters and accept that the impossible is always possible in traditional action films.

However, on social media platforms, the audience's ability to determine realism can be more challenging. If the representation does not come from a film or television studio, audiences do not always have the familiar understandings that years of television and film viewing have developed. The author, on the other hand, has an endless variety of video, photographic, sound and editing tools to construct any version of reality they wish. The author may not be understood to be an actor at all and, thus, can present a version of reality that is as carefully crafted as any created in a major Hollywood studio.

A number of celebrities have become famous simply from the use of social media. In 2015, an Australian Instagram model cancelled her photo-sharing account in protest against the dishonest nature of the platform. After claiming that each shot posted often took 50 or more takes to perfect, which meant that it did not reflect the candid reality it claimed to represent, the account was deleted. What do you see as the challenge for audiences in determining realism in social media representations?

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ACTIVITY 1.29

Authors have the power to construct a realistic representation of themselves using technical, symbolic, written and sound codes.

Your task is to construct multiple versions of your own reality at school.

1 Using your phone or a digital camera, consider how you can construct the following realities:

- **a** a sports champion
- **b** a rebellious student
- **c** a model student
- **d** a wealthy student
- **e** a popular student.

2 Demonstrate your understanding of technical, symbolic, written and sound codes through your five different representations.

ACTIVITY 1.30

Class debate

1 Through your exploration of the world of representation and what you now understand about the construction and values that they contain, in a short written report respond to the following statement:

> 'There's nothing wrong with how men and women are represented in the media as they merely reflect reality.'

2 Think about the various representations of men and women that were explored and assess the following points.

- Do you believe that these provided a positive reflection of both genders or did they seem to focus on the negative stereotypical aspects?
- Do you agree with the stereotypes? Do you believe that the media has enough power over audiences and society for this to matter?
- What is reality? Is it such a problem if we see these representations, because viewers understand how they are constructed?
- Do they actually reflect reality and are we just being too sensitive about ourselves?
- Use examples from media products and real life to support your stance on the topic.

Whether or not you agree or disagree, you will no doubt be reflecting on the nature in which the media reflects our world and whether or not it shapes the world more than we believe. Good luck!

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CHAPTER REVIEW

Summing it all up

Reading representations is a complex business. From the very moment of its construction, a representation is embedded with the codes and common conventions that explain their meaning. However, this meaning can be heavily influenced by the time and place of their construction. As you can see across the chapter, the key socio-political events of the 20th century had an enormous influence over the construction of representations in popular media forms. The representations of gender were subject to societal and cultural influences that changed over time. As we have moved into the 21st century, the way audiences consume and create their own representations of reality has shifted dramatically. However, you are now an active participant in the creation of meaning and will be able to play a larger role in the development of codes and the creation of representations.

Revision questions

1 Are representations reality? Or are they a construction of reality?
2 Explain the process or 'life cycle' of a representation.
3 What is the purpose of selection and omission?
4 How do codes help construct representations?
5 Explain the role of realism in representations.
6 What is a stereotype and why are they commonly used in representations?
7 Using examples, explain how events of the 20th century created representations of 'the other'.
8 Using examples, explain how events of the 20th century created representations of women.
9 Explain how an evolving society and audience expectations have changed the representation of women in some media products.
10 Explain how the realism of representations has been affected by the evolution of technology and audience participation.
11 Explain the role of realism and representations in the creation of self and identity.

Practice assessment questions

1 Using examples, define how an author's intention for a representation can be significantly altered by an audience member.
2 Using examples, define how one representation has been created and read by the society it was created within.
3 Gender roles have shifted and swayed over time. Explain how codes and conventions have been used to position men and women in different positions within the societies in which they were represented.
4 Outsiders and 'the other' have played an important role in media products. Using examples, explain how the authors of dominant societies have used media codes and stereotypes to position audiences to fear and ridicule outsiders.
5 How has the history of male and female representation influenced the construction of self?

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CHAPTER 2 AREA OF STUDY 2

MEDIA FORMS IN PRODUCTION

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

— Ansel Adams

OVERVIEW

Now it's your turn to create a representation. As a creator you must conceive your idea and follow it through all stages of production to distribution – where your audience will consume your product. Your goal is to employ the ideas and skills of constructing a representation that will be consumed by an audience that will, in some shape or form, have a reaction to your representation of reality.

In this chapter, you will learn the skills required to effectively participate in the creation of a media product. While the process may at first appear overwhelming, take your time to appreciate the nature of collaborative media production and, most of all, have fun!

FIGURE 2.1 (above): American actress Robin Givens (centre) preparing to film a driving sequence with members of the crew on *A Rage in Harlem* (1991, dir. Bill Duke)

OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to use the media production process to design, produce and evaluate media representations for specified audiences in a range of media forms.

To achieve this outcome, the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the characteristics of specific media audiences and how productions can be designed and produced to engage these audiences
- stages in the media production process including pre-production, production and post-production
- media pre-production, production and post-production techniques to represent ideas and achieve particular effects
- media codes and conventions used to construct meaning in media products
- media technologies used to produce representations in a range of media forms
- the characteristics of a range of media representations in media forms
- media production language appropriate to the design, production and evaluation of media representations in a range of media forms.

KEY SKILLS

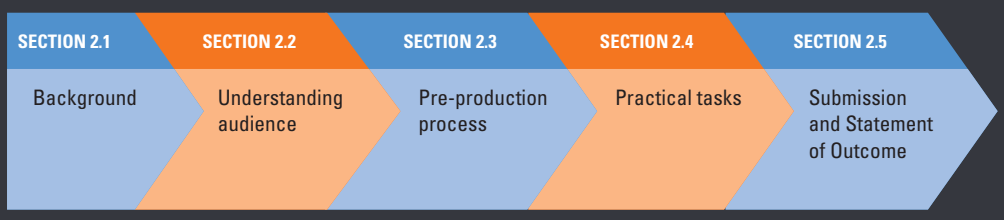
- describe the characteristics of specific media audiences and explain how productions can be designed and produced to engage audiences
- use media pre-production, production and post-production techniques and processes
- research and apply media design and production techniques to represent ideas and achieve particular effects
- apply media codes and conventions to construct meaning in media products
- operate media technologies to produce representations in a range of media forms
- evaluate the characteristics of a range of media representations in media forms
- use media language appropriate to the design, production and evaluation of media representations in a range of media forms.

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KEY TERMS

- research
- media product
- audience
- surveys
- media diaries
- synopsis
- statement of intention
- statement of outcome
- short forms

WHAT'S AHEAD



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2.1 Background

It's time to create your own representations. As you have seen over the unit so far, the audience decodes and applies meaning to stories based on established codes and conventions. However, the form that representation takes has changed over time and, as such, there are multiple ways in which to create the same media product. Planning a media production takes time, effort and careful planning. The better you employ this time, the better your product will be, regardless of its shape and form.

Your new knowledge will equip you to approach the production of a media product with some confidence. A broad understanding of how representations are constructed using codes and conventions like camera and editing techniques or symbolic codes, will help you prepare clear and decodable characters for fictional narrative tasks. A clear understanding of audience behaviour in historical and contemporary societies will help you not only design a task for a specific audience's interests, but also for their cultural and historical reading of that product. Your understanding of recent developments in digital technologies, including online and mobile platforms, will inform how you structure your product and how, where and when audiences will consume your product.



FIGURE 2.2 Planning and preparation are important before you pick up a device.

You will work in a range of media forms. To represent your knowledge of both representation in media forms as well as the impact digital technology has had on the creation of identity and self, you should look to create a media product in more than one format.

Before you pick up a device to start your project, you must plan and prepare effectively. No great product happens by accident. Once given your assessment task, you should work with your team to conceptualise what it is you want to make. This can be a difficult process that does not necessarily have one specific method that will guarantee a fantastic idea. Work with your team and teacher to determine the best way to create an idea that meets the requirements of the task. What *must* be clear, however, is who your audience will be. If you have a clear idea of the people who will consume your product, you will soon have a much better idea of how to make it.

2.2 Understanding audience

There is no such thing as 'one audience'. When a large number of individuals enter a cinema to see the same film, they bring a wide range of interests, personal experiences and cultural influences. They may have different motivations for seeing that same film and may also have entirely different readings and reactions to what appears on screen. The same can be said for any media form and you must be clear on the specific audience member you want to target. It is too simplistic to see 'teenagers' or 'adults' as a single audience. You would know that while teens and adults are often attracted to similar styles of media products, you only need to look around your own classroom to see that not all 'teenagers' are the same. As such, you need to dig deeper into your target audience and find out more about what they want so that you can tailor your media product to them.

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ACTIVITY 2.1

Research task: survey your target audience

The easiest way to find out what your audience wants can be to ask them. Surveys can be conducted including a variety of questions, not just about what media product your audience wants, but also how they want it, when and in what form. You can conduct these in person, or create an online survey that can be shared and turned into data.



FIGURE 2.3 Surveys are a great way to learn about your target audience.

Once you have a basic idea for your product, a survey that asks questions on that topic will help identify the specific needs of your audience. You need to think about the styles, topics, genres or production techniques that your audience will enjoy. What times do they consume them? Where is the most likely location for that to take place? Do they watch alone or in groups? You need to think broadly about the topics you will cover. Try to avoid open-ended questions that will give your responses too many variables. It will be an important part of your planning to reflect on your findings and show how you acted upon them in production.

Task: representations of teenagers

- Idea: Opening sequence to a teen horror film, introducing four characters

Sample survey questions

	Questions	Response
1	How old are you?	**a** 14–19 **b** 20–25 **c** 26–30
2	What technology do you use normally to watch horror films?	**a** my home TV **b** a laptop **c** my phone **d** a cinema
3	Who do you watch horror movies with?	**a** I watch them alone **b** with friends **c** with my parents **d** my partner
4	What is your favourite element of horror films?	**a** being scared **b** gore and violence **c** the comedic parts **d** guessing who will survive
5	What horror movie settings frighten you the most?	**a** a haunted house **b** a dark forest **c** an abandoned hospital **d** a VCE Media classroom

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ACTIVITY 2.2

Research task: ask your audience to create 'media diaries'

Identify a small group of people in your target audience and ask them to complete a diary of their media usage over a day or even a week. Your participants should record all media they consume, when they do so and what device they use.



FIGURE 2.4 A media diary is a record of all media consumed.

For example, the diaries of working adults with school-aged children may show that they engage with television news and social media for only a short period of time in the morning. However, their consumption of social media, television and film increases later in the evening as their children go to bed. If the diaries show a shared interest in escapist fantasy dramas about dragons and improbable plot twists, you may be directed to include more of these elements in your product to ensure you capture their interest and engagement. However, if you are aiming to target the same audience with a piece of news media, you may need to consider how to make it short, digestible and instantly engaging to secure their attention in the early morning.

What you should notice is a relationship between the styles of media consumption in which your audience share an interest. Once you can identify shared interests between how and what media they consume, and for how long, you can begin to tailor your product to them.

Sample diary

Galen Erso

Engineer

45 years old

Date: May 7th, 2018

Morning

Media form: smartphone, TV, radio

Content consumed: social media news feeds, videos, TV chat show, radio weather update

Time spent with media: 30 minutes

Afternoon

Media form: smartphone, laptop, radio

Content consumed: emails, text messages, video calls, radio talk back

Time spent with media: 2–3 hours

Evening:

Media form: TV, laptop

Content consumed: science fiction TV series, space exploration blogs

Time spent with media: 2 hours

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ACTIVITY 2.3

Research task: create a model audience member

To determine who you want to make your media product for, you could also create a model audience member. This will help you identify a more specific idea about who your audience will be and how this information will help you plan and produce it.

Your aim is to create a written profile of a character, generally of the age group you intend to target. It might help to go back to Chapter 1, and examine the stereotypes of gender and select one. Once you do this, you can expand on their interests in fashion, music and film, for example. Explain their outlook on the world, where they live, their social and cultural background, what they do for a living and how this influences the way in which they consume different media forms.

Audience profile examples:

Greta is 24 and lives in a share house in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, Australia. She wears black and only drinks ethically sourced, single-origin coffee from the charity-run coffee store at the end of her street. Greta rides to her work as a graphic designer each day as she believes in sustainable forms of transportation. She has tried the paleo diet and she still prefers all her almonds to be activated. While Greta dislikes the negative elements of social media, she still maintains an active Facebook and Instagram account to record breakfast, lunch and dinner meals and locations with friends. However, it is the only way she is in contact with friends as she never uses text or email functions. Rarely, if ever, would Greta watch commercial television as she prefers to source her entertainment via her laptop; however, she is partial to strong female leads in Nordic noir television serials found on independent media outlets. She shuns popular cinema as she feels one superhero film was enough.



FIGURE 2.5 Greta

Elizabetha lives in a five-bedroom house near the beach in the southern suburbs of Melbourne, Australia. She is 55 and a lover of travel, Parisian fashion, exotic jewellery and lunch with her friends. She is well travelled and revels in shopping abroad but is too suspicious of internet scams to ever consider shopping online. She accesses most of her entertainment via her television at home and a new tablet device on which her grandson downloads all of her entertainment. Elizabetha is learning to use the camera on her new device to record videos of her dog 'Tiddles' and store images of her grandchildren. Elizabetha is considering attending a course at the local library on digital photography and has already bought several photography magazines to provide further inspiration. When lunching with girlfriends she revels in fine foods and local society gossip. Elizabetha loves watching any film based around a Jane Austen novel and feels modern cinema has become too vulgar and violent.



FIGURE 2.6 Elizabetha

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ACTIVITY 2.4

Research task: find out what is trending

What are they watching?

What's trending right now? To gain a real insight into how and where your product is going to be received by audiences, you should really examine what they are watching. There is no easier way than to examine trends on social media platforms. On video platforms like YouTube, you can examine how many people liked and commented on videos that are related to your idea. You can then connect that kind of information to the audience you have intended your own product for.



FIGURE 2.7 Social media platforms provide information about what people are watching and what is trending.

What are they saying?

You want your media product to be appealing and engaging to your audience, so you want to know what your audience are talking about. Search for trending **hashtags**. Hashtags are used to group similar conversations and ideas on platforms like Twitter and Instagram. While both serve very different purposes, searching for popular hashtags on both platforms can tell you a lot about how your audience verbalise and visually represent these ideas. This can be done via social media apps or via an online search. News services routinely report on what is trending online. Using this type of research allows you to gain an insight into the common conversations and ideas that centre on your topic. You should also look at related hashtags to create a more informed idea of who your audience is and what they are talking about. You could try creating a diagram like the one below that you can include within your planning documents.

hashtag the symbol on a telephone keypad (#) used on social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram to group comments and contributions to common online conversations



FIGURE 2.8 An example of a mind map showing the results of online research of what's trending

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What are they listening to?

Is there a style of music that you intend to link your idea with? You can examine online streaming services to see what other people who are listening to that music are interested in, what kind of playlists it exists in, and how often it is commented upon and reviewed. This kind of research is invaluable as it gives you a much broader view of who your audience are listening to and what kind of audio and visual styles you can incorporate into your own product. Some musical styles address specific themes, be it love, loss or politics. By conducting some research over a range of music platforms, you can gain a more rounded understanding of what draws audiences to specific music. With a style as specific as short-form content, this can be crucial as your own knowledge of the finer cultural details attached to your idea is vital to gain the engagement of your audience.

What are they searching for?

If you really want to get into your audience's mind, you should try analysing what they have been searching for online. Major web browsers like Google have analytics tools that allow you to examine search trends on a global scale. If your interest is in creating a media product that has a number of horror film elements, you enter some of these details to see where such searches are taking place around the world and what other related ideas these people are searching for too. These tools are invaluable when you are looking to identify the wants, needs and interests of your target audience. Create a detailed list of the key findings from using one of these tools and see if you can link some of the top and related searches to the audience you intend to target.

What are they arguing about?

Discussion forums can be a gold mine for identifying your audience. Almost any niche topic has a discussion forum that allows like-minded individuals to share their ideas and passion for topics. First, start by examining the breadth of topics available. It can tell you a lot about what the audience interested in this topic see as important. Choose one topic and skim through some of the comments (be sure not to lose too much time). Record some key comments that provide insight into what your audience love about particular media styles.



ACTIVITY 2.5

Research task: competition analysis

What are your competitors doing? Most contemporary art borrows from other art from time to time. All media products, as you have learned, are based on codes and conventions that are shared and copied to establish a common understanding among the audience. So why shouldn't you? Take your idea and compare it to as many other similar examples that have already been created. Create a detailed list of the media codes and conventions that you wish to re-create. For example, if it is your wish to create representations of heroic and villainous characters, it would pay to closely examine clips from the media products mentioned in Chapter 1 and analyse how each of these characters were constructed by their authors. Don't forget, there is a fine line between using others' ideas and outright plagiarism! Your audience will know if you have simply stolen an entire idea, so you should look to provide them with a new interpretation of what already exists. Next to the list of techniques used by your inspiration/s, you should make another that explains how you are going to alter or improve upon them.

2.3 Pre-production process

Once you are settled on what you want to make, and who to make it for, you need to work with your group to prepare the production. If you have made any kind of media production before, you would be well aware that time can be lost to a lack of organisation and so it will help to carefully plan all elements of your production from the outset.

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Pre-production: writing a Statement of Intention

A Statement of Intention helps your group articulate your project. Once complete, it can be shared among the group and with your teacher so everyone can collaborate on the same task. Once each task is complete, it acts as a blueprint to follow through production and post-production. If you are looking to plan larger and more detailed video production projects, you should turn to Chapter 7 in this book; however, the guide below will help you to quickly and efficiently prepare for shorter production activities.

Write a clear intention

What are you making and why? While this may seem like a simple question to answer, a detailed response will help you and your team to complete a better-quality product. Think carefully about the reaction you want from your audience. Do you want to inform, educate or entertain? Do you want your audience to act, share or comment on your work? How do you want them to think and feel afterwards? Should they be frightened or amused? Once you can clearly articulate your intention in a couple of sentences, your whole team must read, share and collaborate on what the intention of the whole group is. If everyone in your team is trying to make the same thing, it will lead to a better functioning team and end product.

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for a basic drama script template, plus five quick tips on writing a fictional screenplay.

Identify the audience

Using some of the research tasks on the previous pages, create a small profile of who you are targeting and explain why they would be interested in your product. Explain what elements from that audience's interests that you intend to use and how you may look to challenge them and present them with new ideas or interpretations of their interests.

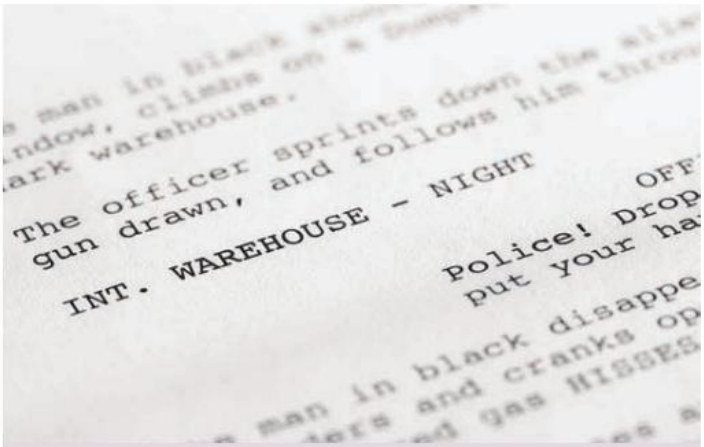


FIGURE 2.9 When creating a media product, creating a script everyone can refer to is very important.

Create a synopsis

In a brief paragraph, explain what will happen at the beginning, middle and end of your project. Deciding on a conclusion to an idea can be difficult, but without it, you won't be able to complete your entire planning process. While you may change the ending later in post-production, it is important to have a plan to fall back on.

Script

Developing a basic script for video tasks, even if there is no dialogue, will be an essential element of your production work. The storyboard artists will need this, along with the intention, to craft out the look and feel of the whole project.

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for a storyboard template, plus five quick tips on storyboarding your ideas.

Storyboard

Not everyone is an artist, but a detailed storyboard that includes annotations along with the illustrated action will assist in shooting the right scenes. When attempting to use specific codes and conventions of camera, lighting, mise en scene and editing, a storyboard can help ensure you're using the right technique at the right time. Once the script and storyboard are complete, the group needs to meet again and compare it all with the intention and synopsis. Once everyone has a clear understanding, you can look to complete the last elements of your planning.

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Locations list

If you're shooting in or out of your school, you will probably need to get permission. Schools are busy places so it never hurts to seek permission for a specific location that you want to use. This allows you to use that location for the time you really need it and to plan the whole production from the outset, rather than as you go. One group member should be tasked with seeking permission and getting signatures from the individuals responsible for the locations you need. Take a photo of each location so the group can prepare how to shoot within it. A sample permission sheet can be seen here:

STUDY TIP

See Chapter 5 for examples of how to set out a script and storyboarding.

PERMISSION TO FILM – UNIT 1: VCE MEDIA

Dear _____

The following students _____

ask your permission to use your location to shoot scenes for a Unit 1 Media Production.

Location: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Description of action to be shot:

_____

_____

_____

_____

We hereby acknowledge that the above-mentioned shooting will in no way disrupt the work of other students, teachers or staff at the school. We also acknowledge that we will abide by the advice and direction of any staff member present at the time of shooting.

Signature of group producer: _____

Signature of permitting teacher: _____

Signature of supervising teacher: _____

Costumes/props

Well-constructed representations and short-form content are heavily dependent on the right costumes and props appearing within shots. A detailed list of what you need, when you need it and where it will come from will ensure you are ready to work all the time.

Equipment

What are you shooting? When do you need it? Will you need lighting? How long does it take to set up and prepare this equipment? Look carefully over the storyboard and locations list and make a detailed list of the gear you intend to use. Once you know what you need, you can start preparing a shot list.

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FIGURE 2.10 It is important to list all the costumes and props you might need for a production.



FIGURE 2.11 The elements that are omitted are just as important as what is selected.

Shot list

The shot list is the final piece of the puzzle. Make a list of every shot you need. They do not necessarily need to be in the order as they appear on the storyboard. Rather, they should follow the availability of your team, the locations, props and equipment. At the start and end of each class, your team should look over this list to see what needs to be done.

2.4 Practical tasks

Whatever task you choose to undertake, your primary goal is to adapt the understanding and knowledge you have gained over this unit into two different forms of production. The challenge will be to take one idea and attempt the same thing in a variety of formats to not only understand the specific requirements of creating a representation, but also understand how that can be completed.

For your practical task, you should revise the following.

Selection and omission

All elements of your images, be they still or moving, require careful thought. Do you want to provide obvious and readable elements in your production or would you prefer to hide these and force your audience to look and examine in more detail? The role of selection and omission is essential in your pre-production planning.

Codes and conventions

This is a major element. Revise the written and practical work you may have undertaken using technical, written and symbolic codes. No one code works in isolation, so it would be valuable to apply two or more together whenever possible.

Stereotypes

This can be a great place to search for ideas, no matter the production you wish to create. While simplistic, stereotypes provide great starting points for developing clear characters and ideas that target a specific audience.

Realism

To directly appeal to your audience, you need to carefully consider how the realism within your media products will affect your audience. A carefully constructed audience profile will help you determine the product best suited to them.

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Audiovisual sequences of representations

The purpose of this task is to incorporate the codes and conventions of representations to create a series of short sequences that reflect a sound understanding of how representations create meaning for an audience. Choose one of the following.

ACTIVITY 2.6

Advertising sequences

Advertise one product to three different audiences. Your task is to create three 30-second television advertisements that cater one product to three distinctly different audiences.

For example: meat and protein-flavoured sports drinks to teenagers, busy professional adults and retired pensioners.

The clip must include:

- at least two actors
- dialogue
- audio – both music and sound effects
- written text on screen.

Discuss your product with your teacher and group and complete the following pre-production tasks in your Statement of Intention.



FIGURE 2.12 Television advertisements can feature a sequence of images.

1. Research: Identify the key elements of television advertising. Define how and when a product is introduced, what elements are used to highlight its selling features and how the 30-second clip is structured.
2. Audience research and identification: Complete one or more of the research tasks listed above to create detailed profiles of the three audiences to whom you are pitching your idea.
3. A complete synopsis of each advertisement: script, storyboard, location and shot list.
4. Present your complete Statement of Intention to your teacher for approval.
5. Shoot, edit and reflect on your finished product (see 'Submission and Statement of Outcome' on page 72 of this chapter).

Contemporary extension task

Complete three 15-second ads for YouTube. Using your original vision that you shot for the 30-second ads, create one 15-second clip that your viewers *won't* skip when browsing on YouTube. You will need to carefully examine how you can restructure your ad to grab attention and engage the audience within the first five seconds (before they are able to skip it!). This clip must include audio, vision and text.

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ACTIVITY 2.7

Retro TV opening credit sequences

In the 20th century, televised situation comedies and dramas often stuck to simplified scripts and representations to communicate ideas and engage audiences. Most would employ a short 30-second to one-minute opening credits sequence where each character would be introduced to the audience. Depending on the nature of the story, each character would be introduced in order of importance to the audience in a manner that simplified their character even further. The clip would be shot in a small number of locations that were specific to the feeling and mood of the show.

For example: A gritty police drama might involve a close-up of the charming but determined police officer after they have chased down and cuffed some hapless criminals. Or, an exasperated father shrugs his shoulders as his family of unique, hilarious and unpredictable teenage children tear the house apart around him …



FIGURE 2.13 The opening credit sequence of a TV show introduces the characters, such as those in *The Addams Family* (1964–66).

RETRO SHOWS TO RESEARCH

For further research, see the opening sequences of *Full House* (1987–95), *Family Ties* (1982–89), *The A-Team* (1983–87), *Magnum PI* (1980–88), *Friends* (1994–2004) and *The Addams Family*.

The clip must include:

- no dialogue
- the introduction of at least four characters
- two locations
- audio soundtrack
- text credits introducing each character
- text credits naming the program.

Discuss your product with your teacher and group and complete the following pre-production tasks in your Statement of Intention.

1 Research: Identify the key elements of these opening credit sequences. Define how and when each one of the characters is introduced and what mise en scene elements are used to define and differentiate each character. The role of each character should be clearly defined. For example, the sequence could introduce the father figure or loving mother, or lovable fool and his best friend the academic. Consider the archetypes and stereotypes that are used in the clips you review.

2 Audience research and identification: Complete one or more of the research tasks listed above to create detailed profiles of the audience for one of the television programs you researched. While these shows attempted to reach as broad an audience as possible, you should detail how each individual character would appeal to different audiences. Choose and define three characters and the audiences they may appeal to.

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3 Create a complete synopsis of your opening sequence: script, storyboard, location and shot list.
4 Present your complete Statement of Intention to your teacher for approval.
5 Shoot, edit and reflect on your finished product (see 'Submission and Statement of Outcome' on page 72 of this chapter).

Contemporary extension task

Complete three 10-second teasers for distribution on social media. Cut up your clips to introduce three of the characters you have identified in your original sequences. These can be presented as short video or animated gifs that include vision, audio and text.



FIGURE 2.14 The original cast of the TV program *Friends*

ACTIVITY 2.8

Archetypes in character introductions

In groups of four, each individual needs to introduce a character and setting that would normally appear within the opening sequence of a feature film. You will plan, direct, shoot and edit four characters into a two-minute sequence. The aim of your task is for the audience to understand what type of character you have created.

Consider the opening 10 to 15 minutes of your favourite films. Each one introduces the main protagonist, antagonist and surrounding characters to ensure the audience is engaged within the film. Often, the simplest way to do this is to employ stereotypes of various character types – for example, male villains or female heroes.

1 Research: Identify the following character archetypes. What common elements do feature films use to introduce these characters visually? List and define as much as you can for your chosen archetype:
   - hero
   - villain
   - anti-hero
   - loner
   - mad genius
   - adventurer
   - loveable fool
   - teacher/mentor
   - sidekick
   - rebel.
2 Audience research and identification: Complete one or more of the research tasks listed above to create detailed profiles of the audience for that character. While the audience may be broad, you should consider who would be attracted to the character you have created and why. For example, some teenagers may be more attracted to rebellious characters, while hard-working adults may be more engaged by a carefree adventurer as it reflects more of what they want to do, rather than what they actually do.
3 Plan your clip. You must include the following in your clip:
   - all mise en scene elements (acting, lighting, props, costume)
   - no dialogue
   - no zooms, pans or tracking shots
   - no more than two actors in a clip.

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4 Each *individual* must create a storyboard and shot list for their 30-second clip, including all of these criteria. Present your complete Statement of Intention to your teacher for approval.

5 During production all members must rotate roles for each character introduction. If it is your character, you *must* be the:
   - director
   - camera operator
   - actor
   - set assistant (gaffer/extra actor).



FIGURE 2.15 A storyboard is an effective way to plan your shots.

6 During production you must:
   - *Edit* all of the clips together. If it is your character, you have the option to either direct the person editing, or edit yourself.
   - Find an *appropriate soundtrack* to match your archetype.

7 Shoot, edit and reflect on your finished product (see 'Submission and Statement of Outcome' on page 72 of this chapter).

8 All members must rotate roles for each character introduction. If it is your character, you must be the director. Roles include:
   - director
   - camera operator
   - actor
   - set assistant (gaffer/extra actor).

Contemporary extension task

Create two character introduction clips for two different social media formats. The promotion of film on social media formats involves the use of archetypes. In such fast-moving formats, you must capture an audience's attention as they scroll past your idea on social media. As your audience may scroll through to your clip while not using audio, you need to use a number of tools to capture attention. Your task requires you to re-edit your existing footage to introduce your character using vision, soundtrack and text and visual effects on screen.

AMAZING FACT

The gaffer is the person in charge of the lighting in each shot of a film or TV production. It is up to them to plan, equip, set up and maintain the lighting for the shoot.

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Photographic and print advertising

The purpose of these tasks is to incorporate your understanding of representation, stereotypes and digital media to advertise using still imagery. The power of photographs remains a strong and influential method of selling products and engaging audiences despite the advance of digital and mobile media. Successful print advertising places a product with its audience that can either reflect their interests and identity or place it just out of their reach to make them 'aspire' to it.

For example, a teenager selling hair care products won't be featured with messy dirty hair. They will usually be represented with perfect hair and be surrounded by equally perfect and attractive people. Your job is to sell an idea as much as a product.



FIGURE 2.16 Photographs remain a strong and influential method of selling products.

ACTIVITY 2.9

Photographic and print advertising

Advertise one product to one audience. Your task is to create three advertisements for the same product. One for a print magazine, one for a bus stop or train station poster, and one for a highway billboard. You will need to carefully consider the size, format and detail each one will require.

For example: a deodorant, hair or beauty products, shoes, food or drink.

The advertisements must include:

- no more than two actors
- a product logo
- written text including product 'tagline'
- digitally manipulated elements.

Discuss your product with your teacher and group and complete the following pre-production tasks in your Statement of Intention.

1. Research: Identify the key elements of print advertising. Each format you are working in engages the audience for varying periods of time. The detail you could include in a print advertisement, for example, may not work on a billboard for obvious reasons. Print advertising has its own set of rules and you should research how the 'Golden Ratio' will assist your preparation, layout and design.
2. Audience research and identification: Complete one or more of the research tasks listed above to create detailed profiles of the audience to whom you are pitching your idea. Pay careful attention to the three formats you are producing in, as the way your audience will engage with each format will need consideration.
3. Create a complete outline of each advertisement. Mock-ups, location and shot list.
4. Present your complete Statement of Intention to your teacher for approval.
5. Shoot, edit and reflect on your finished product (see 'Submission and Statement of Outcome' on page 72 of this chapter).

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FIGURE 2.17 Advertisers need to find new ways to showcase their products using social media.

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for tips on how to create a print advertisement, as well as a template for your mock-ups.

Contemporary extension task

Advertise your product online. As you know already from this chapter, more and more attention is being drawn to online formats. As such, you will need to put your product in their space. You could represent your production online in two ways:

1. A series of three online advertisements using the 'Ken Burns effect'. The technique, popularised by the documentary filmmaker Ken Burns, involves panning and zooming across still images with narration, music and text to give them a feeling of movement and life.
2. A series of five 'paid for' Instagram posts that present the products in the hands of an Instagram user. The images must attempt to avoid obvious constructed reality and appear natural. Research some of your favourite celebrity Instagram accounts to examine how products are presented and 'sold' to their followers.

Online production sequences

As you are probably aware, the scope and audience for online media is extremely broad and caters to an almost infinite number of interests. As you will learn in Chapter 6, 'Media and change', common styles across these new media formats are beginning to emerge and new storytelling techniques are being incorporated with old ones.

ACTIVITY 2.10

Create a vlog

Create a three-part vlog on a specific topic. As your vlog will need to address a key area of interest for your audience, be it gaming, fashion, sport or music, you will need to create an engaging series of clips that will interest your audience and maximise your followers and subscribers.

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Discuss your idea with your teacher and group and complete the following pre-production tasks in your Statement of Intention.

1. Research: Identify the key elements of a vlog that is similar to the topic you have chosen. What media codes and conventions have they included within the clips to ensure the audience remains engaged? Pay close attention to visual and production techniques and make a list of those you intend to employ in your own task.
2. Audience research and identification: Complete one or more of the research tasks listed above to create detailed profiles of the audience to whom you are pitching your idea. Pay careful attention to the three topics and subculture you are producing it for, as this will influence the way your audience will engage with each clip.
3. Create a complete synopsis of your opening sequence: script, storyboard, location and shot list.
4. Present your complete Statement of Intention to your teacher for approval.
5. Shoot, edit and reflect on your finished product (see 'Submission and Statement of Outcome' on page 72 of this chapter).

ACTIVITY 2.11

Online narrative serial

Create three 30-second narrative clips for a narrative web series. Using the normal structure of introduction, crisis and resolution, you should look to develop a narrative that can be produced, shot and released in an online format. As such, you need to consider how you will construct the story in a shorter format for web and YouTube release. Essentially, create one story and break that into three clips that employ engaging visual techniques.

NARRATIVE WEB RESEARCH

See: *Epic Rap Battles of History, The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, The Guild.*

Discuss your idea with your teacher and group and complete the following pre-production tasks in your Statement of Intention.

1. Research: Identify the key elements of an online series that is similar to the topic you have chosen. What media codes and conventions have they included within the clips to ensure the audience remains engaged? Pay close attention to visual and production techniques and make a list of those you intend to employ in your own task.
2. Audience research and identification: Complete one or more of the research tasks listed above to create detailed profiles of the audience to whom you are pitching your idea. Pay careful attention to the three topics and subculture you are producing it for, as this will influence the way your audience will engage with each clip.
3. Create a complete synopsis of your opening sequence: script, storyboard, location and shot list.
4. Present your complete Statement of Intention to your teacher for approval.
5. Shoot, edit and reflect on your finished product (see 'Submission and Statement of Outcome' on page 72 of this chapter).

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ACTIVITY 2.12

Online news media sequences

Report a news story in an online format. Identify an issue facing your school community and create three 30-second video clips that summarise the issue for online audiences. You must pay close attention to your use of imagery, text and text effects as well as subtitles and sound bites for audiences who need to digest your clip within 30 seconds. Don't forget that a journalist must establish the 'where, when, what, how and why' in the first half of the story. Your story is to be shared and viewed on social media formats like Facebook, which need to grab attention within news feeds.



FIGURE 2.18 News stories must establish the where, when, what, how and why of a story.

NEWS MEDIA RESEARCH

See the pages of major online news services on Facebook: *The Age*, AJ+, *The Guardian*, the *Herald Sun*, CNN.

Discuss your idea with your teacher and group and complete the following pre-production tasks in your Statement of Intention.

1. Research: Identify the key elements of an online news broadcast. Identify how text, colour and visual imagery is employed to establish attention, engage and then inform an audience.
2. Audience research and identification: Complete one or more of the research tasks listed above to create detailed profiles of the audience to whom you are pitching your idea. Hard news is important to a variety of audiences and anything related to your school community should help you identify the specific audience for your stories.
3. Create a complete synopsis of your opening sequence: script, storyboard, location and shot list.
4. Present your complete Statement of Intention to your teacher for approval.
5. Shoot, edit and reflect on your finished product (see 'Submission and Statement of Outcome' below).

2.5 Submission and Statement of Outcome

Individual statement

Each individual involved in the production must complete an individual Statement of Outcome that reflects on their experiences. These answers should be confidential and act as an honest reflection on what you learned in your roles during the production phase. The following questions need to be answered:

- How do you feel about the film you made?
- How did your group work productively together?
- How did you contribute to the pre-production process?
- Did you have any problems within the group? Explain what they were and how you resolved them.
- Did you fulfil all requirements of your roles? Explain with specific references.

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- Were you satisfied with your contribution? Explain.
- What individual problems did you encounter in your specific role?
- If you were to undertake your roles again, what would you do differently?

Production statement

Reflecting on what you have learned in Chapter 1 on representation, how have you applied your theoretical understanding into a physical media product? Answer the questions below:

- In the creation of your product, explain how the process of selection and omission influenced the construction of your representations.
- Explain how your product accurately reflects your understanding of:
  a technical codes
  b written codes
  c symbolic codes.
- Did you use stereotypes to create meaning? Explain how, where and why they appear.
- Are you able to identify where your position as an author has influenced the potential reading of your product?



CHAPTER REVIEW

Summing it all up

With your complete project, you can now see the work, time, energy and enthusiasm required for a successful media production. In this chapter you will have learned the value of audience research to guide your idea into production. By utilising more than one form of audience research, you can reach the individual as well as the crowd when designing an idea. Your pre-production process will have demonstrated the value of effective planning and preparing for an effective production process. You will have learned the value of a variety of media codes and the power of each one in delivering an effective message to an audience. In post-production, you will have experienced the magic of 'fixing it in post' as you employed all available technologies to present engaging ideas that reflect the initial intention.

As you examine your own Statement of Outcome on the process, consider your contribution to what you have just participated in. If you look over all that you have learned about representation and the construction of media messages, you have just become an active participant in the construction of meaning in not only your life, but that of others!

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CHAPTER 3 AREA OF STUDY 3

AUSTRALIAN STORIES

Never let the truth get in the way of a good story.

— Eric Bana, *Chopper* (2000)

OVERVIEW

The media plays a significant role in helping us understand who we are. Around the world, in every country and region, there are stories that help define people's collective identity. In this chapter, you will examine how media codes have been used to construct the very idea of Australia. As a nation with both an Indigenous and European history, you will learn about the use of media codes and conventions in Australian stories and examine the important role they play in shaping how Australians defined themselves at each stage of its journey.

OUTCOME 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse how the structural features of Australian fictional and non-fictional narratives in two or more media forms engage, and are consumed and read by, audiences.

To achieve this outcome, the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 3.

FIGURE 3.1 (above): Pictured is Koen (Hunter Page-Lochard) in season one of the Australian TV series *Cleverman*

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the structure of Australian fictional and non-fictional media stories arising from cultural histories and institutions
- media codes and conventions used to engage audiences and communicate meaning
- the influence of the style of media creators and producers in the construction of fictional and non-fictional narratives
- the impact of institutional, economic, social and political constraints on the production and distribution of fictional and non-fictional narratives
- how audience engagement with and reception of narratives is affected by their expectation, consumption and prior reading of a range of fictional and non-fictional narratives in a range of contexts
- media language.

KEY SKILLS

- analyse structures in Australian fictional and non-fictional media stories arising from cultural histories and institutions
- analyse media codes and conventions used to engage audiences and communicate meaning
- analyse the construction of narratives through the fictional and non-fictional style of media creators and producers
- analyse the impact of institutional, economic, social and political constraints on the production and distribution of fictional and non-fictional narratives
- discuss factors which impact on audience engagement and reception, such as consumption and prior reading of narratives in a range of contexts
- use media language.

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KEY TERMS

- cultural history
- cultural institutions
- larrikins
- social media
- Indigenous Australian people
- landscape
- anti-authoritarianism
- news media
- media ownership

WHAT'S AHEAD

SECTION 3.1	SECTION 3.2	SECTION 3.3	SECTION 3.4	SECTION 3.5	SECTION 3.6	SECTION 3.7	SECTION 3.8
Background	The structure of Australian stories	The larrikin	Australian media creators	The Australian media environment	Consumption and reception of Australian stories	*Cleverman*	*The Big Steal*

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3.1 Background

The telling of Australian stories is essential to the evolution of an Australian culture and identity. These stories help us understand the society around us and the people we share it with and can provide a vision for the future. In the early days of the Australian media, the great colonial stories of Clancy of the Overflow and salacious news reports of a daring band of bank robbers led by Ned Kelly captivated Australian audiences with a vision of who their people were and the society Australia had become. However, Australian stories stretch much further back than this, and 50 000 years of Indigenous Dreaming stories help provide the bedrock of understanding when examining who and what Australia is.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Define the term 'culture'.
2. Investigate the poem *Clancy of the Overflow*. Briefly explain who its author was, what the story is about, and to whom it would have appealed.

In this chapter you will examine the role various media creators have had in the telling and sharing of Australian stories. You will examine the relationship between Australia's Indigenous and colonial histories in creating the stereotypes and conventions that are uniquely Australian. You will also examine the challenging environment in which so many of these stories are made and told, and consider the impact these stereotypes have had on the future of media production in Australia itself.

3.2 The structure of Australian stories

Australian stories have long told the story of challenging authority. It seems to be an innate element of the identity represented in our film and literature that the small man always challenges the strong and it has become a central element to so many Australian narratives.

In the late 1870s, Melbourne newspapers reported the daring actions of the bushranger Ned Kelly and his gang. While it was perhaps overlooked that his crimes involved murder and armed robbery, audiences were drawn to each news report for the fantastic tale of an illiterate Irish farmer who had managed to play the entire Victorian police force for fools. As Kelly and his gang robbed banks, they destroyed many of the debt records of the poor, making them legends to the communities of local farmers. After his capture, trial and execution, a legendary figure in Australian media was born. The story emerged of his outrageous stand against police in Glenrowan. As he stood firing at the police sent to capture him, he wore a metal plate and helmet he and his gang had crafted for their protection. It portrayed an image of a capable, articulate (if a little naive) rogue who took on the most powerful force in the land, regardless of the odds. This legend was only made stronger when the Victorian police banned the wildly popular film *The Story of the Kelly Gang* in 1906. The censorship and ban on all bushranger films was intended to prevent



FIGURE 3.2 Ned Kelly ran a notorious bush gang in the late 1870s.

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the 'glamorisation' of crime; however, these actions would come to reflect the adversarial relationship between colonial Australians and authority.

Fast forward to 1914 when Ashmead Bartlett observed the Australian soldiers landing at Anzac Cove in their first appearance of World War I. His words were read in several Australian newspapers two weeks later on Australian shores and cemented the identity that the Kelly reports had started. Bartlett told of the daring Australian men who were strong, brave and charged into enemy fire against impossible odds. The story of that day permeates deep into the Australian identity and marks a national holiday each year.



FIGURE 3.3 A still from the Australian film *The Story of the Kelly Gang* in 1906 – the world's first feature-length movie

The anti-authoritarian streak demonstrated by Kelly later found a home in the Australian soldier. Even though the Anzacs fought under the command of English officers, they were often reluctant to show them the respect demanded within the strict British army. Peter Weir immortalised this identity in the characters of Frank (Mel Gibson) and Archy (Mark Lee) in his 1981 film *Gallipoli*. In an early scene from the film, two British officers – one wearing a monocle – demand that Frank and his friends salute as they pass on horseback. The Australian's giggling effort to pay respect to the officers was met with derision. In the following scene, Frank 'borrows' a donkey from an Egyptian market and rides around the stalls impersonating the officers. The use of humour is central to this idea that authority could easily be dismantled by mockery and satire; a theme that was to permeate through countless Australian representations.



FIGURE 3.4 A still from the Australian movie *Gallipoli* (1981), starring Mel Gibson as Frank Dunne

The notion of egalitarianism is central to the Australian identity. No one is better than the lowest member and any effort to rise beyond this is cut down. Often referred to as 'tall poppy syndrome', the Australian identity is notorious for never allowing anyone to assume a sense that they were better than the rest. We demand it from our sports heroes, musicians, artists and politicians. What is cherished is the capable, dependable Australian hero. A loveable and loyal character who can not only tame the landscape but see and do what is right.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What role does the 'small man' play in some Australian stories?
2. What is the link between the legend of Ned Kelly and the reports of Anzac landings in Gallipoli in World War I? In each, who are the protagonists and who are the antagonists?
3. What is satire?
4. Define 'tall poppy syndrome' in your own words.

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FIGURE 3.5 Mad Max (played by Mel Gibson) from the film *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior* (1981) is a silent, brooding stereotype.

George Miller's evergreen character Mad Max represents all of these qualities. While certainly not a unique stereotype, Max is a mysterious character who brings order to chaos in a uniquely Australian landscape. In Miller's 1981 film *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior* the audience see a silent, brooding wanderer who can survive off the land.

Dressed in all black leather and followed by his loyal cattle dog, Max searches the landscape for petrol, food and water in his modified car, the V8 Interceptor. All the elements of his character link back to the Ned Kelly legend. His ingenuity and ability to survive the post-apocalyptic Australian landscape is evident in his wits, speed and cunning. He is reserved, not an extrovert and prefers others to do the talking. Max's legend grows from his decision to help a group of petrol producers escape a marauding gang of thugs, and points back to the Kelly legend of fighting the rich to defend the poor.

ACTIVITY 3.1

Carefully examine the images of Ned Kelly (Figure 3.3), Frank Dunne (Figure 3.4) and Mad Max (Figure 3.5).

1. What similarities can you identify in the construction of each representation?
2. Discuss how realistic you believe each character to be.
3. Describe what symbolic and technical codes have been used in the two film stills to create a message consistent with the early drawing of Ned Kelly.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Define the term 'larrikin'.
2. Discuss how the landscape could be both a setting and a character in Australian stories.

The character that inevitably grew out of this representation is that of the 'larrikin'. A uniquely Australian invention, the larrikin is a poorly behaved maverick who flaunts the rules of conventional society and authority with humour and audacity. While America has historic heroes like Abraham Lincoln and George Washington, Australia has Ned Kelly, a murdering, horse-stealing criminal who is central to our cultural identity. The larrikin is usually male, usually white and usually a skilled bushman. Despite the vast majority of Australians living in cities, early Australian stories romanticised the figure of a witty, anti-authoritarian man living an uncluttered life, surviving in the harsh landscape of Australia. The battle against the landscape has meant that the land itself has become a character in the Australian story.

The landscape

The Australian landscape is undeniably harsh. From deadly snakes to crocodiles, brutal climates to disgruntled koalas, the Australian landscape has an element of fear that has long struck city-dwelling audiences. As such, it has played the antagonist in many Australian stories. In 1975's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (dir. Peter Weir), a group

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of boarding school girls disappear into the volcanic formations of Hanging Rock, never to be seen again. In 2005's terrifying *Wolf Creek* (dir. Greg McLean), a backpacker must not only escape a killer, but the outback itself. In the 2005 film *The Proposition* (dir. John Hillcoat), the wild and untamed characters of the story are only matched by the danger the landscape poses to their collective survival.

ACTIVITY 3.2

Examine this image from the film *The Proposition*.

1. Explain how the landscape has been represented.
2. Now examine the representation of the characters, and describe what impact the landscape has had on them.



FIGURE 3.6 A still from *The Proposition* (2005)

Throughout this history of creating Australian stories, the landscape and the outback have become signifiers of Australian stories themselves. The TV adventurer Malcolm Douglas produced hours upon hours of documentary films from the Australian outback, revealing hidden stories of animals and environments few would ever see. A simple character who found beauty in the Australian bush, Douglas also held the essential larrikin skill of crocodile hunting. It was a mantle taken up and carried by the late Steve Irwin in internationally recognised stories of Australian wildlife.



FIGURE 3.7 Steve Irwin, the Crocodile Hunter, was the ultimate Australian larrikin.

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ACTIVITY 3.3

Research task: larrikin characters

1 In pairs, research as many 'larrikin' characters from Australian stories as you can find. Some examples could be:
   - Ned Kelly
   - Alby Mangels
   - Steve Irwin
   - Russell Coight
   - Darryl Kerrigan.

2 Examine the personality of each character and identity.

3 Explain the similarities and differences between the way each character reflects the rugged ingenuity defined by the larrikin.

4 Explain the values embedded within each character. How do they reflect the Australian image of the 'larrikin'?

The news media against authority

Australia's news and current affairs media have long maintained a tradition of challenging authority. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's investigative news program *Four Corners* has been credited with bringing down some of Australia's tallest poppies. While its modern counterparts in *Today Tonight* and *A Current Affair* have built reputations taking down 'dodgy tradesmen' or 'scumbag landlords', *Four Corners* has often aimed a little higher and held major business and government to account.

In 1987 *Four Corners* ran a story titled 'The Moonlight State'. The investigation, led by journalist Chris Masters, uncovered a web of corruption in the state of Queensland that drew in police, politicians abusing their power and the premier of the state himself, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. 'Sir Joh' was a controversial figure before the investigation and an even greater one after the *Four Corners* story as he was often criticised for being an authoritarian premier. The claims of the investigation linked politicians with embezzling public money and using police for illegal activities against political opponents. The day after the story aired, a government investigation into the Queensland government was launched and led to the imprisonment of several politicians and the end of the premier's time in office. Not a one-off, *Four Corners* has been credited with gnawing at the edges of authority for 50 years, exposing the corruption of big business and politics in Australia. From tackling governments of any persuasion to exposing corruption and anti-social behaviour in Australian sport, *Four Corners* and investigative journalism have long held a place within the Australian identity for telling stories that consistently challenge authority.

ACTIVITY 3.4

Research task: *Four Corners* stories

1 Research the top stories from the 50-plus-year history of *Four Corners*.

2 Choose three stories that examine a topic of importance to Australia.

3 Critically evaluate how the story challenges authority.

4 Evaluate for what purpose the story does this.

5 Outline how technical codes and conventions have been used within the story to create a sense of good versus evil.

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The other in Australian stories

As you've probably noticed, the Australian larrikin, so loved for his constant challenge to established authority, is almost always a Caucasian man. Defining the role of women is much harder as their visibility in many of these early stories would not fare well against the Bechdel test you read about in the first chapter of this book. The same could be said for the representation of Indigenous Australians in these stories. As you have read, the larrikin is a construction of a battle between white Australian men and the authorities and landscapes they fight against. However, the troubled history of white and black Australia does not always combine well with the happy-go-lucky image of the Australian bushman. The difficult reality of murder, genocide, forced removal and discrimination was rarely tackled by early representations of Indigenous Australians in Australian stories, as they were often relegated to the position of 'the other'.



FIGURE 3.8 Early representations of Indigenous Australians in Australian stories, in which they were often relegated to the position of 'the other'

In 20th-century Australian stories, the treatment of Indigenous Australians as the other meant their own identity was considered separate from that of mainstream Australia. Often represented in a stereotyped form, the Indigenous Australian person was simplified into a single image of a hunter gatherer wandering the Australian bush who was unable to communicate or fit in with civilised white society. Aboriginal people were so rarely seen outside of this stereotype that news broadcasts in the early 1980s and journalist John Pilger's documentary *The Secret Country: The First Australians Fight Back* (1986) revealed a shocking image of the true living conditions of some Indigenous communities in outback Australia.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What does the Bechdel test measure?
2. Define 'the other' in terms of media representations.

Nevertheless, in fictional narratives, Aboriginal people were, at best, represented in specialist outback roles of 'the tracker' who knew the land and would willingly help Europeans to survive. At worst, they were depicted as a product of an uncivilised, stone age culture. In the 1955 film *Jedda* (dir. Charles Chauvel), a young Aboriginal girl (Rosalie Kunoth-Monks) is lured away from her life on a white cattle station by the tall, dark and mysterious Marbuck (Robert Tudawali). While the story was credited for its political stance against the treatment of Aboriginal people in that era, it reinforced a negative stereotype of Indigenous Australians as Jedda is seduced by the more 'primitive' Marbuck, which leads to their rejection from his tribe for breaking marriage customs and, ultimately, their death.

This notion of Aboriginal people as a mysterious other that does not fit into mainstream society has long been perpetuated in film and television depictions of Indigenous people. However, what is evident is that in the 21st century, the image of Indigenous people in Australian stories has begun to reflect the diversity within Indigenous culture and their own place within Australian identity. What you must consider in this chapter, however, is what role the larrikin and older representations of Indigenous Australians have played in audience expectations of Australian stories. What has a long history of the unique experience of Australian storytelling created for audiences when they engage with these media products?

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the stereotypical ways Aboriginal people were represented in past Australian stories?
2. Why can stereotypes be harmful?

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ACTIVITY 3.5

Examine this image from the 1971 film *Walkabout* (dir. Nicolas Roeg).

1 Analyse the construction of the image using codes and conventions.

2 Does it reinforce the old stereotype of Aboriginal people? Explain your response using the codes and conventions of the image.



FIGURE 3.9 A still image from the Australian film *Walkabout* (1971)

3.3 The larrikin

The image you see here is of Australian comedian, TV host and actor Paul Hogan. Before he was an internationally recognised actor for his role of Crocodile Dundee, he was well established on Australian screens as a drinking, smoking, swearing star of sketch comedy and advertising. He was the face of a cigarette brand, and in one television commercial he walked out in front of a very stuffy-looking orchestra and casually spoke to the audience about the value of the cigarette brand. As he sat down, dressed in a tuxedo, he stated that he'd been asked to talk to the audience because he's a 'suave and sophisticated man about town' and to set the scene he asked the orchestra for a 'bit of the ol' mood music'. His thick Australian accent, laid-back slouch and casual

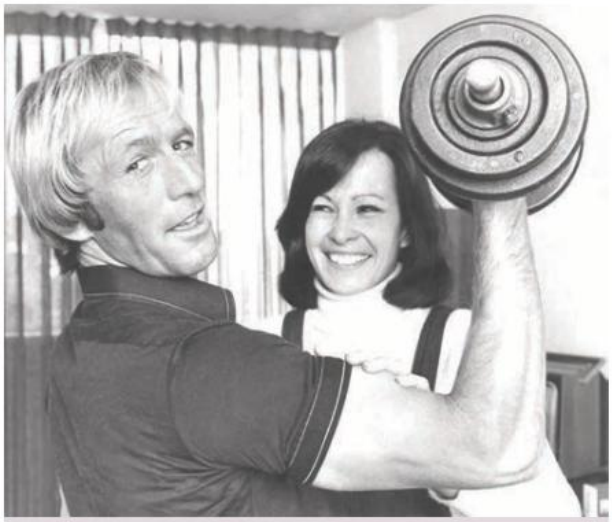


FIGURE 3.10 Actor Paul Hogan played the iconic Australian larrikin role of Crocodile Dundee.

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indifference to the formality of the occasion created not only a mould for his own personality, but an archetype for the larrikin.

Later in the decade, Hogan's larrikin was given to the world in the popular film *Crocodile Dundee* of 1986 (dir. Peter Faiman). An American and Australian co-production, *Crocodile Dundee* remains one of Australia's most successful film exports of all time.

It had all the ingredients to captivate an Australian audience: a larrikin from the untamed Australian bush, who caught crocodiles with dry wit and a smile. However, the movie's success overseas played a huge role in stereotyping Australia to foreign audiences too. The physical construction of Dundee represents the very essence of the Australian larrikin.

Pictured in Figure 3.11, we can see the man at home in the Australian bush. Muscular and sparingly dressed, the only jewellery he affords himself come from the remains of the crocodiles he has already killed.



FIGURE 3.11 Crocodile Dundee was a larrikin from the untamed Australian bush.

The casual attitude with which Dundee treats the unpredictable nature of the Australian bush fell in line with Australia's love for rogue characters who played by their own rules. This stereotype, new to international (especially American) audiences, falls into a more humorous role when the character is taken out of the bush and toured across America by a journalist, Sue Charlton (Linda Kozlowski).



FIGURE 3.12 A scene from *Crocodile Dundee* (1986)

Dundee met all of the expectations Australian audiences had of not only Hogan, but the loveable rogue larrikin. Within the same media products, we can also examine the representation of the Australian Aboriginal person. While deep in the bush with the journalist, Dundee stumbles across his old friend 'Neville Bell' (David Gulpilil), a city-dwelling Aboriginal person on his way to a 'corroboree'. Clad in dirty jeans, no shoes and traditional body painting, Neville represents the same stereotype of the outsider seen in early Australian stories. However, the film plays on these older representations by making fun of white understanding of complex Indigenous cultures.

As Sue Charlton raises her camera to take his photo, Neville stops her, stating: 'you can't take my photograph', playing on the stereotype of Indigenous cultures who believed camera images would steal their spirit. When Sue replies as such, Neville corrects her: 'Nah, you got the lens cap on'. Then, as Neville leaves the camp and wanders into the night, Dundee tells Sue that Neville will be able to see in the dark and 'some people think they're telepathic'. In the background the audience hears Neville tripping over a branch stating: 'Ohh! God, I hate the bush!'

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Neville's character challenged old stereotypes; however, in the next scene Sue discovers the 'secret ceremony' that Neville was heading to: a men's-only gathering of dancing. The voyeuristic style in which the scene was shot, as Sue creeps through the trees to photograph the meeting, leans again on the old stereotype of an ancient culture that is not part of mainstream Australian society as the ceremony is seen as something foreign and hidden.

ACTIVITY 3.6

1 Define the construction of the larrikin.



FIGURE 3.13 Mick Dundee fitted with stereotypical 'larrikin' perceptions of the Australian male.

2 Deconstruct the technical and symbolic codes used within this image.

3 Assess whether it fits into the social and historical perception of the Australian male.

The changing face of the larrikin

Much has changed since the heady days of *Crocodile Dundee*. As Australian society evolves and the roles of men and women change, immigration from Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa has created a version of Australian identity that is much more diverse than the Caucasian bushman and mysterious Indigenous Australian person. What has remained, however, is the constant challenge to authority.

A new wave of fictional and non-fictional characters has brought anti-authoritarianism into the 21st century and ensured it remained central to the Australian story.

Kath and Kim

The long-running TV show *Kath and Kim* (2002–07) takes the role of larrikin away from men and positions it in the hands of two working-class women from the suburbs. Rather than directly challenging any specific authority, the media product revels in the simplicity and affectionate mockery of the Australian working class.

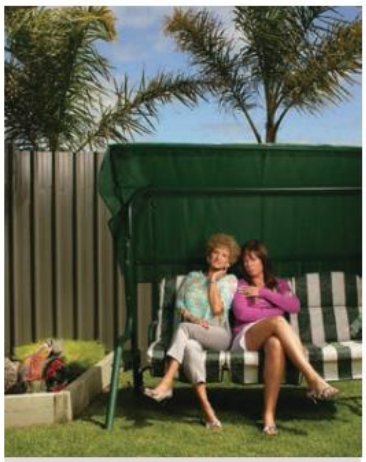


FIGURE 3.14 Kath and Kim (played by Jane Turner and Gina Riley) are comedic Australian characters from the suburbs.

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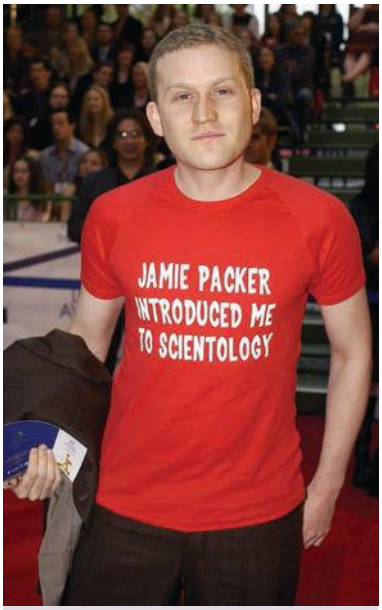


FIGURE 3.15 John Safran is a Melbourne-based writer, comedian, filmmaker and radio host.

John Safran

John Safran is a Melbourne-based writer, comedian, filmmaker and radio host who has redefined the role of the trouble maker in Australian stories. Getting his start in an Australian short film competition on the ABC called *Race Around the World* (1997–98), his taste for challenging authority with dry Australian humour was revealed in one short film where he kicked an Aussie Rules football over the West Bank fence that divides Israel and Palestine. His innocent request to heavily armed soldiers for them to kick it back over was followed up with an even more common Australian stereotype: he 'streaked' through the streets of Jerusalem wearing only his St Kilda football club scarf. His subversively innocent approach to filmmaking and storytelling has even seen him challenge the authority of religion in a series titled *John Safran vs God* (2004).

The Chaser

The Chaser team is a group of Australian comedians who have continued the larrikin tradition of Australian storytelling with their motto 'striving for mediocrity in a world of excellence'. With their primary focus to undermine politicians from all perspectives, their actions have pushed the boundaries and seen them run foul of the law. In 2007, they were arrested by the Australian Federal Police for planning and filming a sketch that saw them drive a fake motorcade of limousines through a variety of strict checkpoints for a meeting of world leaders in Sydney. Police got wind of the joke when one of the team stepped out dressed as Osama Bin Laden. The day after the stunt, the team was arrested again for dressing up as fake limousines and trying to get past the same blockade. The behaviour and comedy of the team reflects a strong anti-authoritarian stance; however, their physical representation of educated, middle-class city dwellers rejects all notions of past male characters in this role.



FIGURE 3.16 TV personalities from the Australian comedy show *The Chaser* (1999–)



FIGURE 3.17 Australian-Greek actor and writer Mary Coustas

Greek and Italian comics

Nick Giannopoulos and Mary Coustas are Australian writers, comedians and film directors with Greek ancestry. During the 1970s and 80s the arrival of Greek and Italian migrants to Australian shores created a challenge to the norms of established white Australian society. By commandeering the derogatory word of European migrants, the pair turned 'wog humour' into television shows and films. By challenging the dominant society that was not initially accepting of new cultures into Australia, Giannopoulos, Coustas and many other Greek and Italian comedians took on the favoured role of the underdog who mocked the dominant authorities of Caucasian society. Migrant stories were then told through the use of common Australian story conventions of triumph against adversity and humour tackling the authorities.

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FIGURE 3.18 The sketch show *Black Comedy* challenges older notions of how Indigenous people appear in the media.

Black Comedy

Black Comedy (2014–) is an Australian comedy sketch show that is made by Indigenous Australian writers and actors that reflects the stereotypes created by white society, but mostly by Indigenous Australian society itself. Significantly, it does not generally reflect the 20th-century view of Indigenous Australian people only ever existing in the outback. Rather, most of the sketches take place within the cities, towns and suburbs of Australia to challenge older notions of how Indigenous Australian people appeared in the media. In addition to their mockery of casual racism and societal disadvantage, the show takes aim at the structures and practices of Indigenous Australian society itself.

Redfern Now

The TV drama *Redfern Now* (2012–) also challenges the existing expectations of Indigenous Australians on our screens. Set in Redfern, a Sydney suburb with a large Indigenous Australian population, the series does not rely on comedy, nor does it attempt to challenge authority. It does, however, tell modern and evolving Indigenous stories. It does this through the prism of a modern Indigenous Australian identity. The representations evident in the characters of the series provide challenges to the old version of the uncivilised Indigenous Australian. Focusing on dramatic themes of love, betrayal, crime and mental illness, *Redfern Now* represents a different view of Indigenous Australia that, like *Black Comedy*, depends heavily on the author and those who created its view.

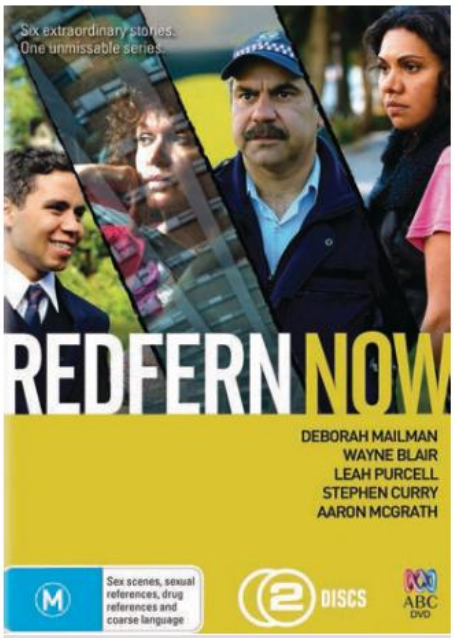


FIGURE 3.19 *Redfern Now* tells modern and evolving Indigenous stories in a dramatic format.

ACTIVITY 3.7

In pairs, research online and watch clips of each of the examples above.

Using the knowledge of 20th-century Australian stories of the larrikin standing up to authority, evaluate how each of the examples above use the same convention of an 'underdog' character to challenge and reinvent the notion of the Australian larrikin.

For each example:

1. Identify and deconstruct the codes used in the character from the representation.
2. Evaluate its realism – does the character seem realistic based on your own experience?
3. Describe the values that have been embedded within the character. How do they reflect the notion of challenging established ideas and authority?
4. In your experience, how do you see the representation as a more modern version of the Australian larrikin? Explain your answer in relation to your expectations of Australian characters in Australian stories.

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3.4 Australian media creators

Australian stories are more than just larrikins and crocodiles. They are as diverse as the people of the nation itself; and as the country has evolved, so have its people and the stories that are told about them. From film and television to news media, narratives and ideas are discussed and meditated on over time to incorporate old and new ideas of who and what Australia is and how it sees itself.

Producers of Australian media in any form face challenges. Major media productions like film, television, animation and games are expensive to make and, as such, are difficult to make for a population as comparatively small as Australia's.

While Australia did once dominate the global film market, way back in 1906 when Ned Kelly was the star, it has since been dwarfed by the production might of the USA and England. For decades much of the content we see and hear has been from overseas and so the opportunities to tell Australian stories are harder to come by.

Fortunately for television, the commercial broadcasters of Nine, Ten and Seven have to comply with Australian content standards where 51% of their content must be locally produced. This ensures a stable industry of media professionals who can learn the ropes and in turn create new productions and employ people like you, to learn as they did on Australian sets, newsrooms and studios. Additionally, broadcasters like the ABC and SBS were created with the sole purpose of reaching Australian audiences with content made for them. However, as you will soon see, the pursuit of making Australian content has become harder and harder in the modern digital environment. With streaming services and digital channels that have no content quotas to meet, the audience for Australian stories is spread across a vast number of platforms for audiences to see and hear Australian voices.



FIGURE 3.20 Australian stories are more than just larrikins and crocodiles.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important for Australian stories to be seen and heard?
2. How does the Australian government protect and encourage Australian content?

The role of the ABC

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) began with a specific purpose: to inform, educate and entertain Australians. Covering radio, film, television and online services, the national broadcaster has created Australian stories and told the nation about itself since 1932. It was the first television station to begin telling stories from inside Australia, showcasing the flora and fauna of a diverse country that few in the cities (who had TV reception) could or would ever see.

While telling fictional and non-fictional stories, it maintained a focus on audiences of all ages. The youth music show *Countdown* (1974–87) brought the newest and most cutting-edge music to the eyes and



FIGURE 3.21 The ABC's purpose is to inform, educate and entertain Australians.

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FOCUS QUESTION

What is the purpose of the ABC?

ears of teenagers all over the country, which has morphed into the youth national radio station Triple J and a dedicated children's TV channel called ABC Kids. Set up as an independent broadcaster with no commercial or political bias, the news and current affairs teams have been criticised by both sides of politics for negative perspectives on the ruling government. As the ABC's funding comes from taxpayers, they are thus obliged to tell as many diverse stories about Australia as possible. However, their success in this pursuit has periodically been under threat by governments who pull vital funding from the ABC.

Without commercial support – an ABC production can only mention brand names in rare cases – it is therefore totally reliant on government funding to present these unique stories.

ACTIVITY 3.8

Research task: ABC

Research two of the following productions from the ABC and present your findings to your class.

Your focus should be on the production and its contribution to telling Australian stories and perspectives:

- *Aunty Jack* (1972–73)
- *This Day Tonight* (1967–78)
- *Four Corners* (1961–)
- *Bellbird* (1967–77)
- *Countdown* (1974–87)
- *A Big Country* (1968–91)
- *Lateline* (1990–2017)
- *Australian Story* (1996–)
- *Landline* (1991–)
- *Media Watch* (1989–)
- *Mother and Son* (1984–94)
- *The Late Show* (1992–93)
- *SeaChange* (1998–2000)
- *Sylvania Waters* (1992).

For the two programs you choose to investigate, complete the following:

1. Identify the show's format – e.g. comedy, news, drama, etc.
2. What element of Australian society did it focus on? Explain.
3. Propose how the show contributed to the creation of an Australian identity.



FIGURE 3.22 The two major news services that dominate Melbourne's print media are *The Age* and the *Herald Sun*.

Australian news media

Through the news media, Australian audiences get their most immediate narratives and reflections of their own society. These news stories are created within the diverse environments of print, online, television and news media. While journalists do have their own code of ethics, those who work in commercial spaces, which need an audience to build profit or simply remain afloat, often need to push the boundaries of what is right and fair to tell these stories.

The stories we read in Melbourne's print media are dominated by two major news services: *The Age* and the *Herald Sun*. While both endeavour to report fairly and openly, their ownership and political bias can influence the way in which stories are told and the focus they have on individuals and groups within

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Australian society. *The Age* is owned by the Fairfax media group and was the last **broadsheet** paper in Melbourne. Its stories were traditionally longer and focused on readers interested in political and economic issues. The *Herald Sun* is owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp group and is known as a **tabloid**, which features a larger font, shorter articles and focuses on lighter and sports-related content.

The view of Australia and its stories can be examined through both papers, and you will be surprised by the contrasting views they hold on the same topics. Despite this, both have a valid place in the news media landscape; however, both are under threat from the internet. The newsrooms of both have been slashed in the last decade as the spread of online news, created here in Australia and overseas, have swamped the internet and social media feeds of potential readers. Both newspapers have to fight with a much broader competition than ever before and have had to fire workers. And in the case of *The Age*, it had to physically downsize the paper to a tabloid format to save money. Now both newspapers ask audiences to pay and subscribe to access varying levels of content – a trend affecting traditional news media worldwide.

broadsheet a newspaper printed on a larger page (double that of a tabloid) to allow for more detailed information. Often more detailed and complex than tabloid newspapers; broadsheets attempt to avoid sensationalism.

tabloid a newspaper printed with only five columns to a page that provides condensed and simplified versions of daily events. Usually focuses on sensationalised versions of key stories.

For both papers, increased competition has meant they have had to chase their audience aggressively and create an image through 'editorial' articles that blend hard news with opinion. In this sense, both present news with significantly opinionated narratives on key issues.

The view of both news services, either in print or online, remains the same and their coverage of Australian news stories varies greatly.



FIGURE 3.23 The *Herald Sun* is owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp group and is known as a tabloid.

If you are a follower of Australian Rules football, you will be familiar with the Essendon doping scandal, arguably one of the greatest news stories in Australian sports history. In a long-running saga that gripped public attention and levelled accusations of drugs and cheating at one of the biggest sporting institutions in Australia, the Essendon Football Club, both news media outlets reported the story from differing perspectives. While *The Age* reporters were quite persistent in their calls to have the club punished, the *Herald Sun* took the line that the players and club had been deceived by outside elements and were not entirely at fault. Regardless of the outcome of official investigations and countless exclusives, an examination of each news outlet's narratives told vastly different stories about the same news item.



FIGURE 3.24 Essendon Football Club press conference at Windy Hill on 6 May 2013 in Melbourne, Australia

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What is a code of ethics, and why would professional journalists have one?
2. What types of changes have affected traditional news media outlets in Melbourne, as well as globally?
3. How do *The Age* and the *Herald Sun* differ in their approach to delivering news for Melbournians?
4. Where do you source your own news?

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ACTIVITY 3.9

In groups, gather copies of both *The Age* and the *Herald Sun* from your library, or examine their news articles online.

Your task is to compare and contrast the focus of each paper on any given day to key issues and determine how similar narratives about issues in Australia are told in different ways.

1. Identify the cover story of each print addition (or the top story on the website). What does it tell you about what the paper considers to be important to Australian readers?
2. Pick one issue or topic and examine how it is covered by both news outlets. Can you see any difference between the headline, reporting and imagery? What does one emphasise that the other does not?
3. Interpret how these differences in reporting and storytelling affect the understanding of Australian stories.
4. Now search online through social media for the same stories. How have they changed? Propose what impact you think social media formats have on your understanding of the story.

3.5 The Australian media environment

Funding

Australian stories are expensive to tell. Due to Australia's relatively small population size, film and television production can be prohibitively expensive. For major television stations it is often cheaper to buy an international program than to produce one locally. Mark Scott, the former managing director of the ABC, stated in an address at Macquarie University in 2015 that the ABC could acquire an episode of the popular program *Antiques Roadshow* from the UK for 4% of what it cost to make an hour-long version of its Australian counterpart, *The Collectors*. Quite simply, it is financially sensible for major government and commercial stations to spend their money on British and American shows they know will draw in audiences for a fraction of the cost of an Australian production. In the modern television landscape, that includes streaming channels like YouTube and Netflix; the audience is spread much thinner than ever before. When it costs, on average, $1 million to create one hour of Australian drama, it is a simple equation for the owners of these broadcasters.



FIGURE 3.25 The arrival of the on-demand streaming service Netflix in 2015 changed the TV viewing landscape in Australia.

But what does this mean for you, the future media professional? Before the introduction of streaming, it meant that work for Australians on Australian stories was few and far between. After Netflix landed in Australia in 2015, there has actually been a huge influx of television production happening in Australia as binge-watching audiences have created huge demand for more television.

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However, Australian stories and the cultural signifiers – like a larrikin or a harsh landscape – only have a limited reach beyond Australian shores. For international companies investing in Australia, they will look to ensure the production is relevant and has reach across the globe. As such, there are a number of factors that can influence the production of film:

1 Australian films have a limited audience in Australia when pitched against American blockbusters. The influx of superhero films from major Hollywood production companies has been significant. As such, Australian films rarely receive the same financial backing and advertising that an international production, filmed in Australia, would receive.
2 The global economy plays a large role in the production of films in Australia. If the Australian dollar is weak against the American dollar, this means that Hollywood films can be produced in Australia and save money. This provides work for thousands of Australian media professionals. However, market fluctuations can add millions of dollars to this process almost overnight and, in some cases, can lead to the project being cancelled.
3 A lot of Australia's best talent moves abroad to make a living as the local industry can be unstable.



FIGURE 3.26 The influx of superhero films and TV shows from major Hollywood production studios has been significant.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 Why do you think local content is so expensive to produce?
2 How have Australian media professionals traditionally made a career for themselves?
3 What effect have streaming services like Netflix had on Australian production?

CASE STUDY 3.1

Australian productions and economic factors

Think about what you have just read and examine the following film production examples.

Saw

The creative minds behind the horror franchise *Saw* are two film graduates from Melbourne, Leigh Whannel and James Wan. The film franchise has gone on to gather millions of dollars on screens around the globe; however, they could not get funding for their idea in Australia. There simply was not enough money to fund a smaller project like theirs.



FIGURE 3.27 Leigh Whannel and James Wan

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Wan and Whannel then took the idea to Los Angeles, made a short film version of their idea and found funding to make the first film. Today, the *Saw* franchise of films is one of the most profitable film franchises in cinema history. As a result of their success in the US, the original film had become a franchise of eight feature-length films by 2017.

The Babadook

The 2014 Australian horror film *The Babadook* (dir. Jennifer Kent) experienced huge success overseas in places such as the United Kingdom and France, where it received greater advertising and cinema screen time than in Australia. A highly successful film made on a small budget with an Australian cast and crew, it received good reviews; however, local cinemas were unwilling to show it as it was considered too 'arthouse' for Australian screens when a blockbuster action could take its place.



FIGURE 3.28 Jennifer Kent

Animal Kingdom

2010's *Animal Kingdom* (dir. David Michod), a dark and disturbing tale of a suburban crime family, found success both in Australia *and* overseas – it has since been adapted into a television series in the US. However, in order to entice Australian audiences to the cinema, it had to be released overseas at the Sundance Film Festival first.



FIGURE 3.29 Director David Michod (centre) and the cast of *Animal Kingdom*

The Mule

In 2014, the team behind the drug-smuggling comedy *The Mule* (dir. Tony Mahony & Angus Sampson) decided to avoid releasing their film to Australian cinemas altogether. Their aim was to avoid the three- to four-month period where audiences may or may not see their film, and they released it online instead. In doing so, they were able to give audiences immediate access to their film.

Analysis

For each example, explain:

1. How and why the production was affected by economic factors.
2. How this could have a further impact on the production of Australian stories.
3. What impact do you believe external factors like online streaming and piracy have on the ability for Australian filmmakers to earn a living from their work?

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The future of production

Online video services like YouTube are providing a new avenue for Australian stories. While funding for a large-scale production is becoming more and more difficult in an online environment dominated by bit torrenting and piracy, there are other ways to tell stories. Adelaide twin brothers Danny and Michael Philippou make the YouTube channel *Rackaracka* that plays short, violent and often hilarious pranks and clips which have a dedicated audience of over three and a half million subscribers. Their popularity has led to the development of a film based on the childhoods of the twins. Other YouTube creators like *The Katering Show*, a satire of reality cooking shows, and *Bruce*, a dark comedy about the settlement of Australia, also began online and produced a high level of content that gained the eventual interest and support of commercial television and film, and help tell more Australian stories to a much broader, online audience.



FIGURE 3.30 *The Katering Show* (2015–) is a popular satirical Australian cooking web series.

ACTIVITY 3.10

Search your favourite video streaming service for Australian web serials and channels.

1. Identify and list the top five with the largest number of subscribers.
2. Explain the content. How does it reflect an Australian story or identity?
3. Investigate how these creators have built a production career beyond YouTube.
4. Do you think the production of stories in freely available online spaces has made it easier or more difficult for Australian stories to be told? Explain your response with examples from your research.

Political factors in Australian stories

As you have seen earlier in this chapter, the role the Australian government plays in access to the media can influence how, what and where we see stories. In 1906 the Victorian police censored the Ned Kelly film because they were concerned about the influence it would have over audiences and that it may encourage more crimes against the police.

The political influence over what we see and hear in the media can be examined through the way the media is owned, the way it is regulated and what they consider to be an Australian story.

Ownership

regulation the process of applying rules and codes to the classification and self-regulation of media content

The Australian government created a series of laws and **regulations** to ensure that the television, radio and news services in Australia were owned by a diverse group of people. This was done to prevent one person buying a majority share in the available media outlets and dominating the media with a single voice or view. It also ensured that television stations have to broadcast 51% Australian content to protect the Australian media industry and prevent audiences from being overwhelmed by foreign content, so that audiences continue to see Australian stories on free-to-air television stations.

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ACTIVITY 3.11

Media ownership in Australia

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) regularly updates the current status of media ownership in Australia.

1 Research ACMA online and determine the laws, according to the *Broadcast Services Act* (1992), on media ownership for:
   - newspapers
   - radio stations
   - television stations.
2 Compare the potential economic or financial interests of the owners. How might this influence the production and criticism of their owners in news and current affairs?



FIGURE 3.31 As the former chairman and CEO of News Corporation, Rupert Murdoch has long been an influential player in the Australian media landscape.

3 Consider the public ownership of the ABC and SBS – are they restrained by the same economic interests? In your answer you should also explain the impact this has on their own news and current affairs stories.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 Why are Australian cinema attendances down?
2 Define the term 'binge-watcher'.
3 Do you consider yourself a 'binge-watcher'? If so, what sorts of content have you consumed?
4 Should streaming services like Netflix be forced to show a quota of Australian content?

Television

If you examine the possible reasons for Australians not attending the cinema, you may not look far beyond the availability of streaming and the impact it has on the media consumption of Australian audiences. In the days before streaming, audiences had to wait days and weeks to see their favourite programs which, if unsuccessful, meant that the commercial television stations had a dud on their hands and 10 to 12 weeks to go before the program ended. In the mid 2000s, the solution to this problem was to swamp screens with cooking and dating reality programs. While this is yet to fully change, streaming has played a role in changing audience behaviour.

The Australian content laws (as they are in 1992 law) do not apply to digital channels or streaming services like Netflix. So what does this mean for the future of the Australian story for our screens?

So far, it means more television production than ever before. As audiences are able to stream what they want when they want it, this has meant an appetite for television never before seen by media producers. Australian audiences are binge-watching more content than ever, and to keep up with demand, streaming services and commercial television are scrambling to create more drama than ever.

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ACTIVITY 3.12

Screen Australia information

Screen Australia is the governing body responsible for funding and supporting the telling and making of Australian stories on our screens. It provides regular updates on what has been produced in the past years and projects that are beginning production.

Investigate its website for the most up-to-date information on the production of television and cinema in Australia:

1. What trends can you detect? Is there more television or film being made?
2. How many of these are specifically 'Australian' stories?
3. How many of these are made for commercial television and how many are for streaming services?
4. How many of the productions (as best as you can determine) are funded by foreign investment (i.e. a Hollywood film shot in Australia)?
5. Outline the kind of future you predict for the Australian story on our screens.

Regulation

The Australian government also regulates and monitors what we see and hear on film and television through a variety of government bodies. Through the Classification Board, the government can apply an age classification for films and video games which provides a label that determines the appropriate audience for the media product. It makes its decisions based on the violent, sexual and general nature of the product for audiences.

FOCUS QUESTION

Define the term 'self-regulation'.

Free-to-air television stations are guided by less structure than the Classification Board as they are encouraged to 'self-regulate' to ensure the content they air meets the acceptable standards of the community at that time. (The justification for the decisions made by either of these bodies and the challenges they face can be explored in detail on page 399 of this book, whatever the implications.) In an age of limited funding and a growing online viewing environment, how relevant is this type of government control and what impact does it have on the producers of the content?

Australian identity

Unsurprisingly, politicians play a role in attempting to determine what is and is not 'Australian'. From suiting up in an Akubra hat, denim jeans and boots for a photo opportunity with a struggling farmer to labelling any rival politician they don't like as 'un-Australian', the meaning of what is and is not Australian is continually debated by our government.

In 2016, the New South Wales government began rewriting its secondary school curriculum and decided that its history books would indicate that the English explorer Captain Cook did not discover Australia, rather he invaded it. This reignited a political debate known as the 'History Wars', where conservative and liberal politicians argued over how Australia's relationship with its Indigenous people should be remembered. Some will argue that Australians bear no responsibility for the crimes of the past, whereas others

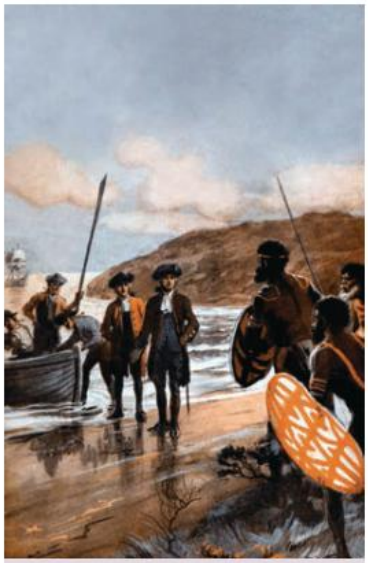


FIGURE 3.32 The meaning of what is and is not Australian is continually debated by our government.

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FOCUS QUESTION

How could the 'History Wars' debate affect Australian media production?

believe we should remember and recognise the impact European settlement has had on the Indigenous Australian people of Australia. Regardless of the stance taken by the individual, it presents an interesting possibility that politics, rather than the media, is attempting to define Australian history and, in doing so, the stories it tells about itself.

The ABC

FOCUS QUESTION

Do you think the ABC is politically biased? Why/why not?

One of the cornerstones of the Australian media industry is the ABC. From current affairs and children's television to inventive and innovative storytelling, the ABC has been telling Australian stories since its inception, free from commercial or political influence. However, its existence is under constant scrutiny for perceived political bias and impact on government funding.

One of the long-standing arguments about the ABC is that it is taxpayer-funded and, thus, an expense borne by Australians. The production of film, television, radio and online content is expensive and could be – and is – produced on a large scale by commercial operators. Australian governments who draw criticism from ABC news reporting have claimed it is politically biased, regardless of its claim to be independent. For instance, the panel current affairs show *Q&A* has been criticised for a perceived left-wing bias by successive Liberal governments.

However, commercial stations and producers, especially those in the news media, are owned by powerful people with political viewpoints that drive agendas and their audiences to see the world through their own perspective. Commercial considerations make it difficult for investigative news reports or comedic satire that is critical of major brands – who fund the commercial media companies with advertising – so these would never be heard and some Australian stories may not be told.



FIGURE 3.33 The ABC panel current affairs show *Q&A* has been criticised for a perceived left-wing bias by successive Liberal governments.

ACTIVITY 3.13

Hold a class debate. The debate topic is:

- 'Do we need the ABC today?'

Choose an unbiased moderator, as well as two panels of speakers, for and against.

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3.6 Consumption and reception of Australian stories

As you have seen in this chapter, the creation of the Australian identity and its stories has a long history that marries its colonial and Indigenous past. While technology and the global economy have begun to have significant effects on the impact and location of Australian content and the people that make it, the role of regulation, political influences and media ownership can all influence the production and creation of stories essential to the Australian public.

However, what Australians expect when they view Australian stories has often been in conflict with what they see. In the 1995 episode of *The Simpsons: Bart vs Australia* a very crude and rudimentary version of Australia was presented. When Bart runs foul of the Australian government via a prank call, he is confronted with the crude punishment of being kicked in the rear by the Prime Minister, known as the 'booting'. The crude representation of Australians, poor imitation of the accent and general mockery of Australians, made by an American cartoon, highlights the schism between local and foreign interpretations of Australian identity.

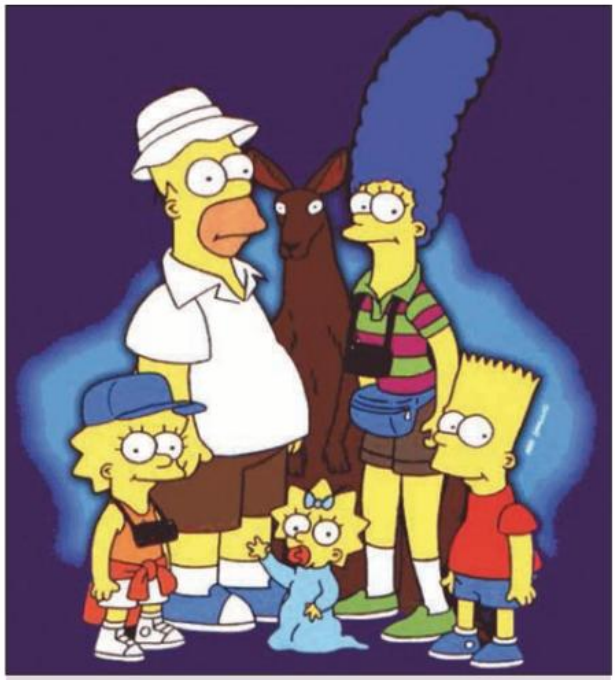


FIGURE 3.34 In the 1995 episode of *The Simpsons: 'Bart vs Australia'*, a very crude and rudimentary version of Australia was presented.

The demand for Hollywood superhero blockbusters has dominated viewing habits of Australian audiences for the past two decades. However, Australian audiences clearly see their own identity and stories as important. How they are consumed is changing. Trends you have read about in this chapter about the film industry indicate that Australian audiences are reluctant to head to the cinema, especially when there are so many streaming and online services available on their home television, laptop and phone. A by-product of this, however, has been the production of television stories to cater for insatiable audience tastes.

Today, Australian stories may not even come from the traditional platforms of radio, film and television. They may be online as a video, a game or a podcast and created independently of any form of commercial or government control. News services, once renowned for telling the events of a young nation back to itself, have succumbed to the power of online media and now battle with a wave of social media to tell accurate and clear narratives.

What we can determine is that the Australian identity defined at the beginning of this chapter, the larrikin, is not dead. However, who he or she is, has changed and how and where we see these heroes of our past and future is as diverse as the Australian audience. Indigenous Australians are no longer seen as the uncivilised other; however, their role in modern society is being reshaped by a new media environment that allows Indigenous authors to play a role in the shaping of their own media stories.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Watch the 'Bart vs Australia' Simpsons episode, or view the YouTube video 'Top 10 Simpsons "Bart vs Australia" Moments'.

1. Can you identify any larrikin characters, or other stereotypes?
2. How has Australia's history as a former British colony been represented?
3. Explain how 'Bart vs Australia' proves that it is important for Australian creators to tell Australian stories.

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3.7 *Cleverman*

CASE STUDY 3.2

Cleverman

The 2016 release of *Cleverman*, season 1, provides us with an excellent opportunity to examine the changing nature of Australian stories. It combines a number of features from a long history of Australian narratives, like rogue larrikins and feared outsiders; however, it imagines a future where some of the same problems within the Australian identity still exist.

Indigenous writer/director/producer Ryan Griffen wanted to create a superhero narrative that, while meeting the modern demand for stories that combine action with speculative futures, included an honest interpretation of Indigenous Dreaming stories and an insight into the experience of modern Indigenous Australians.

The series focuses on an inner-city hipster, Koen West, whose Aboriginal identity initially appears incidental to the plot. He lives in a future version of a divided Sydney where the general population is separated from a species of humans called the Hairypeople. Excluded by government propaganda and physical barriers in 'the Zone', the Hairypeople are feared for their physical differences and supernatural connection to the land. They are 'the other' in this future society.



FIGURE 3.35 Koen (Hunter Page-Lochard) in season one of *Cleverman*

A series of gruesome murders captivates the city and the 'Hairies' are blamed, justifying a forced closure of the Zone. As the tension increases a distant relative emerges to hand Koen the mantle of *Cleverman* – a power that thrusts a reluctant hero into the limelight to save the Hairypeople.

Analysis – representation in *Cleverman*

Deconstruct the representation of the Cleverman in the image above.

1. Discuss how technical codes like lighting and camera have been used to construct meaning within the image.
2. What symbolic codes have been used in the representation? Interpret how this helps add meaning to Koen's character.
3. Is the representation realistic? Consider your response and explain what contributes to the audience's understanding of the character.

Cleverman is a classic superhero narrative of an underdog using a unique power against authority. Koen is a complex character who lives a normal inner-city life. He works at a bar and has a diverse group of friends that identify him as anything but extraordinary. He is almost alienated from audiences in the first episode 'First Contact' when it is revealed he works as an informer for the government by identifying Hairies who tried to hide outside of the Zone by shaving themselves. Here is where the show strikes an excellent balance between past and present Australian stories. Koen, as an Indigenous man living in the city, has become disconnected from his identity and culture – the Hairypeople are outcast by mainstream society because they are connected and refuse to fit in. Koen is the classic representation of an anti-hero caught between two worlds.

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To create the representation of the Hairies, *Cleverman* has turned the table on the feared other and made this a symbol of strength against authority.

Analysis

Examine the construction of Figure 3.36.

1. Describe how the technical codes of camera, mise en scene and acting have been used to construct this image.
2. Explain the meaning created within the image. What kind of character does it represent?
3. Interpret why you think this shot was constructed in this way. What is Griffen attempting to communicate to the audience?
4. Explain how symbolic codes work within this image to make audiences think about the role of the other in Australian media products.



FIGURE 3.36 The use of camera and symbolism within scenes involving the Hairies and police draw on ideas of power and weakness. Pictured is Maliyan (Adam Briggs) in season 1, episode 1.

Griffen further embraces the notion of the other as a persecuted group. As the Hairies attempt to escape the Zone, many are forced to 'shave down' to hide their identity from mainstream society. The use of camera and symbolism within scenes involving the Hairies and police draw on ideas of power and weakness, positioning the audience to identify with and support the Hairies.

Analysis

Examine Figures 3.37 to 3.39.

1. How has acting been used to create meaning within each shot?
2. How have technical codes been used to create meaning for the audience?
3. How does *Cleverman* position the audience to feel about the Hairies?
4. How realistic is this representation? What experiences and knowledge can you incorporate to create meaning from the images?



FIGURE 3.37 Persecution of the Hairies creates a bridge between fictional and non-fictional representations of Indigenous Australians. Pictured are Araluen and Jyra (Tasma Walton and Val Wheldon) in season 1, episode 1.



FIGURE 3.38 *Cleverman* (2016) is a classic superhero narrative of an underdog using a unique power against authority. Pictured is Latani (Rarriwuy Hick) in season 1, episode 3.

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Cleverman draws on the history of Indigenous Australians within the news media. The image of Indigenous Australians in custody has long been an element of news production (yet rarely discussed in fictional narratives) and one that is used to further enhance the persecution of the Hairies and create a bridge between fictional and non-fictional representations of Indigenous Australians.

In 2017, Indigenous Australians made up 3% of the total Australian population; however, they make up 28% of those in Australia's prisons. The reasons for this are diverse; however, the image of Indigenous Australians in conflict with authorities and the prison system has long lingered in the public news media.



FIGURE 3.39 Australians in conflict with authorities and the prison system has long lingered in the public news media. Pictured is Djukara (Tysan Towney) in season 1, episode 1.

Here Griffen attempts to bring meaning to a common representation in Australian stories.

Analysis – analysing meaning in images

Examine Figure 3.40 and respond to the following questions:

1. Describe how mise en scene has been used to create meaning.
2. Describe how acting has contributed to the audience's understanding of this character.
3. Symbolism is a central element of the representation of the other in *Cleverman*; explain how these codes help position the audience to consider their own understanding of Indigenous representations in past Australian stories.

The representation of 'civilised society' has been used in countless stories to create strong and identifiable contrasts with 'the other'. In the same way, the heroic and noble actions of a superhero help highlight the real evil of the villain, while the use of civilisation and 'normal' society helps create a visible barrier for audiences between those included and those excluded from society. Consider the image from *Walkabout* in Activity 3.5 – the other is created with the civilising element of clothing. Examine the image in Figure 3.41 and explain how the contrast is created by the character Jarrod Slade (Iain Glen), the devious television executive.



FIGURE 3.40 Pictured is Djukara (Tysan Towney) being shaved by the brutal prison guards in season 1, episode 2.

Analysis – construction of character

1. Explain how symbolic codes have been used in the construction of this character.
2. Assess the elements of this character that you see as realistic.
3. Describe how these codes help separate the character from other characters within the show.

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Cleverman was conceived and directed using real stories of the Dreaming. Griffen worked with Indigenous elders to incorporate traditional stories with a superhero narrative. In pre-production the writers were forced to do away with a number of superhero narrative conventions as they would force adaptations of Dreaming stories. In combining the two elements, the influence of Indigenous Dreaming stories holds equal weight with modern and engaging narratives of a superhero fighting against the odds. Consider the representations of David Gulpilil in *Crocodile Dundee*. Dundee claimed he had 'telepathic' powers that were instantly mocked when Gulpilil's character stumbled into a tree – here, Griffen combines traditional ideas with the modern audience expectations of the superhero narrative.



FIGURE 3.41 The representation of 'civilised society' has been used in countless stories to create strong and identifiable contrasts. Pictured is Jarrod Slade (Iain Glen) in season 1, episode 1.

Analysis – representation and meaning in images

Carefully examine the representations of Uncle Jimmy and Koen. Uncle Jimmy is the older Cleverman who passes his power to the new.

Each image provides meaning to the marriage between Dreaming stories and modern fictional narratives.

1. Explain how lighting has been used to create meaning.
2. Explain how camera and mise en scene have been used to establish a relationship between old and new ideas in the stories.
3. Explain how Griffen has used each character to shift the traditional perception of the 'other' to a new one of respect.



FIGURE 3.42 Uncle Jimmy the elder (Jack Charles, in season 1, episode 1) passes his power to the new Cleverman, Koen.

Analysis – assessment of *Cleverman*

Contemporary Australian stories have shifted long-held ideas of who is the hero and who should be feared within fictional and non-fictional narratives. *Cleverman* works to combine the traditional Australian story ideas of fighting against authority with formerly disregarded ideas of Indigenous culture. As a class, you should examine the first episode of *Cleverman*, 'First Contact', and answer the following questions:

1. Discuss the use of media codes in the construction of one of the following *Cleverman* characters. For each character, you should explain how the codes help position the audience to understand the role each character plays in the story:
   - **a** Koen
   - **b** Djukara
   - **c** Jarrod Slade

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d Uncle Jimmy

e McIntyre.

2 Consider the use of symbolic codes in the construction of the various settings of *Cleverman*, the city and the Zone. Explain:

a What symbols have been used to separate the two groups in the media product?

b How realistic do you feel the settings are? What influence does this have on your understanding of and engagement in the narrative? You can draw on your own understanding and experience to respond.

c How does the setting reference other Australian stories (fictional and non-fictional) that include Indigenous Australians?



FIGURE 3.43 The creators of *Cleverman* worked with Indigenous elders to incorporate traditional stories within a superhero narrative. Pictured is Koen (Hunter Page-Lochard) in season 1.

3 Explain the common elements of Australian stories that would be familiar and engaging within *Cleverman*.

4 Identify and explain how two elements of Australian stories (identified above) work with contemporary engagement techniques common to superhero and action narratives to engage the audience.

5 Explain, using codes and conventions, how Griffen has positioned the audience to change the traditional perception of the other? You should use more than one character in your response.

3.8 *The Big Steal*

DIGITAL LINK

Visit the Interactive Textbook to access an additional Australian story case study on the film *The Big Steal* (1990, dir. Nadia Tass).

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CHAPTER REVIEW

Summing it all up

Australian stories have a rich and diverse history. The telling and sharing of Australian stories has ranged from Dreaming stories told over generations to non-fictional narratives of daring individuals tackling the greatest adversary, the Australian landscape. As you have seen, the nature of who Australian audiences value and engage with is intertwined with its history. A tough, witty, anti-authoritarian larrikin will always capture the imagination of Australian audiences. In the 1997 film *The Castle*, homeowner and proud Australian Darryl Kerrigan fights to protect his home from big business developers. Taking his fight to the Supreme Court of Australia, Kerrigan's naivety is no barrier to his desire to protect the rights of the underdog against adversity.

Regardless of where and how we access Australian stories, be they online, in print, or television and film, their creators will themselves work within the social, political and economic confines of an industry that is constantly evolving.

Review questions

1 Define the role Australia's colonial history had in shaping Australian stories.
2 Explain how Ashmead Bartlett's non-fictional story of the Anzacs contributed to the idea of the Australian larrikin.
3 Describe how these ideas have been translated into representations in fictional Australian stories.
4 Explain the role the landscape has played in Australian stories.
5 Define the role of the ABC in creating Australian stories.
6 Outline how 'the other' was traditionally represented in Australian stories.
7 Define the contrasting representations of traditional Australian characters in *Crocodile Dundee*.
8 How have new media forms allowed the evolution of new challenges to authority and larrikin characters? Explain.
9 Define the challenges facing Australian news media and the impact they have had on storytelling within the industry.
10 Outline the economic and political factors that influence the production of Australian stories.

Practice assessment questions

1 Explain the role of varying media forms and how they have contributed to the telling and sharing of Australian stories.
2 Analyse the development of the larrikin in Australian stories. Using examples, explain how this representation has changed over time.
3 Outline the evolution of 'the other' in Australian stories. How have fictional and non-fictional media products altered this representation over time?
4 Australian stories are created in a challenging environment. Outline the positive and negative elements of the political and economic challenges facing media production in Australia.
5 Define the role *Cleverman* plays in challenging historical representations in Australian stories.

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PART 2 UNIT 2
Narrative across media forms

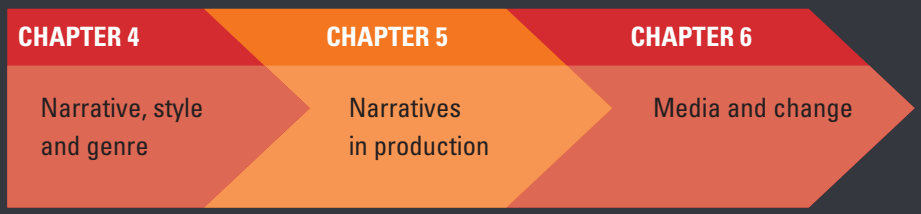
Drama is life with the dull bits cut out.

— Alfred Hitchcock

OVERVIEW

As you pick up your smartphone to take an image for your social media feed, consider the role you are playing in creating and distributing your own narrative. Your participation in the construction of this story is spread across your profile, detailing the places you have been, the experiences you have participated in, or the important events you have obscured with your own image in a selfie! Telling stories and constructing narratives has been essential to the practices of filmmaking, television, journalism and many other media forms. In these traditional media forms the construction of fictional and non-fictional narratives can be deconstructed, replicated and challenged now that you, the media participant, have become a creator with access to new and engaging technologies and the means of publishing and distributing your work.

WHAT'S AHEAD



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CHAPTER 4 AREA OF STUDY 1

NARRATIVE, STYLE AND GENRE

I think that even if you're wondering if two characters are ever going to kiss, drawing out the inevitability is part of the fun. Whatever the genre happens to be.

— JJ Abrams

OVERVIEW

When film director George Lucas set about making a science fiction film about an orphan living on a desert planet, surrounded by robots, dust and two moons, he had a vision for a great narrative. However, Lucas was so focused on developing *Star Wars: A New Hope* that the production process was strained, exhausting for cast and crew and nearly didn't see the light of day.

In this chapter, you will examine the range of challenges facing modern media producers. Narrative takes many forms and you will need to examine how and where new and old technologies tell the stories you want to read, view and make for yourself. You will need to evaluate the range of challenges that stand in the way of storytelling and navigate, just as Lucas did, a way to balance the demands of modern media production with the need to see and hear great stories.

FIGURE 4.1 (above): Still of Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher and Harrison Ford in *Star Wars*: *A New Hope* (1977)

OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the intentions of media creators and producers and the influences of narratives on the audience in different media forms.

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

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the development and communication of a distinctive style by media creators and producers in the construction of narratives in different media forms
- the manipulation of media codes and conventions by media creators and producers in the construction of narratives in different media forms
- the influences of historical and cultural context on the construction of narratives in different media forms
- the influences of institutional, economic, social and/or political factors and constraints on the work of media professionals
- notions of audience and engagement and how these influence the construction, production, distribution, consumption and reception of narratives
- the influence of narratives on audience engagement, consumption and reception in different media forms
- media language.

KEY SKILLS

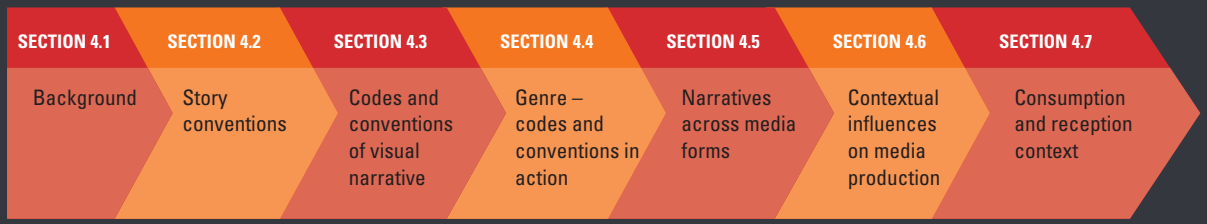
- analyse the distinctive style of media creators and producers in different media forms
- analyse the structure of narratives in different media forms
- analyse the influences of historical and cultural context on the construction of narratives in different media forms
- analyse the influences of institutional, economic, social and/or political factors and constraints on the work of media creators and producers in different media forms
- analyse and reflect on the way personal values relate to individual interest and engagement in narratives in different media forms
- analyse the influence of narratives on audience engagement, consumption and reception in different media forms
- use media language.

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KEY TERMS

- narrative
- three-act structure
- style
- genre
- story conventions
- codes and conventions
- historical context
- audience engagement
- political economy model

WHAT'S AHEAD



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4.1 Background

narratives in VCE Media, narrative is used to describe fictional and non-fictional media stories in all media forms. In narratives, the term 'story' refers to all events that contribute to the narrative.

mediated stories with structures and techniques shared and agreed upon by audiences over a long period of time

podcasting recorded audio narratives that can be downloaded online and listened to on mobile audio devices

Since the birth of human civilisation, **narratives** have formed the cornerstone of how we learn about, represent and interpret the world around us. They are used to create meaning, inspire imagination, educate and provide a platform to record history and ponder over the future. Narratives, or stories, can appear in a number of forms that provide different means for an audience to engage with them. They can be aural, visual or spoken. They can allow for a sedentary audience to absorb and form an understanding or can then be participatory, allowing the audience to contribute and build their own. Regardless of the shape or form, they are made to be shared and enjoyed. Each narrative is generated from a shared or **mediated** understanding of the codes and conventions that are essential to the form in which it is created.

For over 40 000 years, Australian Indigenous peoples have shared an oral history of Dreaming stories that are used to explain the creation of the world and the function of everything in it. The stories are transmitted from the elders of each family group to its youth to ensure that the stories are passed down across generations. Much in the same way that modern media can create a set of common understandings of symbolism or technical codes, the Dreaming creates a set of cultural norms for each group and serves as an encyclopedia of all common knowledge. The stories vary accordingly with the diverse and immense number of tribal and language groups that exist across the continent; however, most Dreaming stories carry the common features of animals, plants and the elements of the environment that connect Indigenous Australians to their culture and history. The role of story is therefore essential to understanding the world.

In this chapter, you will examine the construction of stories from around the world in multiple forms. You will examine the key codes and conventions of visual storytelling from film, documentary, **podcasting** and online forms. To understand how to approach your own storytelling, it is essential to examine the personal techniques of established media professionals. You will examine the media codes and conventions that have been tried, tested and adapted by these individuals to help drive their own narratives regardless of institutional, political and cultural constraints. You will also closely examine the context within which audiences consume and receive these media products as it can often affect the way stories are understood over time.

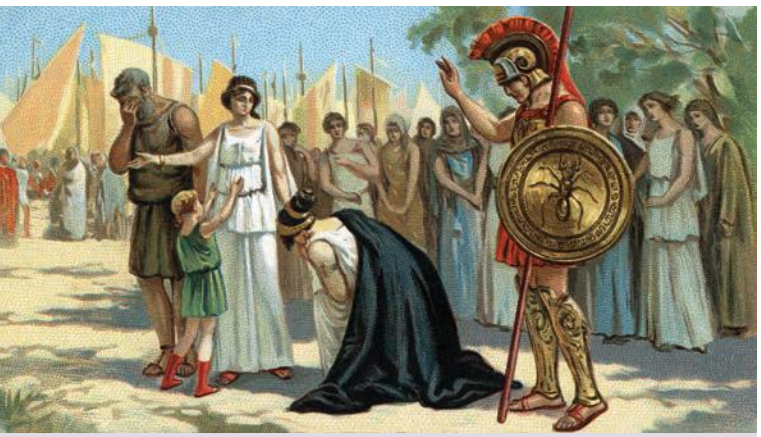


FIGURE 4.2 Ancient Greek tragedies often concluded with the tragic demise of the central character.

4.2 Story conventions

The telling of a good story has changed little across history. While the exact nature of a story can vary depending on the location from which it is told, what binds all stories together is structure. Without a logical structure, an audience can have difficulty following the sequence of events and becomes disengaged. Regardless of the direction, theme or ending of your own stories, you must adhere to a recognisable structure.

A classic narrative structure you would easily recognise would include a 'beginning', 'middle' and 'end', where a character is challenged with a crisis and finds a resolution. How that resolution is met depends heavily on the nature of the media product and where it

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was created. Ancient Greek tragedies, for example, often concluded with the tragic demise of the central character. Fast forward a few thousand years and Hollywood cinema would place the same central character in the familiar 'happy ending', where all is right again just as the credits start to roll. The audience for both narrative forms would clearly understand the structure and conventions that preceded their construction, thus making them more engaging.

The Hollywood **three-act structure** is one of the most common storytelling techniques used in modern media. It involves three simple stages or '**acts**' that tell a compelling narrative.

three-act structure the traditional dramatic structure of most fictional narrative films

acts the traditional dramatic segments in films and stage plays



FIGURE 4.3 The typical three-act structure

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 What is a narrative?
2 What is narrative structure?

Act 1 The set-up

In this stage we learn about the main characters and the setting we find them in. The context is often established here too. It could be in the known past, the distant future or the present day. Ideas must be established here for the audience to create a frame of reference to understand the direction of the story and set up their own expectations. For example, if a film introduces a young, inexperienced soldier in a wartime setting, the audience can realistically expect the young man to face some sort of challenge and conflict within the location, and quite possibly fear for his survival. In this act, there is usually some kind of 'inciting incident' that propels the story forward into the next act. For example, in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981, dir. Steven Spielberg) the character of Indiana Jones (Harrison Ford) is introduced as a daring archaeologist who is chased out of a jungle by an indigenous tribe when he attempts to steal a relic from a trap-laden tomb.

While his character and appearance are clear, the reason for viewing the film is not established until Jones is asked by the American government to recover a relic that is in danger of falling into the hands of Nazi Germans. In *Silence of the Lambs* (dir. Jonathan Demme), novice FBI agent Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster) is on the trail of a dangerous serial killer. To get into the mind of the killer she meets with an already incarcerated cannibal named Hannibal Lecter (Sir Anthony Hopkins). The disturbing first meeting between Starling and Lecter sets up two storylines – one of their developing relationship and the other of her hunt for the serial killer.



FIGURE 4.4 Still of Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981)

Act 2 The confrontation

This act usually takes up the bulk of the story and is where most of the challenges are faced by the main characters. Now that they have a reason or purpose that was established in the first act (for example, to catch

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sub-plots secondary storylines that exist within narratives to add to and sometimes are involved in the main storyline

a killer or escape one!) they must attempt and meet a range of challenges that build in significance as the act moves on. The goal of the second act is to slowly build the drama to a big climax. In the second act of *Jaws* (1975, dir. Steven Spielberg), the main character Sheriff Brody (Roy Scheider) encounters an increasingly deadly series of shark attacks on the people of his small town. He determines that they will not cease until he confronts the shark himself. This places Brody on a boat, away from the safety of land, and in the environment of the shark with a shark expert and an unpredictable boat captain. The confrontation is soon to follow.



FIGURE 4.5 Promotional still of Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster) and Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins) in *Silence of the Lambs* (1991)

Another way to engage audiences within Act 2 is to employ **sub-plots** or secondary storylines that contribute to the main narrative. Take the end of Act 1 in *Silence of the Lambs*, where two storylines are established: as Starling and Lecter's relationship develops, and it allows the FBI agent to get closer to her main goal of capturing the serial killer. However, the complications that result from the sub-plot of the two working together leads to the potential for Lecter's escape. The purpose of Act 2 is to gradually raise the stakes facing the main character and build towards a crucial final act that will resolve the story.

Act 3 The resolution

By the beginning of Act 3, it must be clear to the audience that for the main character there is only one way forward. A final confrontation or effort must be undertaken to ensure that the goals of the main character are met. In a number of stories, this involves a clash between good and evil or the hero and the villain. In this final act, the creator of the story usually attempts to meet the expectations created for the audience in the first act. For example, that soldier in the war setting you read about back in Act 1 must now complete one last heroic action that ensures his survival. It is always possible to tweak these outcomes and the young man can certainly lose his life in the resolution of the film; however, it is essential that some element of his quest or journey is met in this final act. For example, the beginning of Act 3 in *Jaws* arrives when Brody first encounters the killer shark and utters the line 'we're gonna need a bigger boat'; the audience is thus propelled into the final confrontation with the shark.



FIGURE 4.6 (Left) Brody (Roy Scheider) and Hooper (Richard Dreyfuss) in *Jaws* (1975), and (right) the famous poster for the film

During the sequence on the open water, the crew battles the shark as it attempts to sink the boat. The conflict is resolved when Brody successfully destroys the shark and is seen floating back to land on the debris of the destroyed boat. While Lecter is successful in his escape in *Silence of the Lambs*, Starling is equipped with all the knowledge she needs to find the serial killer's home. Locked inside and unable to call for back-up,

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Starling takes down the killer alone and rescues the girl who was to be his next victim. Ultimately, Starling is successful in her quest to catch the killer.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What is an act?
2. Define the three act structure.
3. Explain each act's role.
4. What is the purpose of the 'inciting incident' in the narrative?

Elements of a good narrative

The structure of the Hollywood three-act narrative is not fixed. There are no hard and fast rules. It is flexible and can involve a happy, sad or ambiguous ending. Regardless of how the narrative is teased out, there are some essential elements that ensure the audience can recognise and follow the action.

Step 1: Establish normal

When introducing a character and narrative, the audience needs to meet them in a normal environment. This helps the audience gather the visual and sound cues to establish who their character is and how to identify with them. A good story follows a course of events to a conclusion. Often these stories challenge what the audience understands as safe and normal in order to take them on the journey towards the resolution. For example, if the main character is a lawyer, the audience would expect to see them in court, arguing a case, or in an office environment. However, 'normal' does not necessarily have to be the everyday and mundane – it just has to be normal for the character the audience meets. If it is a child living in a futuristic world, the audience would see them acting and interacting with their futuristic world as though it *is* normal. A doctor heading into a conflict zone needs to be seen in the safety of her home before she travels to the scene of horror and challenges. The author of the story must establish normal so the audience can understand when normal has been disrupted.

Step 2: Disrupt normal

Usually occurring towards the end of Act 1 in a Hollywood narrative, the disruption of the main character's life places them in an extraordinary situation. This is where the audience can see the character develop in the face of adversity. Director Steven Spielberg is famous for placing ordinary people in extraordinary situations. In *E.T.* (1982) he placed a friendly alien creature in the home of ordinary suburban kids. *Jaws*' Sheriff Brody was a sensible family man and policeman faced with a deadly sea creature casually snacking on his townsfolk. Even in films that Spielberg made based around historical events, such as 2015's *Bridge of Spies*, he placed a normal criminal lawyer in the midst of a dangerous international incident between Cold War Russia and America. The use of the ordinary character in the extraordinary situation is a useful technique to engage audiences, because it allows them to identify with the character in a more meaningful way as they can imagine their own responses to the challenges the character is about to face.

Step 3: Create turning points

For the narrative to move forward and generate more engagement for the audience, the author needs to create a series of challenging turning points that change the direction of the story. If the main character can solve one problem, that must create an even bigger one that also needs resolving. In a Hollywood three-act narrative there are generally three major turning points that drive a story forward. In Edgar Wright's 2004 zombie comedy *Shaun of the Dead* the main character Shaun (Simon Pegg) first escapes his zombie housemate with his sidekick Ed, which finds them out on the streets which are infested with a nation of zombies. In his quest to find safety and rescue



FIGURE 4.7 Still image from the movie *Shaun of the Dead* (2004)

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his ex-girlfriend, the pair constantly escalates the level of danger through their efforts to survive. After surviving several close encounters, Shaun moves closer to becoming a zombie victim. Through an ill-conceived plan to hide out at a local pub, Shaun has invited a final showdown with the zombie hordes that will endanger his girlfriend, his mother and best friend Ed. By gradually escalating the tension and creating multiple turning points, Wright was able to place more and more challenges in front of Shaun's character and thus keep the audience engaged in the story and in their own expectations for Shaun's resolution.

Step 4: Develop the characters

Narratives that resonate with audiences often involve characters who learn and change throughout the story. It is a popular element for audiences who are attempting to identify with the main character. This development may take the character through a series of difficult events, or it may come through realisations or relationships with other characters. The 'coming of age' story is a classic story structure that places a naive and inexperienced character against adversity. By the end of the story the character has 'come of age' and is now stronger, wiser and more experienced. Character development shows the progression of weak to strong; or for an antagonist, it can often chart the transition from good to evil. In 2007's *Juno* (dir. Jason Reitman), the main character of the same name (Ellen Page) is introduced as an intelligent but precocious 16-year-old who discovers she is pregnant after a spontaneous romantic encounter with her long-time friend Paulie (Michael Cera). After considering and rejecting the idea of terminating the pregnancy, Juno decides to give her unborn child to a married couple who are looking to adopt. Through the challenges of pregnancy and the public perceptions of a 16-year-old mother, Juno edges closer to the birth of the child. Along the journey she learns more and more about the nature of parenting and relationships. Her final act is to honour her commitment to the older couple and reconnect with Paulie. At the resolution of the story, Juno has developed into a stronger, more moral and empathetic character. The broader reason for developing a character across a story is to see the character learn and employ new skills to meet the final resolution.



FIGURE 4.8 Still from the movie *Juno* (2007)

Step 5: Restore normal

Once a story has introduced a character, and disrupted their 'normal' through a series of turning points that developed the character, a return to normal or the introduction of a 'new normal' will resolve the story. Regardless of the state of normal, it is an important element of a story to conclude and leave the audience where they began. While this can always be challenged and the audience can be left without a resolution, it should attempt to leave the audience with the ability to create their own interpretation of the ending. A classic restoration of normal in romantic comedies sees the protagonist living happily with the love interest. A 'happy ending' leaves the audience satisfied that the challenges of the main character were met. In superhero films, the villain may be defeated, or lives to fight another

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day. However, what is essential is that the superhero has used their power to save society from evil and returned it to normality and safety.

In the 2009 movie *500 Days of Summer* (dir. Marc Webb), the story **remixes** the resolution in the traditional 'boy meets girl narrative' when it tells of the 500 days the main character Tom (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) spends with girlfriend, Summer (Zooey Deschanel). Told in a non-chronological order (the film opens on day 488) the story dips in and out of various stages in the relationship between Tom and Summer. Early in the film the audience sees Tom in the depths of despair as the relationship has come to an end. This would normally appear somewhere towards the end of Act 2! However, the resolution of the film is not in the reunification of Tom and Summer, but rather in Tom leaving his job and pursuing his dream of architecture. The audience learns that the story is not so much about the relationship Tom has with Summer, but what the character learns throughout the process.

remix a method of using a variety of different storytelling techniques to create a new one

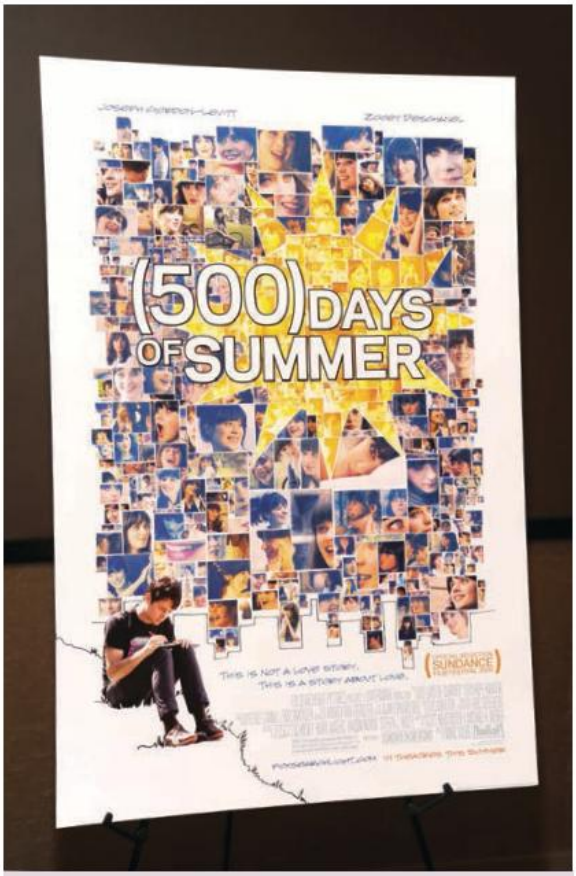


FIGURE 4.9 Poster for the movie *500 Days of Summer* (2009)

ACTIVITY 4.1

Investigate the story structure of these popular films:

- *Psycho* (1960, dir. Alfred Hitchcock)
- *Hail, Caesar!* (2016, dir. Joel & Ethan Coen)
- *Whiplash* (2014, dir. Damien Chazelle)
- *The Usual Suspects* (1995, dir. Bryan Singer)
- *The Thin Red Line* (1998, dir. Terrence Malick)

1. Work in groups to deduce if each film can be broken into three acts.
2. Briefly explain what happens to the main character in each act.
3. Explain how the character's 'normal' is disrupted.
4. Explain how the character finds a resolution to the crisis.
5. Does the film challenge the normal three-act narrative structure? If so, explain how it does this.

STUDY TIP

You can research the 'synopsis' of each film online. The synopsis will tell you what takes place throughout the entire film.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. List the five elements of a good narrative.
2. Briefly summarise each element.

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4.3 Codes and conventions of visual narrative

Visual stories like film, television and online content share a number of common codes and conventions. These include the key elements of narrative that you have read about earlier and they are usually combined with specific technical media codes that contribute to the development and construction of a story.

Media conventions are the substance and content of a film. They are what make up the story of the movie. These include:

- character
- story **arcs**
- cause and effect
- structuring of time
- point of view.

arc the overall span and progression of the story as well as what happens to a character during the drama

Media codes are the technical elements that construct the media conventions. These include:

- camera
- sound
- acting
- setting
- mise en scene and visual composition
- lighting
- editing.



FIGURE 4.10 Media codes, such as music, must suit the audience.

Without media conventions, there would be nothing for the media codes to communicate. Likewise, if there were no codes, there would be no conventions.

Visual narratives also need to be created with specific audiences in mind. Depending on the audience, the director will use media codes in certain ways in order to engage them and gain their interest in the story. If media codes are not suited for an audience, the audience won't be interested and the story won't be communicated properly. How a director uses media codes to engage audiences of 50-year-olds differs greatly from how they would aim to engage 16-year-olds.

FOCUS QUESTION

What is the difference between media codes and media conventions?

ACTIVITY 4.2

Selection of media codes

Consider the following questions:

1. How might a film director use music if they were trying to interest an audience of 50-year-olds?
2. What about an audience of 16-year-olds?
3. Identify some songs or styles of music that would suit each group.
4. Compare the two. Why would some music suit the 50-year-olds and not the 16-year-olds?
5. Why would some music suit the 16-year-olds and not the 50-year-olds?

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Media conventions

Character

In narrative, a central character, known as the protagonist, drives the action forward. To create engagement, the creator of the story will place an antagonist in their way to prevent them from achieving their goals. If you think back to the first chapter of this book, where you learned about female heroes, they were invariably faced with some manner of male villain who attempted to thwart their plans.

However, how these characters appear, and how they are constructed and reveal themselves, is essential to engaging stories. Usually, the protagonist must meet a challenge and resolve a crisis or confrontation to 'return to normal'. It is important for the audience to initially understand and engage with them first. For the audience to engage with a character from a comic strip, for example, the author must use captions that narrate elements of the protagonist that piece together an identity that appeals to the reader. A fictional podcast relies exclusively on the narration of the host to create a 'theatre of the mind' for listeners. Visual narratives employ their own codes and conventions to introduce and develop key figures in the narrative. Characters can develop through relationships with other characters. Be it through friends or against adversity, part of an audience's engagement in a narrative comes through the journey a character takes towards their goal.

ACTIVITY 4.3

Consider this idea for a possible opening shot from a visual narrative. Our main character steps out into a busy street on her way to work. As she attempts to cross the street to catch a bus, she spies an old lady struggling to get across the road. The oncoming traffic seems unaware of the old lady and danger is imminent. Here, the author of the story has two choices:

1. The main character could rush back and save the old lady's life.
2. Or she could shrug her shoulders, turn and ignore the calamity that follows.
   - Explain how the choices define the character.
   - Discuss how an author could use either option to position the audience to understand the role that character may play in the narrative.

ACTIVITY 4.4

A cowboy riding off into the sunset is common in Western films to indicate that the main character has achieved their goal.

1. Examine all of the elements of this image, both symbolic and technical.
2. Evaluate how it indicates that these characters have achieved their goal.



FIGURE 4.11 Cowboys riding into the sunset

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FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 What is a sub-plot?
2 How does it usually relate to the main plot/storyline?

Story arcs

The main storyline is the idea that begins at the start of the movie and continues to the end. There can also be sub-plots. These are used to give us more information about the main character or to create tension as they interact with the main storyline.

In the movie *Alien* (1979, dir. Ridley Scott), the main storyline follows the attempts by Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) and her spaceship crew to survive the relentless attacks by an alien creature. However, the sub-plot follows the fractured relationship between Ripley and Ash (Ian Holm), the science officer on the ship who wants to capture the alien alive. This sub-plot adds an additional element to the main storyline as Ash's motivations endanger the whole crew. In 2015's *The Martian*, the main storyline follows the attempt of Mark Watney (Matt Damon) to survive while stranded on Mars. The sub-plot follows the efforts of scientists back on earth to rescue him. The two work together and rejoin at the conclusion of the film as the efforts of both result in Watney's escape.

AMAZING FACT

Film narratives are not always told in a traditional linear fashion. Plenty of films employ a non-linear narrative – stories that subvert traditional story patterns. For example, see Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) and *Pulp Fiction* (1994), or Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000).

Cause and effect

A movie is a series of causes and effects. It is what pushes the story forward. If there was no cause and effect, no conflict or no problem to solve, the movie would be very dull. This chain reaction can be based on events within a scene, such as cause: the room is dark = effect: the character turns on a light. This of course can bring about other effects, such as if the light being turned on reveals something unpleasant or scary in the room that the character was otherwise unaware of. Cause and effect is used to instigate a motivation for a character. In *The Impossible* (2012, dir. JA Bayona) the arrival of a large tsunami wave breaks up the main character's family and places them on a quest for survival and reunification.

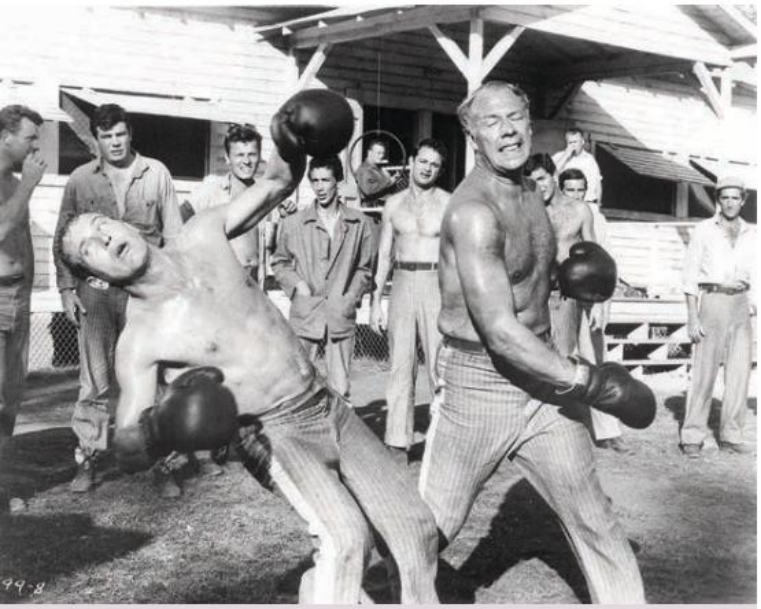


FIGURE 4.12 In *Cool Hand Luke* (1967), Luke (Paul Newman) takes a punishing beating from Dragline (George Kennedy). In terms of cause and effect, this beating (cause) results in Luke gaining respect (effect) from his fellow prison inmates.

Cause and effect can also underpin the characters' actions over the course of a movie, motivating them to complete a larger goal. In the film *Cool Hand Luke* (1967, dir. Stuart Rosenberg), Luke (Paul Newman) refuses to give in to the prison bully Dragline (George Kennedy). During their fight, Luke continues to get up in the face of punishing blows from Dragline. His decision not to concede defeat earns him the respect of his fellow inmates and ultimately, Dragline, thus placing Luke in a better position to use the help of the inmates to escape.

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ACTIVITY 4.5

Fairy tales – the three little pigs

Think of the story of the three little pigs.

1 Outline how the process of cause and effect operates in this fairy tale.

2 Briefly summarise how one event leads to another.

Structuring of time

The magic of narrative is that it doesn't have to follow the normal flow of time. There can be flashbacks and flash-forwards. Time can be **expanded**. Time can also be **contracted**. We also don't need to see unnecessary incidents; we can skip to all the interesting events.

Communicated through the production element of editing, structuring of time allows the director to create a narrative that makes sense and is engaging to the audience.

expanded time the lengthening of time so it takes more time than it would in reality to pass to allow the audience to absorb multiple details

contracted time the shortening of time so it takes less time than it would in reality to pass

Point of view

Point of view refers to the perspective from which the narrative is told. Another way of thinking of this is by contemplating whose side the audience is on. It can be indicated by a voice-over or by the audience only knowing as much as the main character.

The point of view can change, however, from scene to scene to make the movie more exciting. For example, the protagonist is playing cards with another character, but unbeknown to the protagonist, under the table is a bomb. If the perspective is restricted, and we only know as much as the protagonist, we won't know that the bomb is about to explode. If it does, we are just as surprised as the main character.

Since the rise of **first person** shooter video games, first person stories and film techniques have also risen. In the 2016 film *Grimsby* (dir. Louis Leterrier), a frenetic action sequence was shot entirely in the first person perspective. *Hardcore Henry* (dir. Ilya Naishuller), released in 2015, was shot entirely in the first person from eye level, taking the audience directly into the body, thoughts and words of the main character for the duration of the film. Both films were inspired by a rise of short-form stories on YouTube that shot action sequences in the first person, copying the style of popular games like *Call of Duty* and *Doom*. The view creates a heavily **restricted narrative** as it is only told from the direct and peripheral vision of the main character.

If, on the other hand, the point of view is unrestricted and we are informed both that there is a bomb and that the protagonist is unaware, we, as an audience, will be urging the protagonist to either notice the bomb or leave the room. In both cases we are engaged with the narrative, but for very different reasons.

Unrestricted narratives are often told from an outsider or 'third person view'. If two characters are in a room arguing, the audience is in there with them, but unlike restricted or first person stories, the audience is simply observing in an omnipotent position where the characters are not aware of the audience's presence. This point of view allows for the audience to gather more information and establish hierarchies between groups of characters. In the television series *Seinfeld* (1989–98) the audience observed the action of the main characters from a fixed position in the apartment of the main character Jerry. As the show revolved around all four main characters, it allowed for an unrestricted view of the story and the actions of each story.

first person a singular perspective from which a story is told, often from the eyes and body of the storyteller

restricted narrative a story that withholds information from the audience

unrestricted narrative a story that reveals all elements and information to the audience

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ACTIVITY 4.6

Examine the two images below and respond to the questions provided.

Image 1: *Sherlock*

This is an image taken from the TV series *Sherlock*. The story of the detective Sherlock Holmes has often been told as a restricted point of view in order to create suspense. The audience must follow and solve each case in real time with Sherlock.

1 Carefully examine and list what has been included within the image.
2 Propose what could have potentially been omitted from the image. How does this restrict the audience's view of the story?



FIGURE 4.13 Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock Holmes in *Sherlock* (2010–)

Image 2: *The Hurt Locker*

This image is from the film *The Hurt Locker* (2008, dir. Kathryn Bigelow). The story consists of three members of a bomb detonation squad in the Iraq War and their quest to survive. The audience follows the goals of all three characters.

1 Carefully examine and list what has been included within the image.
2 Explain why all of these elements have been selected and what they explain about the broader story.
3 Compare and explain the power of the two images to present point of view and the reason each could potentially engage an audience.



FIGURE 4.14 Still from *The Hurt Locker* (2008)

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 What is cause and effect?
2 How can the structuring of time make a narrative more engaging for an audience?
3 In terms of narrative, define the term 'point of view'.

Media codes

Camera

Camera techniques can vary the meaning of any story. Camera use refers to the size of the shot used, the angle it is on, the depth of focus employed and the movement of the shot. It also refers to the type of camera and method that has been used to record the action.

Shot sizes

The shot size used depends upon what the director wants to draw the audience's attention to. The closer the camera is to the action, the closer the audience will be drawn in, and the more intimate the scene will become.

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- An **extreme close-up** is used to bring the audience's attention to something very specific; it could be a character's eye reacting to something or an object that has great importance to the plot.

extreme close-up framing something small in great detail, such as eyes or a key



FIGURE 4.15 An example of an extreme close-up (ECU)

- A **close-up** is also used to bring the audience's attention to a character's facial expression. Obviously with more of the face visible, it allows the audience to gain a better idea of how they are feeling. Close-ups can also be used to bring attention to an object.

close-up framing showing something in detail, such as a face



FIGURE 4.16 An example of a close-up (CU)

- **Medium shots** are used to allow the audience to still see facial expressions, but also get an idea of what the character is wearing and a hint of the environment they are in. Medium shots are often used when characters are speaking within a shot.

medium shots framing showing something mid-sized, such as two people talking from the shoulders up



FIGURE 4.17 An example of a medium shot (MS)

- **Long shots** allow us to clearly see what a character is wearing. The audience gets an idea of their body language and a clear understanding of the location that they are in.

long shots (also known as wide shots) framing showing something large, such as a person walking down a street



FIGURE 4.18 An example of a long shot (LS)

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- **Establishing shots** are usually used at the beginning of a scene to provide the audience with a clear image of where the character is and where the action will take place. As the character is usually a distance from the camera, we may only get clues to how they are feeling through body language.

establishing shot usually a long or wide shot at the start of a new scene indicating where the action for the scene will take place



FIGURE 4.19 An example of an establishing shot

Camera angles

- **Low angles** are used to communicate a sense of power and authority in a character. The more severe the angle, the more power there is.

low angles where the camera is positioned low and points upwards at a subject



FIGURE 4.20 An example of a low-angle shot (looking up)

- **High angles** are used to communicate a lack of power and inferiority in a character. The more severe the angle, the less power there is.

high angles where the camera is positioned high and points down at a subject



FIGURE 4.21 An example of a high-angle shot (looking down)

- **Eye-level shots** are used to communicate neutrality in a character. These are used most commonly when two characters of equal standing are in a conversation.

eye-level shots where the camera is positioned at a neutral angle, often used for conversation scenes



FIGURE 4.22 An example of an eye-level shot

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AMAZING FACT

The point of view (POV) shot is another common way the camera is used in screen narratives, where the camera becomes the eyes of a character. Another, rarer, type of camera angle is called a Dutch angle, and this is where an eye-level shot might be tilted to a strange angle, and is not level. This angle is often combined with POV shots to show that a character is drunk, has been drugged, or that something else is very wrong with a situation.

Focus

- **Shallow depth of field** is when the object in the foreground is in focus, but the rest of the shot is out of focus. This is used to draw the audience's attention to the primary object in the shot.
- **Medium depth of field** is when the foreground and mid-ground are in focus, but the background is out of focus. This is used to draw the audience's attention to more in the shot than just a shallow depth of field.
- **Deep focus** is when the entire shot is in focus. This is used to communicate depth and distance within a shot.

shallow depth of field where the main subject of an image is in sharp focus and the background is blurred

medium depth of field where the majority of an image is in focus, with some background blur

deep focus where the entirety of an image is in focus

ACTIVITY 4.7

Let's consider shot sizes and when each kind of shot is appropriate.

What type of shot and angle would you use for the introduction of the following characters? Justify your decisions.

- An angry policeman
- A sad toddler
- A happy circus clown
- A businesswoman walking to work
- An artist painting a picture
- A footballer running onto the MCG
- The prime minister giving a speech
- A trapped prisoner
- A vicious monster
- An elderly person crossing the road

Camera movement

- **Pans** are when the camera moves horizontally left or right on a fixed axis.
- A **tilt shot** is when the camera moves vertically up or down on a fixed axis.
- **Dolly or tracking shot** is when the camera moves forward, back, left or right to follow action within a shot.
- **Steady cam** is when the camera moves, simulating the look of being 'handheld'. This is used to provide a more 'authentic' feel to the footage; however, too much of it can produce an authentic feel of seasickness.

pans where the camera moves side to side from a fixed position

tilt shot where the camera tilts up and down from a fixed position

dolly or tracking shot where the camera is placed on a cart with wheels or on tracks and follows the action

steady cam a device that allows a cameraperson to mount the camera to their body to follow the action

Sound

Sound, also referred to as audio, can refer to dialogue, sound effects and music. Audio can also be defined as being *diegetic* or *non-diegetic*. If both the characters within the movie and the audience can hear it, it is diegetic and is used to further create the reality of the movie.

If only the audience can hear it, it's non-diegetic and is used to communicate information. Usual uses of non-diegetic audio are a voice-over, a narrator or an internal monologue, or to indicate the mood or emotion within a scene through the use of a soundtrack.

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FIGURE 4.23 Music and sound effects are essential tools for creating mood and emotion in film. Pictured is legendary composer John Williams recording the soundtrack for *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981).

Mise en scene

This is a French term that literally means 'put in the scene'. It refers to all the visual elements within a shot, scene or film. Aspects such as setting, costume, props, lighting and acting are all referred to when discussing mise en scene. This also relates to the colours used within the visual elements, as these can convey further levels of information.

Consider the image on the next page from the German film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920, dir. Robert Wiene). It is an extreme example of mise en scene, as the director, Robert Wiene, wanted to use every element at his disposal to suggest a psychologically disturbed atmosphere (the story is about a sleepwalker being controlled by

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Research a 'stinger' in film and TV music.
2. Define the term in your own words and note whether it is generally a diegetic or non-diegetic use of sound.

ACTIVITY 4.8

Certain instruments or music are used to indicate certain moods.

1. Write down what music you think would be used to create the following emotions within a story:
   - happiness
   - sadness
   - love
   - fear
   - excitement
   - anxiety.
2. Describe the genre of music, the type of instruments used and the tempo or speed of the music you've selected.
3. Justify your response.

ACTIVITY 4.9

Practical task

The effective use of audio can change the mood of the same scene.

1. Get into pairs and shoot a short 15-second sequence of a character walking into a room, who then stops, looks around the room and walks off camera.
2. Place your 15-second clip into an editing program and copy three versions onto the editing timeline.
3. Now find or create three musical scores that match three of the moods you identified in the previous activity.
4. Place the musical scores against the three copies of the 15-second sequence and examine the results.
5. View your three clips and in your pair, decide how effective the music was in creating a distinctive mood within the clip. Write a short paragraph that explains your findings for each clip.

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a murderer without their knowledge). The image shows how a filmmaker can use every element of mise en scene to visually enhance the narrative.



FIGURE 4.24 A still from the German Expressionist film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920)

Visual composition

This is similar to mise en scene, in that it encompasses the visual elements within a shot, scene or film; however, visual composition specifically refers to the placement and relationship of all these elements within a shot. For instance, two characters within the same shot can be shown as being distant in their relationship with each other if there is a large space or object between them.

Alternatively, two characters in close proximity to each other within a shot can show a strong relationship. A character can also be shown as being powerful or authoritative if they are sitting at a desk in an office with a wall covered with the mounted heads of dangerous animals behind them.

ACTIVITY 4.10

Looking at visual composition

1. Carefully examine the visual composition of this shot from the film *Cool Hand Luke*.
2. Identify and list all of the elements within the image.
3. Propose what the composition of the image suggests about the relationship between the characters.
4. Is there a hierarchy between the characters present? Explain how the visual composition suggests this.



FIGURE 4.25 Still from the film *Cool Hand Luke* (1967)

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What is mise en scene?
2. What is visual composition?
3. Explain the difference between mise en scene and visual composition.

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for more information about visual composition, including explanations about the 180-degree rule, as well as the rule of thirds.

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Acting

Acting refers not only to the actor's performance within a film, but also the expectation that is given to the audience based upon an actor's previous work.

An actor's performance can refer to their use of body language, facial movements and vocal expression to communicate how the character that they are portraying is feeling. For example, the actor smiles to indicate that their character is happy. Remember, it is always the actor who is acting, not the character. The actor may be smiling; it does not mean, however, that they are happy.

Acting is an essential element within a story that is a tool of the author and creator as much as it is of the actor. Great actors in film have always worked with the director to extract the most meaning from every use of the voice, movement and action. Certain actors in film and television are known for playing particular roles and this can assist the audience in understanding the context and possible direction of a story.

ACTIVITY 4.11

Examine the images of the following actors.



FIGURE 4.26 Still from *Alice in Wonderland* (2010, dir. Tim Burton)



FIGURE 4.27 Still from *The Hunger Games* (2012, dir. Gary Ross)

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FIGURE 4.28 Still from the TV show *New Girl* (2011–)



FIGURE 4.29 Still from *Oblivion* (2013, dir. Joseph Kosinski)

1. Identify the acting used within the image. How is the body positioned? What facial expressions are being employed? What understanding of the character does it create?
2. Identify the actor – investigate the previous stories they have appeared in and the type of character they have played. List four that are similar.
3. Recommend how this actor could potentially provide an audience with an understanding of the character they will play in a story created in the future.

Setting

The setting refers to the physical location and the construction of where scenes take place. This can impact upon the characters and narrative as the setting may prove to be an obstacle that the main character must overcome in order to achieve their goals, or it could be a symbolic reflection of their state of mind. Setting also refers to the time of year in which a movie is set. This plays an important part in telling the audience what to expect from the storyline. So, if an Australian movie is set in January, an audience would expect summer holidays and hot temperatures.

The time of day a film or scene is set in can also contribute greatly to not only the audience's expectations, but also to the fortunes of the character. A desert at night time presents different challenges to a desert during the day; likewise for a city street.

This is also true about the period in which a movie is set. If a movie is set in 2017, we expect the character to call for help using their mobile phone. However, if a movie is set in the 1950s, the characters will need to overcome the problem in a different way.

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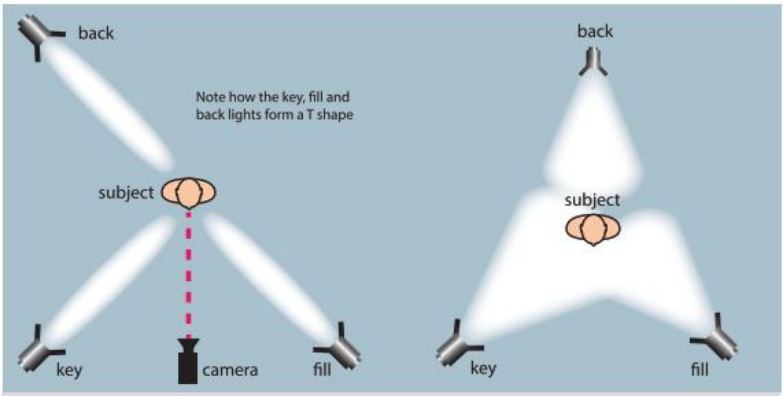


FIGURE 4.30 An example of a three-point lighting set-up

Lighting

Lighting refers to the lighting used by the director to simulate particular times of day or to indicate specific moods within a scene. Lighting can be naturalistic, imitating lighting found in reality. Lighting can also be expressive, communicating, in an artistic way, how a character is feeling or the mood of a particular scene.

The most common form of lighting is the **three-point lighting** set-up. This consists of the key light (the main and brightest light of the three that is shone on the subject), the fill light (a less bright light that is used to the side of the subject to reduce shadows caused by the key) and the back light (used to highlight the edge of the subject in order to separate them from the background). The mood that is needed in a shot will determine the intensity, direction and colour of the light used.

Lighting can also be high-key or low-key. High-key is when there are multiple lights being used to remove any shadows within a shot. Television sitcoms are usually shot with this lighting technique.

Low-key refers to a low level of light being used, usually in a specific direction in order to create shadows, either in the background or across characters for dramatic effect. Sinister or duplicitous qualities of characters are often identified or suggested through the use of low-key lighting, in particular through shadows being cast across the character's face.

three-point lighting a standard lighting method used in visual media such as film, video, still photography, theatre and computer-generated imagery

ACTIVITY 4.12

Examining lighting

Carefully examine the use of lighting in this still from the film *Dark City* (1998).

1. Identify and list the styles of lighting employed in this image.
2. Explain how the lighting provides information about the character in the foreground and those in the background.
3. How could other lighting styles be used to change the meaning of this image? Explain your response.



FIGURE 4.31 Still from the movie *Dark City* (1998, dir. Alex Proyas)

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FOCUS QUESTION

How could the media code of lighting help progress a narrative?

Editing

Editing is the assembling of footage together to construct the film. It can refer to the duration of shots on the screen. If there are many shots in quick succession, a scene is usually fast-paced with lots of action. There is usually a pacing to these shots that corresponds to the actions of the characters on screen, or the music being played.

If there are fewer shots and they remain on the screen for a longer period of time, the scene is usually calmer. Editing can also refer to the order in which shots are shown. This communicates to the audience the way in which time is structured within the film.

Other editing modes include **cutaways** and **reaction shots**. Cutaways are when a character looks in a particular direction out of the shot, which is then followed by a cutaway of the object that the character is looking at. This indicates to the audience what the character is interested in and can emphasise objects of importance to the audience.

Reaction shots are shots, usually close-ups, on the faces of characters immediately after a significant event occurs or another character communicates an important piece of information. Reaction shots inform the audience of how a character is feeling in relation to that occurrence.

For example, if there is an explosion, followed by a reaction shot of a character crying, it is fair to say that they are upset by what has just happened. It would be a completely different piece of information if the same character was rubbing their hands together, smiling after the explosion had occurred.

Editing effects can also be used to communicate additional information. **Slow motion** is used to expand time, in order to bring the audience's attention to a specific piece of information that would otherwise be unable to be observed at normal speed. **Time lapses** are used to contract time, in order to indicate that a specific period of time, usually a day, has passed.

Transitions, such as **fade-ins** and **fade-outs**, are also used to communicate that a period of time has passed; however, this can be a more significant, and sometimes indeterminate, amount of time compared to time lapses.

cutaways a situation where a new shot is used to cut away from the normal action

reaction shots used to show character reaction to action within a shot. Often used after a cutaway.

slow motion where the speed of a sequence is slowed down to reveal greater detail

time lapse where the pace of a sequence compresses the vision of a long period of time into a shorter format

transitions used to communicate that a period of time has passed

fade-ins fading in to a new shot

fade-outs fading out of a shot

ACTIVITY 4.13

Editing with the Kuleshov effect

An editing technique demonstrated by Russian filmmaker Lev Kuleshov in 1910 used three shots in an edited sequence to derive a variety of meanings for an audience.

For example, using three shots – a close-up, a cutaway and a reaction shot – the editor can gain different reactions from the audience and alter the direction of a narrative by simply altering the middle shot. An inquisitive look in the first shot, with a smile in the third, can mean multiple things depending on what we see in the second!

Grab a still camera and a team and shoot the following sequences.

1. Take a close-up or medium shot of a plain expression.
2. Take a close-up or medium shot of a smile.

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3 Shoot three images to place between the two close-ups.
4 Upload your images and arrange them in a presentation.
5 Write a one-word description of your character.
6 Aim to drastically alter the audience's reading of your character.

What did you notice? Explain your findings.

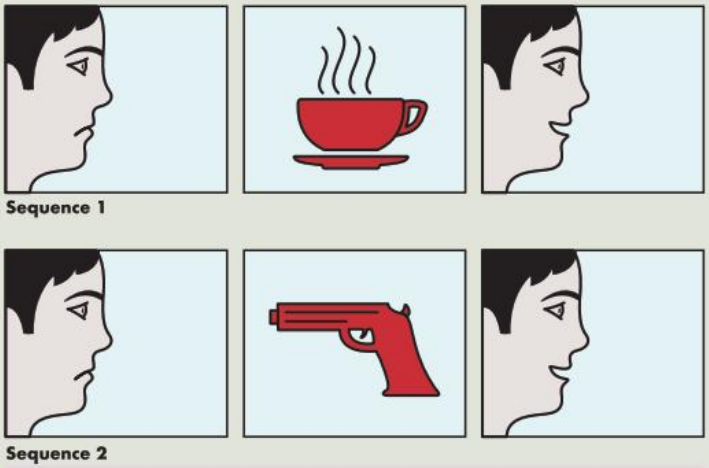


FIGURE 4.32 The Kuleshov effect – in a sequence of three edited shots, the first shot establishes that the character is looking at something. The second shot cuts away to the subject of the character's gaze. The third shot shows the character's reaction to what they are looking at. Therefore, the second inserted shot greatly influences the way the audience interprets the actor's reaction in the third shot.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 How could the media code of editing help progress a narrative?
2 What is the narrative purpose of a transition?

4.4 Genre – codes and conventions in action

Genres are categories for different types of narrative. Across all media forms, genre is a way to differentiate stories that use specific codes and conventions. Different genres became distinguishable for their use of certain storylines, characters and settings. Additionally, visual stories like film and television have developed a language of production techniques that group certain stories together. For example, the horror genre often employs vulnerable characters in isolated settings: just imagine a group of teenagers at an isolated camp site at night who hear something move around.

You could probably guess what's going to happen next because, as an audience member with a developing digital literacy, you recognise many of these genre techniques already. Within the fantasy genre, key characters are often magical and employ supernatural elements that depart significantly from reality, while action films often involve fast editing, pounding non-diegetic audio and bold and aggressive characters.

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When a story uses codes and conventions that are specific to the genre, it becomes easier for the audience to recognise the potential characters, settings and potential story arcs.

Genres are not fixed and can be mixed to create new stories; however, the following examples will demonstrate that codes and conventions work simultaneously to help the audience identify the genre and engage in a story.

CASE STUDY 4.1

Horror – *The Babadook*

The Babadook (2014) is an Australian psychological horror film directed by Jennifer Kent. The broad purpose of the horror genre is to create a sense of fear and dread within the audience. Horror plays on the audience's worst fears and attempts to disarm the audience of its confidence and sense of safety. While horror films often employ blood and gore to shock the audience, *The Babadook* prefers to rely on the element of suspense, keeping the audience on a hook while they attempt to read the thoughts and motivations of its characters. In horror, the anticipation of what might happen is often scarier than what does happen.

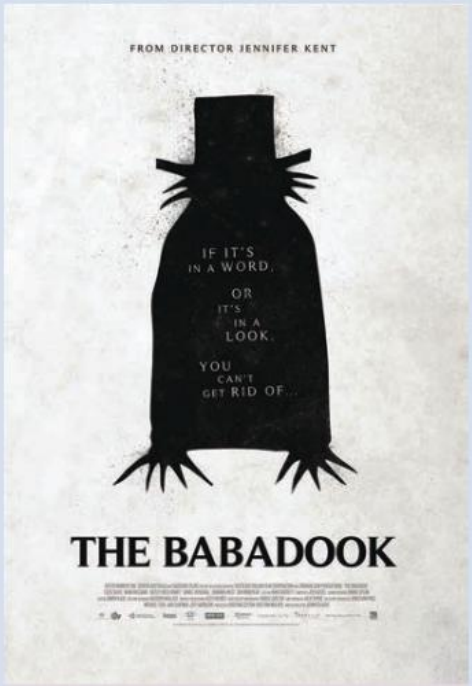


FIGURE 4.33 A promotional poster for *The Babadook*

The Babadook employs characters that are familiar to the genre. Amelia (Essie Davis) is a widowed mother of her young son Robbie (Noah Wiseman). She is vulnerable, alone, stressed and still grieving over the death of her husband. She is constantly tired as she juggles her work, her unpredictable son and loneliness, and her ability to defend herself weakens as the film progresses. Robbie is a troubled soul with 'behaviour problems'. He is terrified of monsters and makes and hides violent weapons around the house to defend himself from the one he is most frightened of, the Babadook. Shortly after a mysterious children's book appears in Robbie's room called 'Mister Babadook', the villainous Babadook monster appears in the house. Shrouded in darkness and intent on death, the monster provides the quintessential horror film villain as it haunts both Amelia and Robbie with its dark top hat, long claws and growling voice.

Key scene: the reveal of the Babadook

In the reveal of the Babadook monster, we find Amelia alone in her dark, shadowy bedroom at night. Robbie is asleep and it appears as though Amelia is relaxed. A wide shot of the bedroom door is used as it creaks open. There is a total absence of non-diegetic audio behind the slow creaking of the door and rattling insect-like noise as a dark hand appears. Editing is employed as the director cross-cuts between the opening of the door and Amelia slinking back into her bed, bringing the covers up as she goes. As the volume of the Babadook's movement intensifies, Kent cuts to a close-up of Amelia under the covers, lasting for a full 15 seconds. This shot is one of the longest in the scene, but the decision allowed for a number of other codes to add meaning to the narrative. As the volume of the audio intensifies, a low guttural voice is heard to exclaim 'Babadook,

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dook dook!'. Actress Essie Davis employs quick breaths and a wide-eyed, open-mouth expression of fear as she follows the sound of the voice with her eyes, even though they are buried under the covers.



FIGURE 4.34 Essie Davis in *The Babadook* (2014)

An overhead close-up shows Amelia slowly removing the covers from her face. The shot emphasises her vulnerability and immediately cuts to one of the ceiling that is streaked with long shadows, into which the jet-black figure of the Babadook appears. In contrast to the rest of the scene, a number of fast-paced cuts work with rumbling non-diegetic audio to emphasise the immediate threat of the Babadook in Amelia's bedroom. Suddenly, between cross-cuts of the monster on the ceiling and Amelia, now wide-eyed and terrified in bed, the Babadook reveals itself in a single-second shot and shrieks as the camera descends into Amelia's open mouth. The shot ends abruptly and cuts to a mid shot of Amelia rising out of bed as though she awoke from a nightmare. The audio of the shriek is cut with her gasp for air to jump the audience from what appeared to be a dream into reality.

Analysis – writing about narrative

In order to effectively write about a story, it is important to always refer to the technique used, how it operates, why it was done and what effect it had on the audience. This way, you can present a clear understanding of not only how a story operates, but how media producers create them.

Write a short paragraph response to the questions below using the following format:

- **Name:** Identify the story you are discussing and the element involved.
- **Describe:** In as much detail as possible, using the correct terminology, explain how the element works.
- **Why:** Explain why the media producer did this. What were they trying to communicate to the audience?
- **Effect:** Explain the impact of this element and the producer's decision to employ it.

For example: To explain how the use of camera engaged the audience in the reveal of the Babadook …

'Camera was used to engage the audience in the film *The Babadook* (2014). A close-up shot of Amelia, under her bed covers hiding from the Babadook, filled the screen, revealing only her darting expression and heavy breathing. Jennifer Kent chose this shot to focus the audience's attention on Amelia's fear and to also remove any vision of the Babadook to increase the tension of its presence in her bedroom. The audience share in Amelia's increasing terror as the shot prevents them from seeing the threat that could potentially be on the other side of the bed covers, and fear for her safety.'

Break that paragraph down so you can see how it helps explain how that element operated:

Name the element

'Camera was used to engage the audience in the film *The Babadook* (2014).'

Describe how it operated

'A close-up shot of Amelia, under her bed covers hiding from the Babadook, filled the screen, revealing only her darting expression and heavy breathing.'

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Why the producer did it

'Jennifer Kent chose this shot to focus the audience's attention on Amelia's fear and to also remove any vision of the Babadook to increase the tension of its presence in her bedroom.'

The effect it had on the audience

'The audience share in Amelia's increasing terror as the shot prevents them from seeing the threat that could potentially be on the other side of the bed covers, and fear for her safety.'

Now consider the use of setting in *The Babadook* and answer the following questions. The image provided here may give you some clues on how to respond to the questions.

Analysis

1. Discuss how the use of lighting created meaning in *The Babadook*.
2. Identify how the contrast of indoor and outdoor settings helped increase tension in the film.
3. Propose how acting was used to communicate the genre of horror.



FIGURE 4.35 What's under the bed? Still from *The Babadook*.

CASE STUDY 4.2

Science fiction – *Alien*

Alien is a 1979 science fiction film directed by Ridley Scott. Sci-fi, as it is often referred to, is a genre that spans across literature and visual mediums that attempts to speculate about the world of the future. Most science fiction stories attempt to imagine a world that is an extension of accepted science. Ideas of extraterrestrial life forms, far-away planets, high-speed space travel and robots have always existed on the fringe of human understanding, and science fiction stories would often use these elements to tell human stories of heroics, love and despair. Audiences are engaged by science fiction as it provides an extension of the known world. As a genre it frequently mixes with other genres to tell established stories in a futuristic context. The adventure and drama of the original *Star Wars* films were told within an alternative reality of a galaxy far, far away. 2013's *Her*, directed by Spike Jonze, details a world in the near future where the main character falls in love with an artificial intelligence operating system he buys for his home. Jonze uses this futuristic environment to tell a traditional story of romance in a new setting. Ridley Scott's *Alien* combines the terror of the horror genre with the unknown of a hulking spacecraft and its isolated crew.

The title sequence at the beginning of *Alien* establishes both horror and science fiction. An establishing shot of deep space slowly pans across a planet on the dark side of its sun. Not much is revealed to the audience during the sequence other than distant stars and light rays coming from behind the planet. As the darkness of

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the planet begins to envelop the entire screen, pieces of text begin to form at random across the centre of the shot, forming the title: Alien. While this shot alone helps establish the genre of science fiction, the use of audio adds the unsettling elements of horror. From the very beginning of the sequence, a range of unfamiliar sounds and instruments are introduced to unnerve the audience. A crawling sound of rapidly plucked violins gives a sensation of a spider crawling up the audience's backs as low, hollow and distant rumbling is replaced by wandering woodwind and brass instruments as the screen descends into the dark side of the planet. All of the audio is suddenly reintroduced and the volume increased as the word Alien is finally revealed. While the title sequence only lasts for a minute and 45 seconds, the simple use of camera and text, combined with the unnerving soundtrack, establish a mixed genre of science fiction and horror.

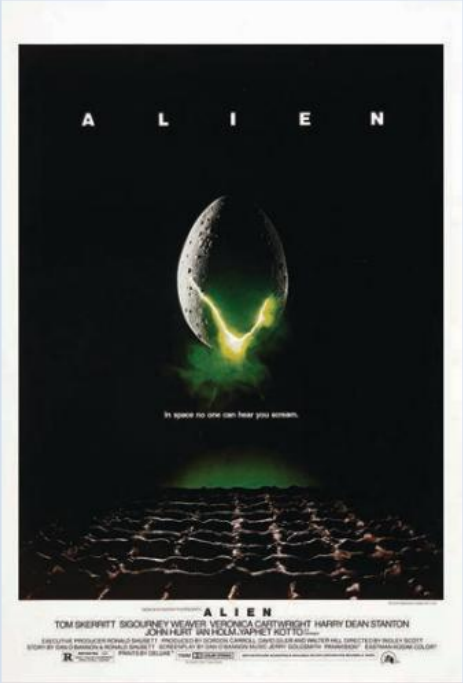


FIGURE 4.36 Movie poster for *Alien* (1979)

Key scenes – the opening sequence

The opening sequence of *Alien* combines a number of codes and conventions to establish the 'normal' of the crew's life before the story is able to upset this balance. After the crew awake from the cryo-sleep, an eye-level tracking shot is used to circle the breakfast table as the crew begin their first meal together. As the crew laughs and jokes together, the audience establishes that this is a functioning and happy group of characters. However, few clues are given to the hierarchy of the crew until Parker brings up an issue of payment and work conditions. While this mundane element of the dialogue establishes the nature of their work, it allows Dallas to be revealed as the figurehead of the crew as the relaxed posture and vocal tones employed by the actor Tom Skerritt suggest a leader at ease with his position. Dallas is soon called to 'Mother', the computer that directs the ship, to discuss communications from the company they all work for. As Dallas enters the circular room and sits down, Scott pulls out to a low angle shot of Dallas as a wall of warm lights illuminate the space and surround Dallas, creating a sense of safety within 'Mother's' room. However, Scott leaves a great deal of headspace between the top of the shot and Dallas' head suggesting a sense of power that Mother holds over the leader of the ship. As a low rumbling sound of a heartbeat suggests a womb-like environment, the audience is introduced to the possibility of multiple storylines. Dallas uses a keyboard and monitor to communicate with Mother as their instructions to investigate the



FIGURE 4.37 The crew of the Nostromo awake from 'cryo-sleep' in *Alien* (1979)

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distress signal are revealed and the story is given purpose; however, the audience is left with questions as to how this omnipresent character of 'Mother' influences the future of the crew.

Analysis – elements of science fiction

Examine this still from the film *Alien*:

1 Explain how acting has been used to communicate information in this shot.
2 Explain how camera has been used to engage the audience in this shot.
3 Explain how the two elements discussed above may assist the audience.



FIGURE 4.38 Sigourney Weaver as Ripley in *Alien*



FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 Define the term 'genre'.
2 How do audiences recognise different genres?

4.5 Narratives across media forms

Introduction

The use of codes and conventions are, of course, not restricted to film or television narrative. Fictional and non-fictional narratives employ the same codes and conventions to engage audiences. Documentary, podcasting, print and online, and digital storytelling all utilise and adapt traditional codes and conventions to create engaging narratives.

Documentary

Documentary stories tell non-fiction stories that attempt to reveal an aspect of the world in intrinsic detail. In essence, the storyteller is attempting to document reality and weave it together to tell a story. Usually told using sound and vision, one of the earliest documentaries was the film *Nanook of the North* (1922, dir. Robert J Flaherty), the story of the indigenous people of northern Canada. The film detailed how the Inuit lived in freezing conditions using traditional practices of hunting and fishing. To a modernising world, these stories that brought a 'slice of life' from the deepest corners of the earth were and remain fascinating to audiences. While much of the vision was staged, it showed audiences a version of reality that, at that time, was out of reach for most and its realistic nature inspired the imagination in a much more powerful way than a fictional story. Since then, the practice of documenting life through audio and visual means provides an alternative lens through which audiences can see the world beyond their own.

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Documentary stories provide an excellent opportunity to examine the very nature of narrative as each represents an author's personal, cultural and historical context. The countless hours of David Attenborough's nature documentaries have told the story of the natural world. However, they carry an element of his personal views of conservation. Documentary is not hamstrung by unbiased doctrines of news journalism and, as such, provides an insight into more than just the subject of the story. The 2004 documentary *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster* (dir. Joe Berlinger) took the audience behind the curtain to view the life of rock metal group Metallica, which provided insight into the unknown troubles brought by fame, wealth and artistic expression.

Documentary has the power to alter the course of cultural and legal discussion. In 1988, an American documentary called *The Thin Blue Line* (dir. Errol Morris) revisited the evidence of a case that suggested 28-year-old Texas man Randall Adams shot and killed a policeman. The story suggested that some of the witnesses potentially lied and that Adams was wrongfully convicted. Within a year of its release, Adams was freed from prison.

The *7 Up* series of documentaries that began in 1964 (dir. Michael Apted) interviewed a group of British school children at the age of seven and reinterviewed them every seven years, providing an insight into the personal lives of ordinary British people; to this day it serves as a historical measure of the impact British society, politics and culture has had on its people since 1964.

Consumption and reception of documentaries

Depending on the form they take, documentaries allow audiences to develop their own interpretation and expectations of the narrative, and consumption is often dependent on the style in which they are presented. Be it a biased interpretation of a topic or a fly-on-the-wall observation, the audience is required to concentrate on all details of the experience. As such, documentaries that are viewed outside of a cinema or television would lose some of the vital elements essential to remain engaged in the narrative.

Documentary can be broken into six categories that best explain the varying uses of codes and conventions.

Poetic

These stories use images and production techniques to reveal inner truths to the story subject which avoid traditional story structures. Short, carefully selected imagery and production techniques tell a very subjective story from the point of view of the author. Dialogue and direct storytelling are often avoided as the imagery, sound and editing present the author's view of reality and story. Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935) employed some of these techniques to produce a Nazi propaganda film that glorified the achievements of Hitler's Germany. In the opening scenes, sweeping shots of huge crowds and proud, beaming children were employed to create a sense of adoration for Adolf Hitler and in the process generate a reality of a popular and capable leader to German audiences.

Expository

Perhaps one of the more easily recognisable documentary forms, expository documentaries tell a story from a specific point of view, using the 'voice of god' narrator who drives the story forward. The smooth baritone of David Attenborough authoritatively tells the story of an antelope migration or dung beetle mating ritual. The purpose of expository documentaries is often educational and thus fictional elements of story are deemed to be a distraction from the version of reality created by the author. These stories combine narration, sound and imagery in a logical story structure. In Attenborough's *Planet Earth* (2006) the narrator (Attenborough) tells the story of a bird of paradise's mating dance as it tries to capture a mate. Establishing 'normal' with a variety of shots of the bird's behaviours, the story then disrupts this normal as the bird tries in vain to attract a mate with unique dancing movements. Famed for their high standard of production, Attenborough's stories are often very simple in their approach. The narration is limited and exists only to introduce stories within stories and occasionally explain bizarre behaviours such as that of the bird of paradise, as long-shot durations allow the audience to view hard-to-reach realities of the animal world. However, without the authority of the narrator, these stories would lack meaning.

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FIGURE 4.39 Documentary maker David Attenborough at Kennedy Space Center in Florida

Participatory

These stories recognise that the act of documentary making is subjective and attempt to include the audience within the story. Usually involving pieces to camera and interviews with subjects as well as audience members, participatory documentaries aim to include the audience within the production of the story. American filmmaker Michael Moore's documentaries like *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) and *Sicko* (2007) reflect this style as Moore is often in shot with his subjects as he moves through the story he has intended to tell. Nick Bloomfield's 1998 film *Kurt and Courtney* followed the documentary maker around as he moved from interview to interview, often providing anticipatory and reflective commentary from each encounter as he attempted to tell the story of musician Kurt Cobain's death. These stories are engaging for their sense of immediacy. As the audience is more actively involved in the story with the author – the reactions and actions of subjects are seen through handheld camera movement, which places the audience in the scene with the author – there is a sense of participation that more polished documentary styles cannot create.

Observational

Often known as **cinéma vérité** ('truthful cinema') or a 'fly-on-the-wall' story, these documentaries take a step back and allow the action and vision to tell the story. Observational documentaries are one of the most commonly created as they attempt to provide an unbiased view of a story and allow the audience more active participation in the creation of meaning. The author of these stories is involved only in the recording of vision and sound and there are no interviews, narration or addresses to camera. Called 'fly on the wall' for the sensation that the audience experiences observing a story without the subject's knowledge, observational documentaries tell a more candid version of events that sometimes avoids traditional three-act story structures. 2006's *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* (dir. Douglas Gordon) trained 17 cameras on professional footballer Zinedine Zidane as he played for his club Real Madrid in a Spanish league game. Aside from the odd subtitled dialogue, the cameras capture his every movement across the 90-minute match. With expansive stretches of long shots and close-ups using a long lens that obscure background activity, the film avoids any sense of narrative and focuses the audience on one solitary figure's action. It is an observational documentary in its simplest form. More modern attempts at observational documentary can be seen in game shows like *Big Brother* that attempted, in its early days, to present every action of a group of individuals trapped in a house together. The participants could be viewed via a 24-hour live internet stream! However, as the lack of a clear narrative began to bore audiences, the show began to drift towards a more structured narrative as producers began to force situations upon the housemates and the 24-hour streams were cut into 30-minute highlights packages.

cinéma vérité a style of documentary-making that avoids artificially constructed realities

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FIGURE 4.40 Morgan Spurlock in *Super Size Me* (2004)

Performative

In the direct opposite to the observational documentary, the author of the performative documentary looks to directly intervene in the story. These stories include the author as an active member of the storytelling process.

The author wants to take the audience into the situation with them and act as a personal guide, allowing them a direct point of reference from which to understand the action. Using a combination of production techniques, including handheld and staged camera interviews, these stories allow the author to participate in the telling and understanding of the story with the audience. Morgan Spurlock's 2004 documentary *Super Size Me* brings the audience along with Spurlock's experiment to eat only fast food for a month. Following the author for breakfast, lunch and dinner, Spurlock intertwines the real-time experience of his diet with interviews with medical professionals, statistics and narration. The realism of this documentary style is found in the diary entry style of the author.



FIGURE 4.41 Parody heavy metal band, Spinal Tap, from the movie *This is Spinal Tap* (1984)

Reflexive

Reflexive stories tend not to focus on story, but on the creation of the story itself and pass comment on the way documentary can be subjective and present a limited version of reality. Documentaries made in this style attempt to guide the audience to question the authenticity of the story they are viewing. A common creation from the reflexive style is the '**mockumentary**' that attempts to present a true story, using classic documentary techniques of interviews, observational footage and candid actions. However, the story is performed entirely by actors in a fictional scenario. Rob Reiner's *This is Spinal Tap* (1984) documents the fictitious life of the fictitious heavy metal band, Spinal Tap. Fake interviews, fake concert footage and fake 'handheld' footage creates a near reality that pokes fun at heavy metal culture of the early 1980s as well as the form of musical documentary itself. The entire film was shot as an earnest and honest take on the life of a heavy metal band; however, as the story unfolds with more and more ridiculous scenarios (including the revolving door of drummers who seem to keep dying in more and more outrageous ways), the audience soon begin to question the authenticity of the story and embrace the commentary it makes on early 80s musical culture. 2010's *Exit Through the Gift Shop* (dir. Banksy) finds itself within the reflexive mode of documentary storytelling;

mockumentary a style of documentary that parodies and satirises the documentary filmmaking process

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however, despite its appearance of a 'mockumentary', borrowing styles of fantastic and bizarre storylines, it is merely a story of an attempt at making the documentary itself. Rather than focus on the life of the reclusive street artist know as 'Banksy', the story follows the attempted creation of the documentary by a French filmmaker who becomes so enamoured by the world of street art that he attempts to be a street artist himself. The film uses all of the common techniques of 'talking heads' to camera, observational footage and guiding narration, but it tells little of the intended subject, preferring to explain the role of its intended author.



FIGURE 4.42 Street art by Banksy, the subject of the mockumentary *Exit Through the Gift Shop* (2010)

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What is a documentary?
2. Explain what 'fly-on-the-wall documentary' means.
3. Give an example of how media codes are used in documentaries.
4. Give an example of how media conventions are used in documentaries.

CASE STUDY 4.3

Documentaries

Blackfish

The expository documentary *Blackfish* (2013, dir. Gabriela Cowperthwaite) details the captivity of orcas or 'killer whales' in the American Sea World theme parks. It focuses specifically on one orca that had been responsible for the death of a theme park trainer. The film attempts to expose the perceived cruelty of animal captivity using interviews, raw footage and screen text as narration. The point of view from which the narrative is told is clear within the opening sequence.

The film begins with the real-life audio of an emergency phone call. The audio replays the awkward conversation between Sea World workers and emergency services after an orca had eaten one of the trainers at the park. The audio is intercut with home-video footage of a diver in a large pool with an orca, creating a frightening sense of scale between human and animal. The power of the audio is enhanced as the emergency call operator attempts to clarify the message being conveyed, with the question 'a whale ate one of the trainers?' as the vision shows an orca launching a trainer out of the water in a rehearsed 'trick' in front of a Sea World audience. The dark, foreboding audio that accompanies the sequence sets the scene for the following black title screen of *Blackfish*, which creates a clear expectation of the sinister relationship between these powerful animals and the theme park that uses them for entertainment. The bulk of the story is told without a narrator, relying on the direct accounts of former Sea World employees and orca experts. By avoiding the use of a narrator interpreting the story, the interviews hold even more authenticity for the audience.

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Catfish

The 2010 documentary *Catfish* (dir. Henry Joost) encapsulates the performative style of filmmaking. The filmmaker Nev and his brothers document a burgeoning and somewhat anonymous romantic relationship Nev develops online via Facebook. Borrowing from participatory styles, the film puts Nev at the centre of the action as he attempts to develop this relationship as well as endeavour to meet the mysterious woman on the other end of a long train of online messages, comments and images. As Nev experiences this narrative arc through a social media tool common to so much of its audience, the emotional experience of Nev sits at the centre of the story. The observational footage documents his reactions to each new message as well as his own decision-making process that guides his actions in the online relationship. The real-time action is filmed using handheld camera with naturalistic lighting that enhances the authenticity of the unfolding drama. The power of the story lies in the developing storylines when it is revealed that the relationship is in fact a construction of a complete stranger. The emotional impact this has on the audience is only possible with the development of Nev's character performed in a situation common to many audiences.

Bowling for Columbine

Famous for his door-knocking style, American filmmaker Michael Moore has made several documentaries in the participatory form. His 2002 documentary *Bowling for Columbine* examines a high school shooting at Columbine High School in 1999 and the culture of American gun ownership in broader society. Moore's position against the existing state of gun control is clear throughout the story as he attempts to highlight the problems he believes are created by the culture and scenarios that stem from it. Presented as a story of one investigator attempting to put forward a version of the truth, Moore is constantly involved in the storytelling process, appearing in shot with subjects and speaking direct to camera. While it employs normal elements of expository documentaries like statistics, voice-overs and archival footage, the power of the story comes through its participatory technique of using the presenter to confront key players in the story in real time.



FIGURE 4.43 Michael Moore in *Bowling for Columbine* (2002)

In one pivotal scene within the story, Moore travels to the headquarters of Kmart, a retailer of guns and ammunition, with a victim of a violent shooting. The dramatic confrontation places the audience at the centre of Moore's investigation. The raw emotion of the victim's detailing their experience creates a strong but subjective experience for the audience.

Analysis – documentary techniques

1. Imagine there is a controversy at your school, like the poor quality of the canteen food. Decide how three different documentary techniques could tell this story.
2. Explain the strengths and limitations of each approach.
3. Identify how each one would generate a more or less 'authentic' audience experience.
4. Choose ONE simple topic of concern within your school community. Your aim is to make three one-minute documentaries on that topic, using three different techniques.

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5 Carefully research the different styles of coverage, interviews and production techniques you will need to use.

6 Research your audience using one of the techniques from Chapter 3, 'Media forms in production', and define the primary and secondary audiences for your stories. Explain how each documentary style will appeal to them.

Media stories – podcasting

Introduction

Podcasting offers a unique passage into storytelling. With headphones or in the solitude of a car, a train or treadmill, a podcast creator can tell a story to a single audience member in an intimate and personal way that is rivalled only by literature. Since the development of digital technologies in the early 2000s the ability for storytellers to craft a podcast has grown rapidly. Today, most smartphones have built-in applications specific to the media form and car manufacturers are developing Bluetooth applications for the sole purpose of streaming online audio stories.

Consumption and reception of podcasts

A podcast is a radio broadcast, on demand. A listener can choose to download the audio story and listen when and where it suits. The popularity of podcasting as a storytelling form has grown from its flexibility in reaching audiences. Long commutes to school or work can be filled with the stories specific to the listener's interests. The personal experience of podcasts influences their reception like few other narrative forms, as it is one that is best experienced alone and so creates an intimacy between the audience and author that could only be rivalled by literature.



FIGURE 4.44 A podcast is a radio broadcast, on demand.

While radio remains a popular medium, podcasting has allowed audiences a departure from a long tradition of radio formulas for audience engagement. Commercial and public radio rely on small, scripted segments of dialogue, commercial and musical breaks to engage audiences and maintain the revenue provided by sponsors and advertisers. While radio stations in Australia vary greatly and the audience for each remains specific, the nature of radio listening (in the car or in the background at home or at work) means that few can listen at length and so content is produced to create immediacy. Imagine two hosts, sharing witty, topical banter and allowing audience members to call in and share interesting anecdotes, and you're visualising almost every commercial radio station in the nation. The segment may last no more than four or five minutes before a song or commercial break is played. Public radio is trending in a similar direction as many attempt to replicate the same methods of their commercial counterparts to garner attention. Australia's youth radio station Triple J uses most of these same high-paced, loud and bite-size-driven segments. In this process to grab at limited attention spans, genuine storytelling is often a casualty.

Podcasting not only allows for real stories, but for almost any kind of story imaginable. Podcasts usually involve one or more hosts speaking directly into a mic with few if any breaks, sometimes for 15 minutes, sometimes for over an hour, depending on the nature of the content. Given the open and available access to the technology required

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to create a podcast, anyone can create one at any time and upload it to a podcasting service, or promote it via their own means. The topics can cover anything: politics, sport, comedy, science, sewing, gardening …

In 2015 two New Zealand comedians decided to watch the film *Sex and the City: 2* (2010, dir. Michael Patrick King) each week for a year and record their reactions. The 52-episode podcast series was well titled: 'The Worst Idea of All Time'. The podcast form allows for a broad range of ideas to be discussed at length and storytelling to borrow from the distant past of radio serials and tell stories over one hour or a whole series. What engages audiences is the immediacy of the content. With many uploading once or twice a week (daily in some cases), the audience is able to connect with stories in real time. Many podcasts can be created without the expensive apparatus of commercial radio and some of the world's most successful podcasts are recorded in the homes and sometimes garages of the author!

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What is a podcast?
2. What is the difference between a podcast and a radio program?

Ultimately, the engaging element of podcasting lies in the **reception context**; that is, the space in which the audience member listens. Few podcasts are listened to in groups. It is assumed that most would listen with headphones in, walking, running or while driving alone. It is a personal experience between the author and the audience member that can only be challenged by the experience of a film watched in a cinema. The ability of a podcaster to broadcast a story direct to an individual allows for a broad range of ideas and storytelling formats to be explored.

reception context the process of receiving a message and how the location, time and emotions of the audience impact on how it is received and how meaning is made

Serial

2015's *Serial* podcast followed the story of a murder in America. Combining the traditions of a police procedural with a radio play, a former journalist retraced the steps, evidence and witnesses in a closed murder case from the late 1990s. The story drew heavily from the recorded narration of its host, who tells the story of a murder conviction that remains in doubt, despite the court ruling. By retracing the steps of the convicted man, the host was able to pull apart the case, the manner in which it was conducted and interview key witnesses, those involved in the trial *and* the convicted man himself via phone conversations from jail. In a carefully constructed story, the audience experienced not only their own doubts but those of the host and the team involved in the creation of the podcast as each episode was crafted in real time.



FIGURE 4.45 The *Serial* podcast (2015) followed the story of a murder in America, hosted by journalist Sarah Koenig.

Like the reflexive documentaries discussed earlier in this chapter, *Serial* constantly asked the audience to examine how the story was being created and the impact the convicted man, the evidence and the review of the trial had on the audience and on the construction of the podcast itself. *Serial*'s host Sarah Koenig provided the audience with an engaging struggle. As a journalist, she attempts to remain unbiased and, yet, as more of the case was reviewed and re-examined, the audience were allowed into Koenig's own process of doubt and confusion over the truth behind this murder case. Each episode follows a simple story structure of reviewing the previous episode's findings, establishing a purpose and challenging the audience to carefully consider their own interpretation of the story before opening new possibilities to be explored in the next podcast. *Serial* was the most listened-to podcast in Australian and the USA in 2014.

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AMAZING FACT

In 2017, *S-Town*, a new podcast from the people behind *Serial*, was downloaded a record-breaking 10 million times in the first four days of its release. The podcast is similar to *Serial* in its narrative approach, though the story quickly evolves from the investigation of an alleged murder in Woodstock, Alabama to something quite different.

The Dollop

The Dollop (2014–) is a weekly comedy podcast where host Dave Anthony tell stories from American history to his co-host Gareth Reynolds. With both hosts holding backgrounds in stand-up and improvisational comedy, each podcast blends traditional storytelling with improvised interpretations and re-enactments of the events. The topics can be diverse. Some stories focus on political or business leaders, like the horrific death of former American president George Washington or the staggering tale of survival of Hugh Glass in the face of a horrific bear attack in the 1700s (the background for the 2016 film *The Revenant*, dir. Alejandro González Iñárritu). Their attention also turns to bizarre events like the night a 1970s baseball team offered 10 cent beer to the entire crowd, or the time when an army of Irish Americans attempted to invade Canada in 1870. No topic is taboo. However, their storytelling technique allows access to complex and bizarre topics that provide an alternative insight into American history as the audience is listening to one friend tell a story to another.

The storytelling reflects the style adopted by observational documentaries as the audience feels privy to a personal conversation. As Dave reads each new story and attempts to explain more complicated ideas, Gareth will often interpret the events and act them out. The audience is thus provided with two experiences as each episode is as much about a new story as it is experiencing the reaction of Gareth to the developing events. This style of podcast, like popular TV serials or long-running film franchises, rewards listenership as themes, jokes and common conversation points carry across episodes. Each podcast runs for close to an hour and is structured to reveal details of each story incrementally. Unlike a three-act structure, which requires a set-up, crisis and conclusion, *The Dollop*'s major 'plot points' vary from episode to episode and often rely on drip-feeding the audience information to maintain engagement over the hour.

WTF with Marc Maron

WTF (2009–) follows a simple format. Sharing the conversational style of *The Dollop*, *WTF* host Marc Maron records his podcast from his home garage in Los Angeles, USA. Each week a new guest meets Maron in the garage and discusses their life, career and opinions. While the former stand-up comedian usually meets with actors, celebrities, musicians and artists, his garage guests have included former US President Barack Obama. The format of each episode often surrounds the personal background of the guest with the goal of discovering the real personality behind the celebrity. Maron borrows heavily from early blogging and vlogging culture as his own life, experiences and background serve as a reference point for each interviewee to compare their own life. As with *The Dollop*, the audience has a fly-on-the-wall experience as if overhearing a conversation



FIGURE 4.46 *WTF* podcast host Marc Maron records his podcast from his home garage in Los Angeles.

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between two diverse individuals. The themes of most episodes often lend themselves to vintage nostalgia for older audience members as guests are often plucked from seminal moments in American artistic history. Kim Gordon, lead singer of 90s band Sonic Youth, discussed the growth of grunge and independent music. Filmmaker and actor Michael Rappaport detailed his experiences growing up in New York rap culture in the 1990s. Sasha Baron Cohen (aka Borat) takes the audience behind the experience of his filmmaking and craft and what it was like to incite a riot at a cage-fighting match for artistic purposes.

Maron's interview style uses his own storied life experience to provide the guest with the impetus to divulge their life experiences in a more grounded fashion. This departure from structured and carefully managed interviews seen on television and in commercial radio allows the audience to see the person behind the identity.

ACTIVITY 4.14

Analysing a podcast

Choose a topic that interests you: sport, comedy, music, politics, gaming, art, etc.

1. Find two podcasts that relate to your topic of interest and listen to two or three episodes.
2. How would you define the storytelling style? Provide examples.
3. Research the background of the hosts. Explain how this influences the way the audience engages with the podcast. Do they have expectations?
4. Examine the frequency of the podcast. Is it daily, weekly or monthly? Consider and explain how this influences the nature of the content.



FIGURE 4.47 The storytelling of podcasts reflects the style adopted by observational documentaries.

5. Is each episode self-contained or are there links between each episode? Explain with specific examples.
6. Explain how you think this influences the way the audience engage with the form of storytelling.
7. Consider the way people would normally listen to this podcast. Explain how the reception context (the location and format it is listened to) could affect the audience's engagement with the media product.

ACTIVITY 4.15

Practical task – creating and editing a podcast

1. Your goal is to create a four-minute podcast on a topic and in a style you feel would be engaging.
2. Find an identity within your school who has a story to tell … and tell it in a podcast!
3. Define the style of podcast you wish to create:
   - **a** Create a detailed unpacking of this person's life in the style of *Serial*.
   - **b** Research the story of this individual and retell the story in the conversational style of *The Dollop*.
   - **c** Interview the individual and record the interview. Examine the questioning techniques of Marc Maron and devise probing, open-ended questions that allow the subject to tell their own story from start to finish.

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4 Record the podcast and create two versions:
   - **a** Raw and unedited.
   - **b** An edited version that excludes mistakes, 'ums and ahs' and 'un-engaging content'.

5 Reflect on both versions by listening to the podcasts yourself and asking your peers to review them.
   - **a** Which version do you feel was the most engaging for audiences?
   - **b** What factors can you determine that influenced this decision?

Media forms – digital content: web serials and short-form TV

With developments in 21st-century technologies, shorter forms of media content have sprung up that are easier, faster and more accessible in more locations. A quick scan of the most popular or trending videos on YouTube on any given day will indicate that each clip is between one and 10 minutes long. Clearly, online audiences prefer shorter, faster stories that hold attention.

ACTIVITY 4.16

Reception and consumption of digital narratives

1 Quickly examine the trending or most popular videos on your favourite video streaming service.
2 Identify the average length of the content.
3 Explain what you know about the audience for that service.
4 Describe how that would influence the length of the content.
5 Explain how and where most of this content would be viewed. Would it require headphones?
6 How would this viewing context influence the audience's understanding of the narrative? Explain.



FIGURE 4.48 Live streaming and on-demand video are changing the face of video distribution.

In 2013, a short-lived and extremely short-form video app known as Vine was launched. Its intention was to encourage users to record six-second grabs from their daily lives to share with friends. However, storytellers saw this as something of a challenge and began to use the tool to tell stories over one and many videos. The appeal of the videos lay in its constant looping of the six-second videos. Viewers for each 'Vine' would be able to see the same content over and over, allowing them to focus on a different element each time. The repetition allowed the comedic or dramatic elements of Vines to evolve over each view. Users interpreted the tool in a variety of ways and many began to tell

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FIGURE 4.49 Today, short-form and web content is embedded in the practices of established media companies.

longer stories in six-second instalments. These stories could be seen anywhere in any context. While the service no longer exists, its concept was borrowed and adapted by other social media services. The idea of a six-second story played a role in challenging the established ideas of story in the media.

Today short-form and web content is embedded in the practices of established media companies. In 2014, the long-running British television channel BBC3 ceased broadcasting on national television, moving to an on-demand online format. As a result, the nature of the content it produced changed to meet the demands of a younger, digitally aware audience. While much of the normal 30-minute and one-hour programming is still streamed from the site, this is matched in equal measure with four- to 10-minute storytelling that is more consumable on a mobile device. One of 2016's most viewed programs on the service was the drama, *Thirteen*. The five-part series can be viewed in a number of ways. Each episode is an hour long; however, the site breaks apart the key scenes from each episode, allowing audiences to revisit key moments in one- or two-minute bursts.

Australian broadcasters have adopted similar strategies. A quick scan of the online services of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) or the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) reveals the same pattern. Longer stories have been broken up and fragmented into what could be considered 'snack-size' stories.

CASE STUDY 4.4

Short-form content

The Katering Show

Based on the experiences of 'a food intolerant and an intolerant foodie', *The Katering Show* (2015–) episodes run for little more than seven minutes. A Melbourne production, each episode satirises the popularity of food and cooking culture and is structured to move quickly between scenes and punch lines. To meet the strict timeline and enhance audience engagement, the hosts set up and deliver comedic moments that often make the structure of the story a secondary concern. A much broader narrative is told over the course of each season as the two characters become more and more intolerant of each other's behaviour. As such, the creators of each story can create a seven-minute burst of comedic moments without having to adhere to a three-act structure.

Hip Hop Homeland

Hip Hop Homeland creates short-form documentaries about the growing hip hop music scene in India. Produced by the online streaming service known for its bite-sized media, 101India, *Hip Hop Homeland* tells the story of a new hip hop artist from every corner of the most populated nation on earth. A blend of music video and documentary, the series aims to reveal a growing but otherwise unknown culture as each episode

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allows an artist to explain their own relationship with hip hop and Indian culture. Editing drives the story as the audience bounce quickly between interview anecdotes, live performance footage, visual effects and landscape coverage. Beginning with the artist, clips delve into the artist's background, how they came to hip hop and how their families interpret their passion. The exposé is then closed with a video clip performance of a song that reflects the swaying camera techniques common to hip hop video clips that feature the artist in their natural environment. As such, each story acts as vignette within a broader documentary about the changing nature of Indian popular culture.

Luke Nguyen shorts

Australian chef Luke Nguyen is known for longer, traditional documentaries that are part travelogue, part instructional cooking stories. Food and travel stories often attempt to string together these two elements to tell a story of food and culture together; however, the web content created by Nguyen prefers to eliminate the story surrounding the cooking of a specific meal and re-edit the longer version to present a three- to four-minute visual recipe instruction. This content is created specifically for an on-demand, busy audience who need quick-fire instructions for popular meals. As such, the original long-form content is repurposed to a shorter story of one meal in one context, rather than that of a broad geographical and cultural narrative.



FIGURE 4.50 Australian chef Luke Nguyen

Nickelodeon shorts

Each year, youth channel Nickelodeon runs a series of animated films known as Nickelodeon Shorts. The films come from around the world as independent and professional animators create films in the hope of developing the story into a longer format with the channel. Entrants are asked to create an animated story, two to four minutes in length, which is comedic, character-driven, with a science and technology focus and which comes from a child's point of view. The series allows for an immensely diverse range of animation styles and stories that cannot be defined within a single story structure; however, the demand of a character-driven narrative written for children means simple lessons and stories can be told quickly in an engaging format.

Analysis – structure of case studies

1. Review the structure of all four case studies. Evaluate what storytelling element/s are emphasised in the shorter format.
2. Explain how media codes have been employed to condense the storytelling.
3. Predict how the intended audience for each story would influence production; that is, what viewing context is it intended for?

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Personal styles

The way audiences understand visual stories can come from a familiarity with the personal style of the media producer themselves. Whole genres and media forms have often been inspired by the work of a single individual. In the same way that a musician can be known for a particular instrument or sound, a media producer can be known for a signature style that not only communicates information to the audience, but also develops a recognisable identity for the stories they create.

How an audience consumes a media product is heavily influenced by expectations created by specific media professionals. When a particular individual uses media codes and conventions, audiences are drawn to styles, genres and narratives that engage them personally.

CASE STUDY 4.5

Alfred Hitchcock – the camera is the eye

Perhaps the best known director of all time, Hitchcock pioneered many techniques that led to him being known as the 'Master of Suspense'. With modern-day technology of gore and special effects unavailable to him in the 1950s and 60s, Hitchcock mastered the art of terrifying audiences with simpler tools.



FIGURE 4.51 Still shot from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960)

For audiences to engage in a story and feel the stomach-churning fear and anxiety of a thriller, the director must make the audience feel vulnerable. Hitchcock used the camera to act as the eye of the audience. Shooting at eye level and following the action in movements similar to those of the human eye, Hitchcock could draw the audience around a scene, independent of the actor's movements. In the iconic shower scene in *Psycho* (1960), a mid shot of Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) washing in the shower is framed with the actor in the bottom right of screen, with a shower curtain behind her, creating a sense of inferiority. The use of negative space is enhanced when Hitchcock begins to zoom steadily into a dark shadow that has appeared behind the curtain. By drawing the audience away from Crane, and towards the menacing shadow, the sense of uncertainty is increased as the audience can do little to protect the vulnerable Crane. What follows is one of the most iconic moments in cinema and disguises the simple but effective technique of enhancing audience anxiety.

Martin Scorsese – freeze frames

Famous for telling stories of gangsters, crooks and the underbelly of society, Martin Scorsese has become known for a style of storytelling that guides the audience through essential moments. The use of a 'freeze frame' is a common element of his work. By freezing the shot, Scorsese pauses one frame of action to emphasise its importance. In a fight scene in *Gangs of New York* (2002) the frenetic action of



FIGURE 4.52 Martin Scorsese directing on location

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the fight is often frozen to pause on moments of significance. This technique is used again in films like *Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) and any of his gangster films to pause on a main character and allow the audience time to investigate the elements of the still image. As photographs have their own unique power, the audience's eye is able, if only for a moment, to examine and see what Scorsese wants them to see. These scenes are used sparingly and often come in between moments of great violence that allow the audience to investigate the individual behind the action, creating more engagement with the character.

Terrence Malick – vision before dialogue

Malick is known for emphasising visual storytelling over dialogue. In a style developed over several decades of filmmaking, Malik uses long, drawn-out shots of scenery and characters to allow audiences time to explore the vision and create their own interpretation. His films are littered with sequences of nature and the environment in which the characters are found. Using something as simple as shots of trees in the wind or a hand passing through long grass, Malick engages his audience in the environment as much as the characters. In 1998's *The Thin Red Line*, Malick does away with a central protagonist in his World War II film about American soldiers fighting on a Pacific island. During one particularly tense scene, where the soldiers are advancing up a hill towards the enemy, Malick frequently cuts away from the movement of the characters to wide expansive shots of the hill itself. With nothing but the wind and sun blowing across the green hill, the audience is constantly drawn towards the environment, rather than the story. Throughout the film, as it does in many of his other stories, the environment becomes the protagonist, rather than any one single character.



FIGURE 4.53 Still from the movie *The Thin Red Line* (1998)

Spike Jonze – tracking shots

Spike Jonze is known for a range of story styles that express a more abstract interpretation of the human experience. His use of dolly and tracking shots has been incorporated into many of his feature films to draw out long set pieces of action that include the audience within a single movement. Jonze's early career was spent in skateboarding and music videos, as well as television commercials. His 2016 commercial for high-fashion brand Kenzo features a woman dancing through a glamorous building interior as the camera tracks backwards on a dolly as the dancer moves across the shot. The long shot duration allows the audience to engage with the dancer in more detail as the action becomes more and more outrageous.

This tracking technique can be found in one of his earliest short films called *How They Get There* (1997). The camera moves up the centre of a suburban street and crosses left to right between and man and a woman walking in the same direction on opposite sides of the street. As the characters catch each other's attention, they begin flirting and mimicking each other's walking style; all the while the camera is constantly on the move, tracking up the street with the action and the audience is caught up with the interaction. The use of this technique allows Jonze to disrupt the audience's natural momentum as one character walks into oncoming traffic and is hit by a car in a dramatic, high-action scene. The use of this technique, common to many of his music videos, allows the audience to see the extraordinary in ordinary long takes.

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Steven Spielberg – ordinary characters in extraordinary situations



FIGURE 4.54 A scene from the 1985 movie *Back to the Future* (dir. Robert Zemeckis)

Spielberg has written, directed and produced some of the most popular films of the past few decades. While his filmmaking techniques are vast, a common theme of his storytelling lies in the type of characters he chooses for his protagonist. In many of his films, the leading character is an ordinary person, dealing with an extraordinary situation. In *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), an alien life form lands in the care of a group of suburban kids. In the *Back to the Future* films, produced by Spielberg, Marty McFly (Michael J Fox) is an everyday teenager suddenly equipped with the power of time travel. Perhaps his most celebrated film, *Jaws* (1975), is a literal fish out of water story. Police Chief Martin Brody oversees a small seaside community in America. As summer starts, a series of deadly shark attacks threatens the calm of the summer holiday season. As the most senior official responsible for public safety, Brody takes it on himself to save the town from the shark. This inevitably takes him away from the safety of a land environment where he is most comfortable, to the open and unfamiliar environment of the ocean. Spielberg uses these characters to allow the audience to position themselves in the shoes of the main character and imagine how they would themselves respond to such a situation, thus increasing their personal investment in the story.

Sophia Coppola – soft naturalistic lighting



FIGURE 4.55 Director Sophia Coppola uses natural lighting in her film *The Virgin Suicides* (1999).

Coppola is renowned for telling stories that incorporate dreamlike states for their main characters. In many of her films she tells stories of characters who are overwhelmed by their circumstances and environment, and she uses lighting to help the audience transcend the reality that the characters appear in. The use of soft natural lighting with matching pastel colours in the setting and costume of the characters helps wash out the detail of a scene and blend all of the elements together. In her debut feature *The Virgin Suicides* (1999), Coppola uses strong summer sunlight to wash out the recollections of the main characters, a group of suburban teenage boys, who are reminiscing about the lost lives of five girls from the one family. As the boys read from the girl's diaries, Coppola cuts to scenes of each girl dancing playfully in a field of sunburnt grass, cross fading between shots of the sky, open fields and a setting sun. The lighting relies solely on the available summer sun and combines with the pastel colours of the foreground, background and costume. The sequence allows the audience to interpret a dreamlike recollection created in the minds of the boys, rather than that of the audience.

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Wes Anderson – colour



FIGURE 4.56 Director Wes Anderson

Anderson's films can be examined from a variety of perspectives. His use of visual symmetry, tracking shots, meticulous visual composition and family-based narratives provides rich ground within which to study a distinctive personal style. However, his use of primary colour allows audiences to signpost moments within his films. Students of visual communication would draw great detail from Anderson's combination of colour and colour palettes used to communicate meaning within his films. Often telling stories with nostalgic tones of a possible world of excitement and light, Anderson uses colour to guide the emotional journey of his audience through his films. If a character is depressed and lonely, he will place them in a bland, colourless setting or, to emphasise such a mood, he will place a sullen actor in a bright and vibrant space to draw attention to the character's inability to be happy. Anderson uses colour to signify meaning for the audience and the story itself.

In *The Darjeeling Limited* (2007), Anderson tells the story of three grieving American brothers travelling through India on a spiritual quest to find happiness. When the brothers find themselves in the midst of a tragic death in a rural Indian community, Anderson uses colour to reflect two meanings within the story. In their time sharing grief with the community, the three find enlightenment through the cathartic sharing of emotion. As they step out to attend the wedding, all three are wearing white as does the rest of the rural community. White is the traditional colour of grieving in Hindu culture and the characters appear to blend in with their environment. However, as you would know, white has different connotations in Western culture and is often associated with happiness, purity and cleansing. As such, Anderson has been able to simultaneously place the characters in a traditional Hindu setting of grief and a Western understanding of happiness and renewal. The scene acts as a pivotal moment in the story as the three characters are now able to resolve their own personal grief.

ACTIVITY 4.17

Media production research

Media stories and personal styles are, of course, not limited to film. The distinctive styles of individuals reflect not only their understanding of the form within which they operate, but the behaviour and expectations of their audience.

Research the personal styles of the following media producers and explain the techniques they use to engage the audience.

Collate your research and present your findings to the class by researching a selection of the following:

1 In your presentation, you must highlight how each media creator reflects a personal style and how audiences develop expectations that may influence their consumption of the media product. In short, what would audiences come to expect from this author and how does that influence the way they approach each one?

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2 You should also consider how and where audiences would engage with these media products. What influence would the technology used to engage with the product have on the effectiveness of their personal styles and use of codes and conventions?
- Documentary: John Pilger/Michael Moore
- Music video: Michel Gondry/Chris Cunningham/Hiro Murai
- Television: Julie Anne Robinson/Beth McCarthy Miller
- Podcast: Ira Glass/Hamish and Andy.

4.6 Contextual influences on media production

Background

Leni Riefenstahl was a revolutionary director working in a unique context. Working well ahead of her time, she was the visionary director behind some of the German Nazi Party's propaganda films of the 1930s. Dedicated to her craft, Riefenstahl's films, like the poetic masterpiece *Triumph of the Will* (1935), broke new ground in cinematic techniques and technology. Her sweeping depictions of Adolf Hitler and his adoring followers were made with the unlimited resources of the Nazi Party. The content aside, her ability to create mesmerising imagery was unmatched. Despite her efforts to separate her work from that of the Nazis in the years that followed, her career after World War II was cut short due to her work with the regime and by association, its crimes. Riefenstahl worked within a political, economic and social situation that few other filmmakers of her calibre would ever experience.



FIGURE 4.57 Leni Riefenstahl was a revolutionary director working in a unique context.

Today, media stories are still created in context. The nature, construction and distribution of stories often reflect the time and place in which they were created. In short, art imitates life (and sometimes the other way around). Producers look to create engaging narratives that demand their audiences to think, feel and respond using their own experiences and approaches to media products. In this chapter, you will examine the factors that influence the production of media products and the way producers engage audiences. You will consider the political, social and economic factors that can inspire, constrain and inform the production of media stories. You will examine the way producers can draw on cultural and contextual understandings held by their audiences to create engaging media products.

The values of the audience often dictate the producer's decisions as they attempt to reflect a version of the human experience back to itself. As you would have found already within this book, different time periods have created a variety of different media products with differing values and beliefs that underpin their creation.

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Conservative notions of family and society dominated commercial media products of the 1950s and 60s; however, as society changed in these decades, so did the products it produced. Issues like environmentalism, war, feminism and LGBTQ identity began to find their way into media discourse. The Australian television program *Number 96* (1972–77) was the first to not only show nudity to Australian audiences, but an episode in 1972 broadcast the first ever gay kiss on Australian television. As mundane as this sounds today, it exists as a touchstone of developing ideas within Australian audiences and evidence that media producers work within and, at times, challenge the existing society. Fast forward to today and one of television's more successful sitcoms *Modern Family* (2009–) features a gay couple as an essential element of the cast.



FIGURE 4.58 The cast of TV's *Modern Family*

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 Briefly explain the relationship between a media product and the time and place in which it was produced.
2 What influence do you think this has on the producers of a media product before they begin?

All media producers work within shifting social, political and economic environments. What is impossible now may be possible in the future and there will be new opportunities for media producers and storytellers to develop distinctive styles and methods of communicating and distributing media products.

The political economy model

To understand the environment many professional media producers work in, we can examine the political economy model. For a film director, television actor, podcaster or vlogger, the demands of the audience will influence production. The political economy model, developed over two centuries by a variety of philosophers and thinkers, suggests that those with the power and the money create the majority of media messages, and they in turn will make media that attracts the largest audience to their commercial advertisers. The model then suggests, as has been alluded to already within this book, that audience demands dictate what those who own the media produce. For example, if a television station broadcasts a program that very few people watch, they will cease producing that show and replace it with one that people do watch in order to continue making money.

FOCUS QUESTION

What is the political economy model?

In this context, it is not difficult to imagine the pressures that modern media creators face. There are certainly many ways for media producers to prevent commercial influences over their production. Media stories can be, and are, made without them. You have read about them in

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FIGURE 4.59 The concept of 'fly-on-the-wall' reality television has proved immensely popular for audiences and shows how the political economy model operates. Regardless of what you think of the quality of reality TV shows, they clearly make broadcasters money, so they keep being produced. Pictured is a still from the reality show *Survivor*.

this book! However, for a media producer to make a living from their craft, as you may hope to someday, they may have to navigate an environment of economic, political and commercial influences.

There are always positives to this model. Media producers are always encouraged to try something new and dangerous to grab an audience's attention. In 1992 the ABC filmed and produced a daring new show that followed the day-to-day lives of an ordinary Australian family. Titled *Sylvania Waters*, after the suburb the family lived in, the show followed the family through their day-to-day experiences, warts and all.

As one of the first attempts at 'fly-on-the-wall' reality television, the concept proved immensely popular for audiences and the idea of 'reality' was copied and adapted to include talent quests, bored housemates, lonely farmers and mystery weddings. The driving economic force of the political economy model means that media producers are encouraged to try new and engaging ways to reach audiences and, as such, develop personal and unique methods of engaging audiences.

ACTIVITY 4.18

Debate!

Break the class into two groups and debate the following question:

'Is the political economy model still relevant in 2017?'

Group 1 Affirmative: Research the role of the political economy model and find modern and positive examples of where economic interests (created by the audience) have driven more production of media stories. Your goal is to prove that not only is the model still relevant, but a positive influence on the production of media stories.

- Examples: Television programs *Family Guy* (1999–) and *Arrested Development* (2003–) brought back into production due to audience demand.

Group 2 Negative: Consider the modern media context. With 21st-century technologies, the audience is also a media producer. Find examples where popular media stories have been created outside of the traditional media industries of commercial television, radio and cinema. Your goal is to prove that online media production has made this model irrelevant and a hindrance to the creation of media stories.

- Examples: Examine the rise of vlogging culture and the high-profile identities that exist as a result.

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FOCUS QUESTION

Briefly explain how politics can influence a media narrative.

Political influences

Power over media production is not always limited to those with the money; in some cases, political leaders and the environment they create can influence media stories. One of the first-ever feature films was made in Australia, about the infamous bushranger Ned Kelly in 1906. Shot without audio, the narration and sound effects of horse hooves and gun shots were all performed live in the theatre. It set off a chain of bushranger stories that captured public attention and made Australia, momentarily, a global centre for filmmaking and innovation. However, police and politicians were concerned that bushranger stories glorified crime and were a danger to the community.

In 1912, the Victorian Police moved to ban all Ned Kelly films from screening, this coming just after New South Wales had banned the production of bushranger films altogether. While Ned Kelly stories made a return in later years, it was a long time before media creators were able to tell a bushranger story that did not offend the authorities. The ban had such an effect on telling these stories that a 1930 film about the Kelly gang portrayed Ned as an overweight, middle-aged man who quite laboriously told the audience about the dangers and temptations of being an outlaw. This too was banned in New South Wales. Clearly, political power can influence the work of storytellers. In Australia, this kind of *censorship* of stories on political grounds is a distant memory. While some films come under scrutiny for their depictions of sex and violence (more on that later), it is rare to see an Australian media producer hindered by such concerns. However, political influences around the globe still impede the production of stories.

ACTIVITY 4.19

Research task

Examine the work of the following media producers. Examine the political constraints on their work and explain how and why their stories were affected.

- Jafar Panahi – Iran
- Tan Pin Pin – Singapore
- Zhang Yimou – China

Social influences – AIDS and *Philadelphia*

Stories reflect the society that creates them and media producers can use story to challenge pre-existing ideas and spark discussion and understanding. The 1993 film *Philadelphia* (dir. Jonathan Demme) is credited with opening public discussion about the discrimination and homophobia created by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In the year of its release, 2.5 million Americans were affected by the disease and a great deal of misinformation, public debate and fear meant those affected, as well as gay men in general, were further ostracised in the community. The film was the first major Hollywood release that directly addressed AIDS as well as gay relationships. While its director, Jonathan Demme, was criticised for avoiding the topic of gay sexuality, it is considered important for the way it was produced. To reach as wide an audience as possible,



FIGURE 4.60 Actor Tom Hanks at a press conference for *Philadelphia* (1993)

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Demme (already a well-known director) chose the family-friendly actor Tom Hanks to play the role of a gay lawyer who contracts AIDS. Another well-known actor, Denzel Washington, played his legal representative after Hanks' character, Andrew Beckett, is fired from his job due to his disease, as well as his homosexuality. Washington's homophobic character, Joe Miller, was initially reluctant to help Beckett. Clearly a representation of a broader community attitude to gay men in 1993, Miller was used by Demme as a vehicle to humanise a community that had been dehumanised by the AIDS epidemic.

By employing Hanks and Washington as the lead actors in a delicate story, Demme was able to reach an audience that may have been previously reluctant to engage in such a topic. Popular working-class musician Bruce Springsteen wrote the title theme, which only furthered its reach to mainstream audiences.

CASE STUDY 4.6

Social influences in media production – *The Simpsons*

As one of the longest-running television programs in the history of the media form, *The Simpsons* has been witness to a range of social changes and attitudes and has worked, through the medium of animated comedy, to challenge them.



FIGURE 4.61 *The Simpsons* (1989–) is one of the longest-running television programs in history.

Analysis

Research the media conventions employed in the following episodes to examine how the characters and story reflect the social environment in which they were created.

For each episode, complete the following tasks:

1. Watch the episode or read the synopsis online. Identify what social issue the episode addresses.
2. Explain how the story addresses the issue.
3. Describe how characters have been used to reflect various attitudes within society.
4. Examine the year of production; how have these issues changed in the year you are reading this? What impact do you feel this episode may have had on attitudes towards this issue?

Season 2: Episode 4 – Two cars in every garage, three eyes on every fish

When Bart catches a three-eyed fish affected by nuclear waste, concerns are raised about the effect the nuclear power plant has on the town.

Season 5: Episode 14 – Lisa vs. Malibu Stacey

Lisa gets involved in the creation of a girl's doll that reflects her emerging feminist ideas.

Season 7: Episode 23 – Much Apu about nothing

To cover up another scandal, Mayor Quimby blames immigration for Springfield's problems and the Kwik-e-Mart owner Apu faces deportation.

Season 8: Episode 15 – Homer's phobia

Homer becomes concerned about Bart's sexuality after meeting a gay shop owner in the mall.

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Economic influences

As the political economy model would suggest, there are strong economic and financial influences over media production. In an age where anyone can broadcast themselves to anyone they want, it seems strange that economic demands could have such an influence over the way different stories are told. And yet, they do. Watch any of your favourite vloggers and you can see the difference between production values as the number of followers increase. Where some of the more niche YouTubers may get by with a laptop camera, those with millions of followers use three-point lighting and high-quality cameras. You can literally see the difference that more money makes to a production. How does a vlogger make money? Advertising. How can this influence the production of a vlog? Just ask popular YouTuber Pewdiepie, who lost a lucrative contract with Disney for broadcasting anti-Semitic content in 2017. As Disney is a large and mostly family-friendly producer of media content, it withdrew its significant financial backing from Pewdiepie (otherwise known as Felix Kjellberg) in an incident that also saw the search engine Google remove all of its ads from his YouTube videos. While YouTube itself did not remove the offending video, the financial impact was obvious and highlights the role money plays in the majority of media story production.

Advertising revenue drives commercial television production and ticket sales, while branding and marketing are attached to major film production. The *Toy Story* films sold the toy version of their animated characters, making over $2 billion in the process. This relationship between merchandise and film is a significant factor in the production of stories. The Transformers were toys before they were a multi-billion-dollar film franchise and merchandise line. The recent Lego movies have blurred the lines even further. It is obvious, then, that economic concerns play a significant role in the financing and production of some media stories. They are not solely seen as a piece of art, but also as an opportunity to make money.

AMAZING FACT

When making the first *Star Wars* film in the late 1970s, George Lucas shrewdly had sole rights to all future merchandising written into his contract with film studio Twentieth Century Fox. Upon their first release, the demand for *Star Wars* toys quickly became a global phenomenon that continues today.

Film studios are known to 'test screen' a story before it is released. A director will be given time to complete the story and it will be shown to a small group of people who will provide their opinion on it. These 'test screenings' have been known to force a director to significantly alter their product in a way that challenges their original intention. The romantic comedy *Pretty Woman* (1990, dir. Gary Marshall) was originally seen as too dark and morbid by Disney, the company paying for the film. Director Gary Marshall shot several different endings to the film and the company used screen test feedback to choose the happy 'rags to riches' ending that would be more palatable for mainstream audiences.



FIGURE 4.62 Tie-in merchandise is a common part of a big film release today. Pictured are some *Star Wars* themed toys.

FOCUS QUESTION

Briefly explain how economic factors can influence a media narrative.

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CASE STUDY 4.7

The role of economics in media production – test screenings

An even more significant example occurred when director Spike Jonze, known for his **surrealist** approach to storytelling, was forced to reshoot the ending to his 2009 film *Where the Wild Things Are*. Originally a 1962 children's book, *Where the Wild Things Are* remains popular with children today and Jonze's adaptation was directed specifically at a much older audience and a real reflection of his own personal style. However, after a screen test in 2008, the studio producing Jonze's film asked him to reshoot elements of the ending to allow for a more family-friendly film. For a director known for telling unique and engaging stories, *Where the Wild Things Are* exists as an example of the role economics plays in the production of media stories.

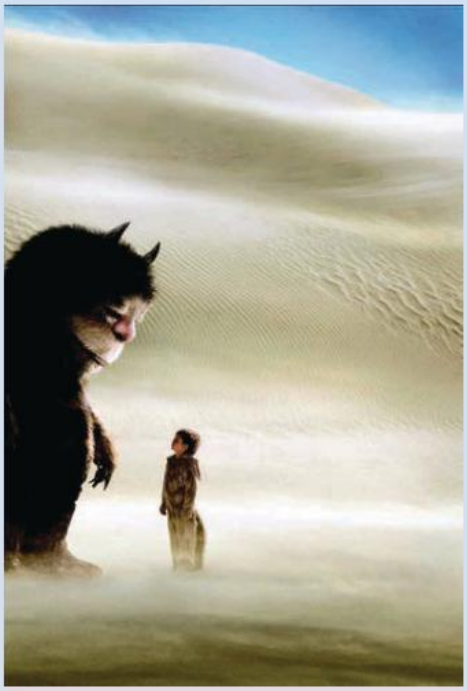


FIGURE 4.63 A still from the movie *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009), based on the book by Maurice Sendak

surrealist a style in which unusual or impossible things are shown happening

Analysis

Examine the case of *Where the Wild Things Are*.

Create a list of pros and cons that debate the role of economics in the creation, production and distribution of this film.

Some guiding questions:

1. What expectations would an audience of children and adults have of the film given its popularity as a children's book? How would this have influenced the studio's actions?
2. Without the estimated $100 million budget, could a story of this technological standard have been made at all?
3. Did the desire to recoup the budget and generate a profit from such a well-loved children's book override the artistic direction of the director?
4. Why would the darker tone to the film mean there was not an attached merchandising line?

After completing your list, examine the role economics plays in the process of storytelling. Do you believe it to be a positive or negative influence?

Product placement

Product placement is the process of placing a commercial product, like a soft drink, in a media narrative with the intention of selling the product to the audience. If the soft drink appears in the hands of an attractive, beautiful film star it will have the audience's attention. If the drink just so happens to refresh the actor's character and appear as a seamless element of the script, then that's even better! It is the hope of the advertiser that the audience won't notice that the product has been placed there for the specific purpose of convincing customers to buy it. Product placement is seen as a controversial element of storytelling as, on one hand, it lessens the authenticity of some stories and, on the other, when companies pay for their products to appear, more stories get made. It is a difficult balance for story producers.

product placement the process of placing a commercial product in a media narrative with the intention of selling the product to the audience

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Product placement has a long history. In 1993's *The Firm* (dir. Sydney Pollack), Tom Cruise visits Gene Hackman in the Cayman Islands, Hackman suggests that he 'grab a Red Stripe', so Cruise opens the fridge for a bottle of the Jamaican-brewed beer. Within a month of the film's release, Red Stripe sales in the US had increased by more than 50%, and just a few weeks later, company owners sold a majority stake in their brewery for $62 million to Guinness Brewing Worldwide.

When the cult TV show *Seinfeld* (1989–98) used the candy Junior Mint as a comic prop in an episode where a Junior Mint falls into the open stomach of a surgery patient, the mint gained international attention. As simple as this sounds, an agency had to be hired to negotiate when and how the mint was to be used within the episode. In this instance, the company was willing to be the butt of the joke. However, this is not always the case, as positive reflections of a product will lead to more sales than negative ones.

AMAZING FACT

Product placement has been a part of the James Bond films over their half a century on screens around the world. Companies pay millions of dollars to have their cars, watches, alcohol and clothing appear in a Bond film. Actor Daniel Craig said upon the release of *Skyfall* (dir. Sam Mendes) in 2012, 'We have relationships with a number of companies so that we can make this movie. The simple fact is that, without them, we couldn't do it. It's unfortunate but that's how it is.'

Online media creators are not immune. Instagram celebrities who create representation of their daily life are paid thousands for posting photos and videos using commercial products. Anything from Juice cleanses, sneakers, teeth-whitening kits and meal replacement regimes are placed in the feeds of online celebrities who have greater reach than most advertising companies could ever wish for. How does this impact the supposed authenticity of this person's whole online persona?



FIGURE 4.64 Product placement in a media narrative: pictured is a scene from *Hot Tub Time Machine 2* (2015, dir. Steve Pink) featuring a Smart car.

Australian reality television is fertile ground for product placement spotting. The cooking contest *Masterchef* has a product placement relationship with several products. As the contestants cook, cry and whisk their way to the final, branded products are constantly seen in their hands, in the background and foreground of most shots. It clearly works, as in 2011 the Coles supermarket chain stated that sales on products they featured on the show had risen by 480%. The trouble is, audiences find it difficult to know when the program begins and the advertising stops. The two seem to become one and any sense of story gets lost. In an episode of the renovation contest *The Block*, 11 different products that sponsored the show were mentioned 61 times either verbally or on clothing and billboards placed in shot over a one-hour time slot. That does not include the commercial breaks either! Those also were for products seen in the show, using contestants and hosts of the program in the advertisements. While these programs are notoriously expensive to produce, product placement can lead audiences to ask what happened to the story in the middle of these giant advertisements.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What is product placement?
2. How could it have an influence on a narrative?

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ACTIVITY 4.20

Product placement research

Research the following cases of product placement:

1 Outline the product and how it appeared.
2 Did the placement prove successful? Why/why not?
3 Did the placement affect the authenticity of the media story? Explain your response.
   - **a** *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982, dir. Steven Spielberg)
   - **b** *The Island* (2005, dir. Michael Bay)
   - **c** *Small Soldiers* (1998, dir. Joe Dante)
   - **d** *Recipe to Riches* (2011–)
   - **e** *Riverdale* (2017–)
   - **f** *Wayne's World* (1992, dir. Penelope Spheeris)

Digital developments

Costs

Traditional media forms like radio, television, film and photography were once created using film strips that degenerated significantly over time. They were fragile, expensive and required specific training to use. With the advent of digital technology (more on that in Chapter 6) the costs of media production have been reduced significantly. The entire process of creating a media product was extremely expensive as film itself was heavy and expensive to produce, develop and distribute. Film could not be reused, so it weighed heavily on the cost of some productions. Digital film is, of course, reusable, cheap and accessible and develops greater opportunities to expand on the realism, quality and special effects of media products in a more cost-effective manner.



FIGURE 4.65 The famous 'Tank man of Beijing' photo, from 1989

Production

More media can now be created in less time. Digital footage means the volume of video footage or audio that can be captured has no limit. As a result, more angles can be shot, perfect and digitally altered to perfect the creator's vision. Modern journalism, especially that of the 'foreign correspondent' relaying a story from a war zone, can rely on high-quality digital footage shot on relatively compact devices that match the high standard of their own recorded audio. Take the example of the famous 'Tank Man of Beijing' photo from 1989. When an American journalist took a photo from his hotel balcony of a man standing in protest in front of a Chinese Army tank, he was being watched by the Army's secret surveillance. To save the images from destruction once the Army eventually burst into the journalist's hotel room, he hid them in

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a sealed plastic bag in the cistern of the toilet. Had the film been exposed to water or light, the famous image of the tank man may have been lost. Today, digital photography means that such a photo can be taken, stored forever digitally and shared or distributed instantaneously.

Post-production

Editing digital footage is now faster and more effective. Consider the process of 'splicing'. To make an edit in a sequence of film, a filmmaker needed to take the developed film reel which, depending on its duration, could amount to tens of metres of fine photographic film, and weave it between a series of spools and levers on a table-top editing machine. Once the editor had identified an edit point, they would literally take the film out and cut the unwanted footage off with a small guillotine. That unused footage was literally discarded, hence the term 'left on the cutting room floor'. The editor would then link that footage up with the next shot they wanted to cut to and place them together in the splicing machine by taping them together. Today, not only can edits be made in seconds using high-quality editing software, but they can be made using applications on smartphones.



FIGURE 4.66 Editing digital footage is now faster and more effective than it used to be. Pictured is director Spike Lee in front of an older analogue editing system.

Distribution

The move to digital technologies has also made the process of distribution and sharing of media narratives faster, broader and more effective. Products that are created digitally can be released immediately, either by online sharing platforms or through live broadcast networks like television. This means that these products can be seen and consumed by even wider audiences than before. Online sharing also increases the ability for audiences to interact with the product, which in many cases increases the audience's engagement with the product and process itself.

Preservation

Have you ever seen a remastered version of your favourite classic film? This process often occurred to physically preserve the quality of the original cut of the film. As photographic film degrades and crumbles over time, media producers would work to restore and 'remaster' the original to its intended standard in order to increase its longevity. However, if the film is not converted into a digital format, it will eventually become unusable. Digital media products can be stored on large servers or in online cloud services. In one infamous incident during the creation of the animation *Toy Story 2* (1999, dir. John Lasseter), a staff member accidentally deleted the entire film from the Pixar servers. Fortunately, the bulk of the missing footage was recovered from the computer of an editor working from home and while it took close to a year to restore the film, it was not lost forever. The preservation of digital media has positives and negatives, however. While it means that media narratives will remain preserved forever, it also means that the sheer volume will in many ways diminish the quality and significance of the whole.

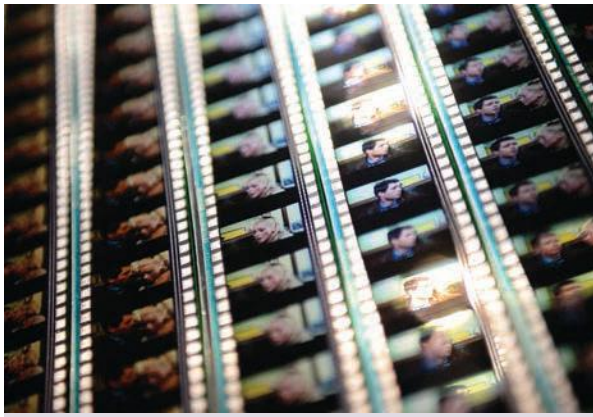


FIGURE 4.67 Photographic film degrades and crumbles over time.

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The introduction of digital technology to the process of story has, inevitably, made it more accessible to the tellers. Low costs, coupled with the speed of production and distribution, have made it easier to create more media narratives that reach more people than ever before.

FOCUS QUESTION

What effect could recent digital developments in technology have on screen narratives?

Government influences: classification

Media producers must work within legal boundaries too. Any media product created for sale and distribution in Australia must either be regulated by the federal government or created under a strict code of 'self-regulation'. Video games, films and literature are all examined by the Australian Classification Board, which applies a rating system depending on the nature of the content. Television and radio are encouraged to regulate themselves and adhere to what they and the Classification Board consider appropriate 'community standards'.

Community standards are set by what audiences, the community, generally accept as normal and acceptable in media products. They concern the nature of media content and, more specifically, their depiction of elements like sexual and violent content. To get an idea of how community standards operate, you only need to look at the reasons for shielding children from this very type of content. Graphic depictions of murder or sex are accepted as inappropriate for children of a certain age as their brains have not developed to a stage where they can easily discern reality from make-believe. The potential for traumatic experiences means government institutions like the Classification Board will apply a rating system to define the nature of certain content and, thus, the audience that it should be appropriately viewed and consumed by. For example, only mature audiences over the age of 18 are legally able to buy video games that are classified under an 'R18+' rating. This is usually due to the violent 'adult' nature of the games' content. Australian radio and television producers are encouraged to use 'self-regulation' whereby they decide for themselves what is or is not acceptable to the community.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is responsible for setting guidelines for content producers online and on radio and television. FreeTV Australia is another similar group, whose members represent all of the free-to-air TV channels in Australia. Both groups set out guidelines that they expect producers to follow when creating content. This is why it is rare to see mature content like sex and/or violence during the hours that it

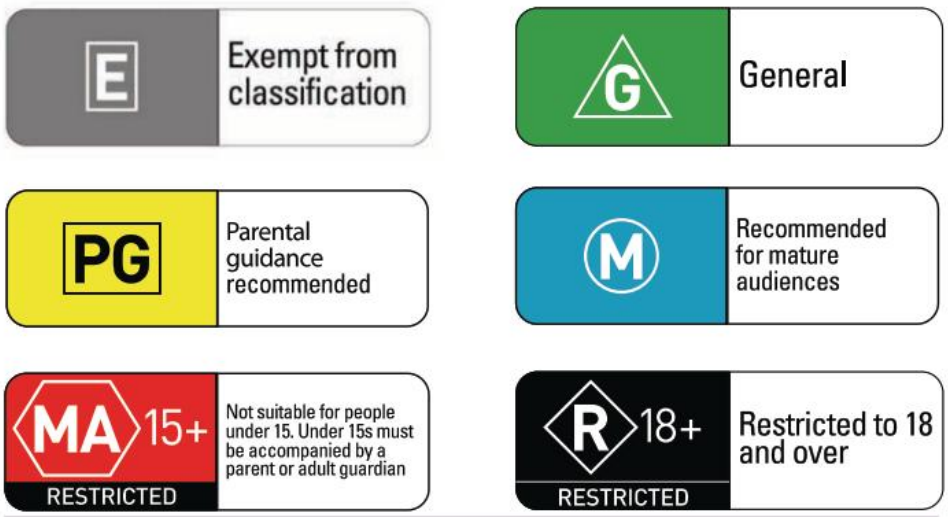


FIGURE 4.68 The film classification rating system from the Classification Board

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is expected children will be watching television. This process of 'self-regulation' means that neither body has the power to see the content before it is released.

While this may seem less restrictive than the Classification Board, which has legal power, audiences are able to lodge complaints with these media producers and advertisers can, and are often known to, pull their lucrative advertising money away from these offenders of community standards as it reflects negatively on their product and, in turn, their own profits.

So what does this mean for producers of narratives and media products, if they are intended for commercial release and sale? A lot. Media producers must be aware of the nature of their own content and the relationship it has with its audience. If it is your intention to make a series of highly engaging (and hopefully lucrative) films about a talented young boy who attends a musty old school for like-minded wizards, you would need to carefully consider the target audience. Such a series of films would, in all likelihood, appeal to a younger audience and, as such, you would need to carefully consider the nature of the content you intend to include from the very first stage of development, as the graphically violent death of the young boy's arch nemesis would not be considered acceptable to the parents of the audience you have targeted. While it is imperative for storytellers to push boundaries and ideas, they must take place within the realm of what the community and government deem to be acceptable.



FOCUS QUESTION

What is the overall purpose of government classification?



ACTIVITY 4.21

Sum up the influences – media production

Media professionals create work within the society and culture that exists around them. While they often create media products to challenge these structures, the social, political and institutional structures invariably have an influence over the nature of the production itself.

1. Define the political economy model. How does it influence media production?
2. Define how historical and social factors have influenced media production (hint: you may want to examine the male villains section from Chapter 1).
3. Explain how political and social factors influence media production.
4. Do you think political and social factors are subject to change? Explain your response with an example.
5. Define the range of economic factors that influence the work of media professionals.
6. Consider these social, economic and political structures in reference to online media production like YouTube or social media sharing sites.
   - **a** Do any of these factors influence the production of content?
   - **b** If and when this content is regulated, does the level of its visibility or popularity determine the outcome? Use examples in your response.
   - **c** What responsibility do you think the host of this content has to regulate the nature of the media product?

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4.7 Consumption and reception context

Where, how and when an audience engages in a narrative is essential to its engagement. Audiences are drawn to different media products for different purposes. The **consumption context** of a narrative refers to the way an audience examines a media narrative. Social and cultural factors are very influential in the way an audience understands and chooses its media products.

After a long week at school, you may not be all that excited about watching a complex spy thriller that has too much dialogue and too many twists and turns. You might just want to watch Jim Carrey be funny. Or listen to a podcast quietly on your own. However, the way in which you decode what you see and hear is based on your background and experiences. If you have grown up watching Hollywood romantic comedies, you come to expect and are sometimes drawn to these narratives as you have expectations and an understanding of the genre or form.

consumption context relates to the ways in which a media product is consumed by an audience

Watching a movie in a cinema with a big picture and loud audio is quite a different experience from watching the same film on a mobile phone while travelling on a bus. Since media codes communicate media conventions, interference with media codes could mean that audiences miss out on media conventions. Missing out on important details could potentially reduce the audience enjoyment and engagement of films as they may miss out on key pieces of information. This experience is referred to as the reception context.

For instance, if you were watching a movie in the classroom and people commentate on the action, making you miss dialogue that explains the protagonist's past, then you would not completely understand the motivations driving the character. This in turn may contribute to you not enjoying the film as it wouldn't make sense to you.



FIGURE 4.69 In Melbourne, watching movies is still an important social phenomenon. Cinemagoers have a choice between multiplexes like Village or Hoyts or independent cinemas like the Sun Theatre in Yarraville.

In addition to this, the time and place where an audience watches a media product is also critical to their understanding and interpretation of it. As seen earlier in this book, historical events and societal changes play a significant role in how producers create media stories and how audiences interpret them.

Media producers must be aware of the individual and cultural contexts within which audiences view, listen to and interact with their work to ensure the audience engages with their product.

When Quentin Tarantino shot the film *The Hateful Eight*, his intention was for audiences to experience it in cinemas and so he shot the film in the unique aspect ratio of 2.35:1. Such a screen size would be lost on a small mobile phone screen or even a laptop.

Tarantino was so set on influencing the reception of the film that it was shot exclusively on film and a special 70-millimetre film version was screened at a number of independent cinemas around America and Australia (for example, at Melbourne's Astor, Sun and Village Rivoli cinemas).

Conversely, digital media content, such as some web serials or vlogs you will read about later in this book, are made with this reception context in mind. As most vlogs are watched online via laptops, phones or tablets, they avoid the subtle and meticulous codes and conventions of cinema to attract the distracted audience!

FOCUS QUESTION

Briefly explain how the way you view a screen narrative can influence how you 'read' or understand the narrative.

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ACTIVITY 4.22

Carefully consider how you receive different media stories and respond to these questions.

1. Describe what the benefits are of watching a movie in the cinema.
2. Identify the things that increase the experience.
3. How could they assist in getting a better understanding of the movie? Explain.
4. Describe the disadvantages of watching a movie in the cinema. What are things that interfere with the experience? How could they inhibit the understanding of the movie?
5. Discuss how watching a movie in class might be different from watching it in the cinema, or watching a movie on a mobile device.

ACTIVITY 4.23

Write a short essay for your teacher: 'How has reception context impacted online storytelling?'

In your response, explain the following:

1. What have you learned so far about the nature of online storytelling?
2. What do you believe to be the most common reception context for these stories?
3. How have production and storytelling techniques changed as a result?



FIGURE 4.70 Eric Bana as Melbourne criminal Chopper Read in the Australian movie *Chopper* (2000)

The geographic location of an audience can significantly impact upon the way an audience consumes a media product. Some of the most popular films made in Australia reflect specifically Australian themes. 1997's *The Castle* (dir. Rob Sitch) featured a family man's fight to save his home against big business. While the ideas are certainly universal, many of the comedic moments reflected a suburban Australian experience and one that, perhaps, would not be appreciated on the same level by someone living in another culture. The same could be said for another Australian film *Chopper* (2000, dir. Andrew Dominik), which unpacked the storied life of a former criminal hitman. International audiences may baulk at what might appear to be a glorification of criminal behaviour; however, that may miss the relationship Australian culture has with the celebration of outlaws like Ned Kelly and the often strange relationship it has with its criminal past. There is an element of these characters that resonates with Australian audiences that may not have the same influence in other locations.

Cultural along with geographic influences also impact the consumption of a story. In 2004 a German production of *Der Undertang* (*Downfall*) told the story of Adolf Hitler in the last weeks of his life. Shot primarily in the bunker where the ailing dictator spent the last days of his life, the story did much to humanise one of history's greatest villains, as it would be understood to a student in an Australian history classroom.

However, shot in German, *Downfall* is a narrative best received in a cinema as the subtleties of the codes and conventions employed would perhaps be lost to an English-speaking audience watching on a laptop or in that same Australian history classroom.

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CASE STUDY 4.8

Consumption and reception

The place of the 'Western' film is unique within American film culture. It is a genre that Hollywood could easily claim as its own. However, as American culture has become more aware of itself and its own history, its understanding of the Western has changed.



FIGURE 4.71 The Western genre contains many well-known codes and conventions, such as the climactic shootout on the main street of town.

In the 1950s and 60s, the Western depicted brave cowboys who could conquer the savage 'wild west' with a pistol and a horse. The films, books, comics and television shows spoke of a world of good and evil, white versus black and civilisation over savagery. What was often forgotten in these narratives was the history of bloodshed, violence and genocide that lurks in the colonial history of the United States, much in the same way as it does in Australia.

Early Westerns romanticised the taming of the west by predominantly white men. Fast forward to 2013 and the remake of a popular TV show from the 1950s, *The Lone Ranger* (dir. Gore Verbinski). The film acts as a modern-day adaptation of the Western television serial of a white crime fighter and his Native American sidekick, Tonto. The film was poorly received by audiences to such a degree that it barely made back its production costs.

Your task is to find out why.



FIGURE 4.72 (Left) The Lone Ranger (Clayton Moore) and Tonto (Jay Silverheels) in the original TV series; and (right) Tonto (Johnny Depp) and the Lone Ranger (Armie Hammer) in the 2013 Disney film

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Analysis

Create a research report on the history of the Western genre that explains how contemporary audience consumption and reception can influence interpretations of Western stories. In your report you must examine the following ideas:

1. Begin by examining the Western genre. Summarise the common codes and conventions used. What kind of characters and storylines do audiences expect?
2. Review Chapter 1 of this book and closely examine the Eurocentric view. Propose how this would have influenced the development of the Western genre and the representation of the Native American as 'the other', as well as create consumption patterns and expectations.
3. Examine the production history: Investigate the story of Jay Silverheels, the actor who played the original Tonto in the television production of *The Lone Ranger* (1949–57). What does his life and career tell you about the nature of Western story production in the past?
4. Examine some well-known Western stories from the 1950s and 60s. How do they represent characters? How do they explain the relationship between good and evil? Civilisation and the other?
5. Now examine the nature of these representations in later films like *Dances with Wolves* (1990, dir. Kevin Costner) or *True Grit* (2010, dir. Ethan & Joel Coen). How have the representations mentioned above changed? What do you believe are the causes of this?
6. Now examine these representations in the film adaptation of *The Lone Ranger*. How could you explain the negative reaction to this film?
7. How have the ways modern audiences consume and receive narratives impacted the way these stories are interpreted? Explain.



CASE STUDY 4.9

Assessment study: *Pan's Labyrinth*

Media narratives are a reflection of the context in which they were created. To examine the role of external influences on the construction of a narrative, we need to look no further than Guillermo del Toro's 2006 film *Pan's Labyrinth*. The film is fertile ground to not only examine the unique style of a director working within the fantasy genre, but the historical, social and political structures that heavily influenced the construction of the story itself.

Set in Spain after the conclusion of the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930s, a young girl, Ofelia, travels to the countryside to meet her pregnant mother's new husband, fascist army officer Captain Vidal. Introverted and afraid of her new surroundings the girl retreats into a world of fantasy where a mythical creature, 'the Faun', sets her a series of challenges that will help her escape her violent new environment and reunite her with her deceased father. The narrative cuts between Ofelia's quest and the ongoing battle between Vidal and a group of rebels in the hills. The audience is engaged not only by Del Toro's richly imagined and realised fantasy world of Ofelia and the Faun, but the impending doom created by the vicious Captain Vidal.

Social and historical context

The Spanish Civil War (1936–39) serves as the backdrop for *Pan's Labyrinth*. A sensitive wound in the collective history of Spain, the war was fought between left-wing Marxists and Anarchists and Nationalist Fascist forces, known as Falangists. The war was brutal. Atrocities and executions were carried out by both sides and the eventual winner, the Falangists, went on to rule Spain under the dictatorship of Francisco Franco until democratic elections were held in 1977.

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Painter Pablo Picasso created one of the most remembered images of the war through his painting *Guernica*. The painting employed Picasso's surrealist style to make one of the strongest political statements of the war, as it depicted the civilian suffering during the mass bombing and destruction of the city of Guernica by the Fascist forces, who were supported by Nazi Germany. The total number of deaths in the war through conflict, execution and starvation is estimated to be near 500 000. Politically and socially, the war is a sensitive topic for Spain even today. In 1977, both sides of a democratically elected government signed a 'Pact of Forgetting', which meant no one from either side would be prosecuted for previous war crimes. The nation and its leaders would look to the future, rather than the past. Naturally, the war still lingers in the memory of most Spaniards, despite the decision to 'forget'.



FIGURE 4.73 Picasso's painting *Guernica* reflected the Spanish Civil War, which acts as a backdrop for *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006).

Guillermo del Toro is a Mexican director who made a Spanish film, for Spanish audiences. His motivation to make the film came from a long memory of Spanish exiles who had fled to Mexico after the war. Using Ofelia and her retreat into her imagination as the focus of the story, Del Toro surrounded her fantasy world with a reality that reflected the horrors of the war, and the vengeance of the eventual victors that would hold special resonance for Spanish audiences. Films, books and plays have been made about the war since the end of the Franco era; however, few of them have been made by outsiders and as such it does not have the same impact for an international audience that a film about Nazi Germany might have. Discussion of the war was heavily censored during the Franco dictatorship and the nation chose to forget it afterwards and, as such, it did not make as significant a cultural and artistic impact outside Spain as the events of World War II or the Cold War.



FIGURE 4.74 Director Guillermo del Toro next to a poster of his film *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006)

Financial context

Del Toro experienced significant difficulties in financing the production of *Pan's Labyrinth*. Investors like to see a return on their investment and film finance is no different. Internationally, the Spanish Civil War is not cemented in common knowledge. Even the Spanish themselves had legislated to forget about it and so it would not necessarily present an obvious opportunity to make money. For such an idea as *Pan's Labyrinth* to take root, Del Toro sacrificed his own salary to ensure the development phase of the film was allowed to begin. He was also offered a much larger production budget to produce the film in English rather than Spanish, which was also refused. The decision to persevere with the original vision of the film had clear implications.

In an early scene, the fearsome Captain Vidal greets his pregnant wife and Ofelia with the masculine plural 'Bienvenidos', a term for welcome that assumes the unborn child is male. While this may seem an obscure detail to English-speaking audiences, it has significant meaning for a Spanish audience and is crucial in the introduction and development of Vidal's character. Without this level of control, Del Toro would not be able to make the film as he intended and thus it was made under significant financial stress.

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Consumption context

The themes of fantasy and war in *Pan's Labyrinth* are easily recognisable; however, the cast were unrecognisable to a non-Spanish audience. Del Toro carefully chose his cast from the Spanish film and television industry and used them to challenge even their own expectations. Ivana Baquero played Ofelia as a newcomer to screens and as such the audience, either in or outside of Spain, had few expectations. To counter this, Del Toro carefully chose his supporting cast to build and disrupt the expectations for Spanish viewers. Maribel Verdú was known for playing strong and dependable women and her role as Mercedes, the matron of the country house Ofelia has been sent to, meant local audiences could have reliable expectations of her character's role in the narrative.

However, the choice to employ Sergi López, who plays the dark and sadistic Captain Vidal, challenged the audience's expectations. López was best known for his work in comedy and melodrama and it was a shock for audiences to see him in such a different role. Similar to Robin Williams' role as the twisted stalker in *One Hour Photo* (2002), López's representation as a fascist army officer created a deep unease in an audience who had come to expect lighter and less challenging characters from him. In employing Baquero, Verdú and López in the roles that he did, Del Toro was able to maximise the engagement from a Spanish audience already familiar with two of the actors, by playing with their expectations.

Creation of meaning

In the creation of *Pan's Labyrinth*, Del Toro employed his own unique style to manipulate media codes and conventions to tell a narrative. Let's examine two key scenes within the film to see how he connects a fantasy to reality in a single narrative.

Opening sequence

The film begins in a black screen where the only sound is the light breathing of a character we cannot see. Titles come onto the screen which establish the time and place of the narrative. It is 1944 and guerrillas are hiding out in the Spanish forest against the triumphant forces of Francisco Franco. The black screen cuts to a close-up of the ashen face of Ofelia, lying next to a stone well with a steady trickle of blood coming from her nose. Del Toro spirals the shot into Ofelia's eye as the audience is taken into the 'underworld' and is told, by an unseen narrator, the story of a princess who yearns to be reunited with her father. As the camera descends down into the dark, dimly lit well, it transforms into a wide shot of a cavernous structure that resembles a palace of royalty. It is, however, deserted, bar the glimpses of Ofelia running through the scene. Instantly, Del Toro creates a vivid and engaging contrast between fantasy and reality as he establishes the expectation that the narrative will occur in two worlds, that of war and that of imagination.

Suddenly the scene flashes white and cuts to a warmer light as the camera pans across scenes of destruction. Before the camera rises above a stone wall from inside a bombed-out church, the audience see a scene of skulls and barbed wire. Objects of war and conflict. A fade to a rising establishing shot of a convoy of cars reveals a dry Spanish landscape surrounding a devastated small town. Here Del Toro uses two clear devices to engage two audiences. The scene was shot in the Spanish town of Belchite, which was destroyed during the Civil War. After the conflict was over, Franco ordered that the town remain untouched and it exists today as a monument to the conflict. For a Spanish audience, the use of this town holds specific significance



FIGURE 4.75 Ofelia (Ivana Baquero) in *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006)

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as almost 5000 died in the battle for a town that was, in military terms, strategically insignificant. While this knowledge may not be readily known by an international audience, the consequences of war are perfectly represented by the crumbling ghost town. As the polished military vehicles weave their way towards the rubble, the audience catches a glimpse of the pain and devastation that preceded the narrative and so both audiences are engaged in the location of the narrative.

The opening sequence introduces Ofelia and Captain Vidal, the two driving forces of the narrative. The audience is taken inside the car where Ofelia sits with her heavily pregnant and unwell mother, cradling a small pile of fairy tale books. As her mother tells her she is too old to be reading such nonsense, Ofelia turns away from her mother in a slight protest; however, as her mother is suddenly about to be sick, Ofelia lurches forward to alert the car's drivers. In this scene, acting was employed to demonstrate Ofelia's character. Without dialogue, Ofelia is established as one who not only cherishes, but defends her world of fantasy. However, in the same breath, she is protective of her mother. Del Toro provides further opportunity for the audience to engage with Ofelia when she exits the car. Bathing a forest scene with warm, naturalistic sunlight, Del Toro demonstrates the mixed world of fantasy and reality that Ofelia experiences. Surrounded by floating insects, she wanders away from her mother and stumbles across a stone with strange markings. Instinctively it seems, she is drawn into the scrub towards a stone statue with almost prehistoric carvings. Clearly, the statue does not fit in the established setting and yet the stone with the strange markings seems to have found its home as Ofelia places it in a hole in the statue. Throughout this scene, Del Toro uses sound to make the suggestion of a descent into fantasy as the faint sound of strings, coupled with an unexpected breeze creates an unsettling but curious emotion for the audience. The significance of this is emphasised with a close-up into the statue's face. A faint, low rumbling sound accompanies the audience's focus on the mouth of the statue as a large, unrecognisable insect bursts from the mouth to surprise Ofelia. Through this subtle use of technical codes, Del Toro has established the possibility that Ofelia's character can travel seamlessly between both worlds.

Shortly after, the audience is introduced to Ofelia's antagonist, Captain Vidal. His scene opens with a close-up of a leather gloved hand holding a ticking pocket watch. While this watch plays a significant role on the narrative later, it establishes a clear understanding of Vidal. The watch signifies an obsession with time and order, something typical of an army officer. The following low-angle close-up of Vidal emphasises this point as he looks into the distance and states '15 minutes late'. Del Toro's introduction of Vidal invites the audience to examine his character in a sequence that establishes his personality. Represented in perfectly polished boots and a neatly pressed uniform, Vidal is an instant vision of authority. Del Toro supports this notion by filling the space behind him with supporting officers, the house staff and soldiers standing at attention. Much in the same way Del Toro used the town of Belchite to capture a Spanish audience's attention, the vision of the Fascist uniform holds symbolic as well as literal meaning for the Spanish reading of the narrative.

However, Del Toro connects the mise-en-scene elements of costume and arrangement within a frame with acting to establish Vidal as the greatest threat to Ofelia's quest to reunite with her father. As Ofelia is invited to meet Vidal, the creaks of his leather boots can be heard as he turns to greet her. A low-angle shot, over Ofelia's shoulder, sees Vidal step into the frame and dominate the space above her. His dominance is established further when Ofelia meekly offers her left hand to greet him. Her right hand was protectively clutching her fairy tale books to her chest. Rather than meet her hand, Vidal aggressively grips it, crushing her fingers together. Del Toro again uses a close-up of both Ofelia and Vidal as the Captain again moves into her space; leaning in to the grimacing Ofelia he states, 'It's the wrong hand' and tosses her hand aside. Through a combination of acting and camera, Del Toro establishes not only the character of Vidal, but the aggressive and possibly violent future of their relationship.

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The toad scene

As the narrative progresses, Ofelia looks to escape her reality by retreating into her imagination. In a book she finds in her new home, Ofelia meets a mythical creature known as 'the Faun' who introduces her to her quest. If she is able to complete a series of tasks, she will be reunited with her father in the underworld as the princess the audience met in the opening sequence. Del Toro uses the scene to establish the converging worlds of fantasy and reality. As Ofelia embarks on her first quest, Vidal begins his own, chasing the guerilla fighters into the hills in the hope of destroying them and living up to his father's legacy. The scene moves each character closer to their fate and eventual conflict.



FIGURE 4.76 Ofelia and Captain Vidal (Sergi López) in *Pan's Labyrinth*

Tasked with retrieving a key from a magical Toad, Ofelia enters a hole in a forest tree. A low-angle shot establishes Ofelia in the entrance of the tree, bathed in light and surrounded by the now ever-present insects of the fantasy world. In this world, Del Toro establishes Ofelia as strong, confident and a symbol of power. In the next scene, Del Toro shows the search for the guerrillas as Vidal finds their abandoned camp and an empty vial of antibiotics, stolen from his own home. As Vidal shouts into the forest to the unseen guerrillas, his voice echoes between the trees, commanding the space. Del Toro uses a low-angle shot from behind Vidal as he holds the vial into the air. Both scenes establish the two leading characters in command of their surroundings.



FIGURE 4.77 As the narrative progresses, Ofelia looks to escape her reality by retreating into her imagination.

Del Toro uses editing to cross between Vidal and Ofelia's quests. A wide tracking shot is used as Vidal rides away unsuccessful from his verbal challenge to the rebels to reveal a lone rebel watching Vidal's men from a distance. The use of this shot enhances the possibility of conflict between the guerrillas and the soldiers. However, by cutting back to Ofelia, who is now face to face with the Toad in the cramped, wet and muddy hollow of the tree, the audience now realises the importance of Ofelia's need to escape Vidal.

Despite her success in retrieving the key, Del Toro casts doubt over Ofelia's immediate safety when she leaves the tree. It is now night and the safe, warm glow of the forest is gone. Shivering and covered in mud, Ofelia is obviously worn out from her quest but is now confronted with the cold of night and the threat of rain from rumbling thunder in the distance. By concluding the scene in the manner that he did, Del Toro prepares the audience for the consequences of both Vidal's discovery and Ofelia's success in her task.

Scene analysis

Now it's your turn. Examine two more key scenes from *Pan's Labyrinth* and explain how Del Toro uses media codes and conventions to create meaning for the audience.

The Pale Man scene

Here, Ofelia meets a frightening monster that devours children. She must try to resist temptation in order to complete her second task.

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The Pale Man reveals the dark facets of this fantasy world. The colours within this scene again contrast heavily with those from the world Ofelia has travelled from. What appears to be a place of splendour and beauty quickly turns sinister, causing issues for both the fairies and for Ofelia later in the narrative.

Worth noting is the way that Del Toro creates tension by providing the audience with a perspective that exceeds Ofelia's awareness. Javier Navarrete's score plays a special part in this scene.



FIGURE 4.78 The Pale Man (played by Doug Jones) reveals dark facets of this fantasy world.

Analysis – the Pale Man scene

Remember to use the Name/Describe/Why/Effect technique you read about earlier in this chapter on page 130.

1. Del Toro uses the convention of cause and effect to drive the story forward here. Explain how this has been used to engage the audience in the narrative.
2. Explain how the setting and acting have been used to establish the character of the Pale Man.
3. Describe how mise en scene has been used to engage the audience in the narrative.
4. Time is structured in this scene to engage the audience. Explain how the codes of sound, editing and camera work together to expand time within the scene.



FIGURE 4.79 Closing sequence from *Pan's Labyrinth* – Ofelia holds her brother away from the Faun while Captain Vidal reaches for his son.

Closing sequence

In this scene, each character reaches the end of their quest. Under attack from the rebels, Vidal reveals the nature of his evil as he attempts to kill Ofelia after she steals her newborn brother from the house.

With the guerrillas in pursuit, Vidal chases Ofelia into the Labyrinth where the final confrontation takes place.

Here Del Toro employs the common theme of light and dark to signify the fate of each character's journey. Thick shadow surrounds Ofelia as she rushes her baby brother to the faun to complete her final quest; however, once Vidal meets his own fate, the warm light of safety (seen in the opening sequences) is seen behind the victorious rebels as Vidal's house burns.

Analysis – closing scene

1. Interpret how lighting has been used to resolve the narrative in this scene.
2. Describe how mise en scene has been used to signify Ofelia's success in her quest.
3. Explain how the relationship between sound and camera in the closing sequence serves to engage the audience.
4. With reference to two technical codes and one story convention, explain how a storyline has been resolved or unresolved by the closing sequence of a media product you studied this year.

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CHAPTER REVIEW

Summing it all up

Reading, making and engaging in narratives is a complex process. Our understanding and consumption of narratives is heavily influenced by our understanding of the codes and conventions that have been developed over time and across a variety of media forms. Who we are, where we are from, what we like and which technology we use to access narratives all play a role in the coding and decoding of these stories. You now understand the role that various formats play in catering to their audiences' experiences and that the techniques developed by a range of professional media creators have developed audience expectations and responded to changing narrative forms.

Revision questions

1. Explain the three-act structure. How does it engage an audience?
2. Revise the role of production and media conventions. Choose two media codes and explain their role in defining media conventions. Use examples in your responses.
3. Explain the role of camera in story.
4. Explain the role of mise en scene in establishing the direction of a story.
5. Explain the role of cause and effect in driving a story forward.
6. Explain how structuring of time can communicate information.
7. Examine the story examples in Activity 4.6. Explain how two media products communicate their genre using codes and conventions.
8. Define the various formats of documentary. How do they differ in their approach?
9. Explain the role of podcasting in storytelling. How does this format create engaging stories for the audience?
10. Describe how technological changes have influenced the creation of online content.
11. Propose how the personal styles of media producers influence storytelling.
12. Explain the range of challenges modern media producers face.
13. Explain how reception and consumption can influence the meaning of a media product.

Practice assessment questions

1. Define the role of media codes in introducing a selected media story in its opening sequence.
2. Explain how one story idea could be told across these formats:
   - **a** three-act structure
   - **b** documentary
   - **c** podcasting
   - **d** online content.
3. Define how the personal style of one media producer uses production and media conventions to tell stories.

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CHAPTER 5 AREA OF STUDY 2

NARRATIVES IN PRODUCTION

We make up horrors to help us cope with the real ones.

— Stephen King

OVERVIEW

Telling your own story sounds simple doesn't it? Imagine that all you need to complete your high-energy action film is for the main character to survive a parachute jump out of a burning helicopter as they skilfully shoot the villain, while upside down and in slow motion. Now imagine that it is late in the day, all of the batteries in the cameras are flat and your teacher has objected to the helicopter scene on what appears, after a while, to be very reasonable safety concerns. Creating your own narrative may not be held back by the same issues that some professionals face; however, you will need to strike a balance between what you want and what is possible.

FIGURE 5.1 (above): Famous movie storyteller Steven Spielberg directing a scene from *Jurassic Park: The Lost World* (1997)

OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to apply the media production process to create, develop and construct narratives.

To achieve this outcome, the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- media production processes and their relationship to specific media forms
- construction of narratives using the media production process
- the roles and responsibilities required in different stages of the media production process
- technical skills used in the operation of media technologies
- ethical, legal and community constraints in the production and distribution of media products
- media language appropriate to the design, production and evaluation of media products.

KEY SKILLS

- design and produce narratives using the stages of the media production process
- undertake roles and responsibilities within the media production process
- apply technical skills in the operation of media technologies
- develop and produce narratives within ethical, legal and community constraints
- use media language appropriate to the design, construction, production and evaluation of media productions.

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KEY TERMS

- pre-production
- production
- post-production
- ethics
- roles and responsibilities
- technical skills
- product placement
- evaluation
- distribution

WHAT'S AHEAD

SECTION 5.1	SECTION 5.2	SECTION 5.3	SECTION 5.4	SECTION 5.5	SECTION 5.6	SECTION 5.7	SECTION 5.8
Background	Pre-production research	Pre-production story development	Pre-production Statement of Intention	The production stage	Post-production	Methods of distribution	Statement of Outcome

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5.1 Background

In this chapter, you will work to create your own media narrative. In this process you will incorporate the understanding you have developed since the beginning of your study in Unit One up to this point. The creation of meaning is your primary goal; the creation of a narrative in a modern context creates more challenges and obstacles than you perhaps realise. However, careful planning, thoughtful development and enthusiastic collaboration with your team can ensure your idea and reality meet somewhere in the middle.

For your assessment task, you must make a school-friendly horror film. To make your five-minute masterpiece, you will need to navigate the creative, logistical, ethical, economic and technical constraints of making a film within your school's environment.



FIGURE 5.2 Horror has conventions that are unique to the genre.

Working to your individual strengths within a group environment, your goal is to develop, plan, shoot, edit and distribute your film to an audience. In order to make your film engaging and suitable for a screening to the school community, you will need to carefully plan and consider how to best employ the popular conventions of horror to elicit the same reaction from your target audience, while clarifying what your school community and its leaders deem to be acceptable content. In addition to this, you will be required to incorporate three products into your script that are a mandatory element of the production.

Throughout the process, you will need to carefully reflect on all stages of production to examine not only the artistic and creative process of media professionals, but also consider the environment within which skilled professionals must create a media product for a specific audience. The constraints facing your production will inevitably create challenges that you will need to anticipate in order to ensure you use your time effectively.

Once complete, you will be responsible for the distribution of your product. That will mean working with your teachers and school communities to not only screen the completed film, but to organise physical and online promotion of the event. As part of your reflection process, you will need to analyse the success or otherwise of your online distribution methods and seek feedback from your target audience.

The task

Your primary task is simple. You are required to construct a five-minute horror narrative.

The film must be shot on your school campus, using the various skills of your entire production team. The narrative must follow the story structures explained in Chapter 4. Your aim is to present a narrative that properly represents the key themes of the horror genre. By playing on the fears of your target audience, you will be able to draw out the emotions of fear, excitement and anxiety within your audience. You want to 'disrupt the normal' world of your audience.

Your secondary task is to create a 30-second online trailer, two 10-second teaser clips for online social media platforms and a physical poster. The primary goal of creating the film is the core of your work, the secondary

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goal will ensure your narrative will meet the interests of your target audience and ensure a successful distribution of your production.

Before you run off and start recording, you need to meet with your production team and identify the needs of the production process. If you plan together and carefully research the genre, you will be best equipped to formulate an idea that reflects the horror genre.

In summary

Working in a team you will submit:

- 1 x five-minute horror film
- 1 x 30-second promotional trailer
- 2 x 10-second social media teasers
- 1 x promotional poster.

Once complete you will:

- organise the screening of your film to a target audience
- gather feedback in data and written form
- formally examine your processes and product by submitting a written reflection.



FIGURE 5.3 Still image from the Alfred Hitchcock film *Psycho* (1960)

STUDY TIP

If horror is really not your cup of tea, negotiate with your teacher to work within another genre.

5.2 Pre-production research

Genre development

Before you begin to plan your film, you will need to investigate the broad and diverse world of the horror genre. It's not all blood and gore; some of the most effective horror films deny the audience the satisfaction of graphic violence, keeping them in suspense. Great directors have played on the innermost fears of an audience to elicit the same emotions of some of the great slasher films in history.

You need to research what makes the horror genre appeal to audiences *and* identify the innermost fears of your target audience. Imagine this film: our main character is a senior student at your average secondary school. We meet this character as they stand outside the maths classroom, waiting for their teacher to arrive. Suddenly, the orchestral score of Carl Orff's 1935 classic *Carmina Burana* begins to creep into the ears of the audience (it will help to play this score as you read this!). Our character looks furtively around the hands and faces of their fellow classmates as they study pieces of paper. A close-up of our character reveals the strike of sheer terror as a cutaway reveals the title of the papers: 'Assessment Cheat Sheet'. As the orchestral score begins to build momentum, it is clear that our hero has forgotten all about the maths test. Frantic attempts are made to skip through the textbook as class notes and poorly organised notes crash to the floor in a dramatic slow-motion tracking shot. Yet, more terror awaits: as an extreme close-up reveals a bead of sweat rolling down the forehead of the main character, the eyes glance up, past the camera to a figure approaching in the distance.



FIGURE 5.4 Great horror films deny the audience scenes of graphic violence, keeping them in suspense.

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It is the most feared maths teacher in the entire school, here to conduct the test. As Orff's masterpiece reaches its climactic crescendo, a long, drawn-out slow motion march of the teacher is cross-cut with medium shots of the hero as the body language and wide eyes reflect an impending sense of sheer terror.

By employing the common techniques of horror and the common fears of any secondary school maths student, it is easy to play on the fears of a specific audience.

Genre research

If you don't know a lot about the horror genre, you have an opportunity to research and discover one of the most popular narrative forms of all time. There are multiple avenues to explore horror; however, you will need to ensure you examine how the use of various technical and symbolic codes works in concert with common horror conventions.

It may help to start, as a group, researching the broad themes of the narratives and common techniques associated with horror stories.

ACTIVITY 5.1

Genre research task one: conventions

Identify one example from the genre and explain how all of the codes listed below have been employed to communicate the genre.

1. What are the common storylines found in horror?
2. What are the common characters found in the genre?
3. How is music used to enhance the power of the horror genre?
4. How are editing, mise en scene and camera employed to support the audience's understanding of horror?

Collate your findings and meet together as a group and target some specific horror narrative creators.

ACTIVITY 5.2

Genre research task two: directors

Some great directors and storytellers have used different techniques to tell these stories.

Divide this list of directors up among your group then answer the questions that follow:

Directors: Alfred Hitchcock/Wes Craven/James Wan/John Carpenter/George A Romero/Guillermo del Toro

Investigate:

1. What are the common storylines employed by this director?
2. What are the common characters employed by this director?
3. How is music used to enhance the power of the horror genre by this director?
4. How are editing, mise en scene and camera employed by the director to support the audience's understanding of horror?

You will need to also develop an idea of how you will distribute your film and advertise it to audiences. The art of the film trailer lies in making a good impression with your audience. You don't want to give too much away, but you want to leave them with questions and reasons to find and view your complete film. Work as a group to research a series of horror trailers to examine how they are constructed.

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FIGURE 5.5 Director Alfred Hitchcock with clapperboard on the set of *Psycho*

ACTIVITY 5.3

Genre research task three: trailers

1 Outline what happens in each trailer.
2 Identify how many shots appear in the trailer.
3 Describe how music has been used. Explain all of the sounds and instruments.
4 Explain what elements of the story have been given away by the trailer. What questions do the audience have?

Meet again and collate your understanding. Make a list of the key techniques and ideas you would like to attempt, re-create or adapt in your own film. Keep that list handy as you will need it again soon.

ACTIVITY 5.4

Genre research task four: poster research

Examine the use of codes and conventions in the following posters. Carefully examine the techniques that have been used to communicate the genre of horror.

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For the following film posters, answer these questions for each one:

1 Identify and list all of the technical codes employed. How does each communicate the ideas of horror?
2 Explain what symbolic codes have been used. How have they been used within the poster?
3 Written codes are essential to advertising posters – how does the written text appear? What colours have been used? How does the font combine with colour to represent the ideas of horror? Explain.

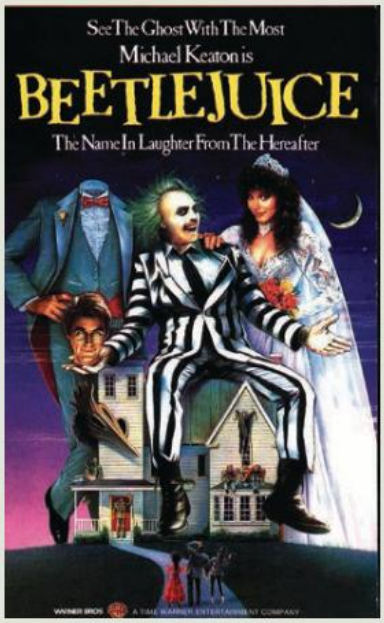








FIGURE 5.6 Film posters show what genre the film is by their choice of images and colours. From top left: *Beetlejuice* (1988, dir. Tim Burton), *Ghostbusters* (1984, dir. Ivan Reitman), *Gremlins* (1984, dir. Joe Dante), *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993, dir. Henry Selick).

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The sound of horror

As you are creating your horror film for a public audience, you will need to create your own soundtrack. As copyright laws dictate that you will not be able to use the work of others without authorisation, you will need to investigate copyright-free opportunities to use sound in the form of music and sound effects to enhance the impact of your vision.

Horror soundtracks play a vital role in the creation of fear, anxiety and excitement in the audience. Nothing moves an audience to the edge of their seats in the way a seemingly silent violin creeps into the ear as the main character wanders into a dark basement, alone and frightened. It enhances the gravity of the danger the character is in.

You will need to capture the mood and ideas generated by some of the great horror film composers and highlight the techniques they use.



ACTIVITY 5.5

Genre research task five: sound

Research and listen to the work of the following soundtrack composers.

For each one, note down your responses to the following:

1. Identify which instruments are most commonly used.
2. Explain how the instruments reflect a variety of moods. In your explanation, consider the tone, pitch and tempo created by each composer.
3. What sound effects can you detect? How have they been created? Where are they used and what narrative moments do they enhance? Justify your answers.
4. What avenues do you have available to emulate these sounds? Investigate the technology and copyright-free options that could replicate these sound elements.

Composers:

- John Carpenter (*They Live* [1988, dir. John Carpenter])
- James Horner (*Alien* [1979, dir. Ridley Scott])
- Christopher Young (*Hellraiser* [1987, dir. Clive Barker])
- Harry Manfredini (*Friday the 13th* [1980, dir. Sean S Cunningham])

Once you have completed all of the genre research tasks, make a list of the five essential codes and conventions that you and your group want to employ. Explain your responses in detail and collate all of this information in a document that you will include with your Statement of Intention, to be completed prior to beginning your production.

The production process – audience development

You need to know what your audience wants. Chapter 2, 'Media forms in production', provides you with a range of techniques to find out what interests your audience. You can search their interests online, create profiles or examine media products that have been targeted at your audience.

However, depending on your setting, you should have ready access to your target audience. They are all around you! Depending on the conditions set out by your teacher, you will either be targeting a whole year level, or an age group. To broaden your audience research, you should break them up into two specific groups:

- Group One: 12 to 15 year olds
- Group Two: 16 to 18 year olds.

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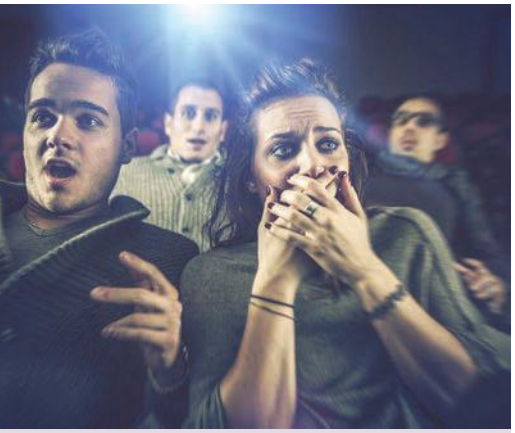


FIGURE 5.7 Do you know what interests your target audience?

Each group will vary greatly in their interests and what they deem to be acceptable concepts and ideas that generate the emotions that horror will elicit. You need to carefully investigate both groups and investigate what they want, expect and fear in the horror genre.

Audience research

You need to survey your target audience to determine how you can best engage them.

You can develop a physical or online survey, or you could develop a series of face-to-face interview questions. Both styles of questioning, quantitative and qualitative, will provide you with responses that will help you evaluate what you will keep and discard from your genre research.

Decide on the survey method you feel is best to gather the relevant information you need to craft your idea. You will need to investigate the following:

1. your audience's biggest fear
2. the type of characters they like to see
3. their favourite type of setting (a log cabin, haunted house, scary forest)
4. the type of horror stories that interest them (psychological, action, paranormal, etc.)
5. what they see as 'too much' in a horror film
6. what they are not allowed to watch at home.

You may want to develop more questions that are specific to the presentation requirements set out by your teacher.

Collate your data. Sit together with your team and evaluate your findings. While your aim is to make a film that you want to make, you also need to appeal directly to your target audience. If it does not meet their interests, you may not be successful in engaging them. Compare the list you created about horror genre conventions with the audience research. What can you use that will meet their expectations? What do you need to discard? Write your findings from the research in the same document as your genre research.



FIGURE 5.8 What is your audience's biggest fear?

The production process – ethical development

What your audience wants and what you can show them within a school context can be two vastly different things! As you will be exhibiting your work to the school community and your target audience, you will need to investigate what constraints you will encounter when planning the nature of your content. Horror is notorious for pushing the boundaries of blood, gore, terror and violence. This may not be appropriate in your setting and according to the Australian Classification Board, it may be deemed inappropriate for the target age group set out by your teacher.

Legal and ethical research

Investigate the standards for content set out by the Australian Classification Board.

For the two age groups you have available as potential audiences, examine the standards of acceptable content.

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Work together as a group to determine what content from your genre and audience research does and does not meet these guidelines. Record your findings.

Local concerns

Depending on the context of your school, there may be restrictions on the content deemed acceptable by your school's leaders. As every school is different there are different themes that may or may not be appropriate to the community.

You will need to discuss your proposal with the relevant authority at your school. This could be the principal, an assistant principal, or a leader of a faculty or year level. Either way, this individual needs to have the authority to determine what is and is not appropriate content.

These individuals are invariably busy people and you will need to fit into their schedule, not the other way around! So, you need to nominate a member of your group who will seek out a time and location to interview this person to gather the information you require.

It may help to develop questions that identify the limits of themes referred to by the Classification Board.

For example, you need to find out what is acceptable in terms of:

- violent content (Can you use blood and gore? Or not at all?)
- language (i.e. what constitutes a swear word!)
- adult themes (i.e. what are appropriate topics for the characters to discuss)
- drug use (this includes the presence of drugs, alcohol and cigarettes).

Copyright concerns

You need to be aware of copyright! If your plan is to screen your film within your school, you should not be concerned with the use of music or footage that is not your own. However, if you want to include this film in your folio, or submit it to independent film festivals, you must be aware of copyright law! The general rule is: if you didn't make it, you need permission to use it. In some cases, the rights to popular songs can cost thousands of dollars to use, and just because it is on YouTube or another free streaming service is not an indication that it is free to use.

Work together as a team to decide on how you want to move forward. If you need assistance with sound and music, websites like Creative Commons can be a great place to start.

Impact

The Classification Board determines that certain levels of any of this content have varying degrees of 'impact' on certain age groups. The content your school leaders determine as having a high or low level of impact may differ to that of the Classification Board.

Overall, it would be best to determine an outline of what you would like to include within your story and see what will be deemed acceptable by the school.

Once this information has been gathered, you and your team need to meet again and evaluate these concerns against the findings of your genre and audience research. What kind of horror film do you want to produce? How do the findings from the research in the Classification Board and your school alter this idea? Record your findings.

The production process – product placement development

As in modern media productions, you will be required to place three products into your film to reflect the role product placement plays in the modern media production process. You will need to examine the needs of the following 'companies' to place their product effectively and positively within your script.

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FIGURE 5.9 Meat Juice

Meat Juice – It's steak in a can

The makers of Meat Juice – 'It's steak in a can' believe their protein-infused wonder drink is suitable for all ages; however, they don't want to simply market their product to just one audience. Meat Juice is for the people. As such, they need you to research, plan and produce an ad campaign that meets the needs of the three audiences they are targeting.



FIGURE 5.10 The Pineapple Paradise Pandemonium Burger

The Pineapple Paradise Pandemonium Burger – a guilty pleasure

It's everything you shouldn't eat but the PPPB Company don't care! While they don't promote unhealthy eating the PPPB Company want customers (of all ages – flavour does not discriminate!) to have a 'cheat day' in their modern, healthy diets to indulge in the guilt-free pleasure of a triple Wagyu beef patty, pineapple-sauced, layered and flavoured burger that tastes like a carefree day on a remote Pacific island. It is the taste of happiness.



FIGURE 5.11 Durian Deodorant

Durian Deodorant – the once in a lifetime scent

Durian Deodorant creates a scent that makes a statement. Wearing the antiperspirant deodorant that could withstand the depths of the orangutan-infested jungles of Borneo, young men can ensure that when they enter a room, all present will question: 'What is that smell?' The Durian Company believe they have crafted the right balance of aluminium and zirconium to create a burning memory for all those who encounter its scent.

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Each product must appear in a positive light. None of the companies who are paying for their products to appear in your film want their product to appear in a negative light. They need to be positively represented in scenes within the film that make them appear 'normal' and woven into the world you have created for your audience.

So, you need to carefully examine your script and evaluate how and where you can fit the products into your narrative. The challenge is twofold. If you make your placement of the products too obvious, you will lose the confidence of your audience, as they will no longer accept the authenticity of your narrative.

It may help to research the most successful/unsuccessful examples of product placement to examine how and where they have been used to the best effect.

AMAZING FACT

Running for over 25 years, the annual Tropfest short film competition requires contestants to include a reference to a Tropfest Signature Item (TSI) – this is mandated each year by the festival, and could be an object like a pineapple, for example. This pushes filmmakers to think of creative ways to include the TSI in their production.

5.3 Pre-production story development

One of the most difficult stages of the entire production process is the development of your idea. It's never easy to come up with a creative and engaging idea on the spot. So it is essential that every member of the group has input and brings one idea to the group. Take some time to complete one or more of the following tasks to develop an idea you can take to your team.

Learning task – individual concept

Your task is not to develop the entire concept of your film, but to prepare a list of ideas and themes you would like to include. Choose one of the following tasks and take it back to your group.

ACTIVITY 5.6

Task one: research

Researching online or in print, collect a page of images that relate in some way to what it is you want to create. For instance, it may be a page filled with the colours that you are hoping to create, or it may be a page of shots that you are looking to replicate, or it may just be all the things that you are interested in at the moment and that you hope to draw on in some way.

Using a search engine on the internet or a trusty pair of scissors and a pile of magazines, create a page of images that communicate one of the following ideas:

- green
- anger
- darkness
- fear
- depression
- red
- isolation
- terror
- blue
- excitement
- triumph.

Try to use as many different images as possible from a range of locations. Now look for ideas that could be turned into a film. Identify three and write a sentence explaining each idea.

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ACTIVITY 5.7

Task two: brainstorming

Brainstorming is another great way to generate ideas.

1 What are you interested in at the moment? Write down or cut and paste as many things as you can. (For example: topics, people, music, stories, TV shows, movies, directors, bands, photographers, books, comics, animations, radio, personalities, tastes, sounds, colours, styles and time periods.)



FIGURE 5.12 Brainstorming is a great technique for generating ideas.

2 Describe what you already know about the genre of horror and your favourite memories from the media products you have already seen.

3 Choose five things you've written down and explain how they could be combined to form elements of a horror film. Remember, it does not need to be a complete story idea, just a sample of a potential scene, character or location.

Creating your story

When each group member has completed a story development research task, you need to meet again and take turns discussing your ideas. It's important that you take turns and everyone's notes and ideas are listened to. Each individual will have their own unique perspective to offer and a richer, more developed idea will be the result.

You will need to develop your story from this meeting. Use one of the tasks in the next section to develop the story.

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Developing the story

Before you begin, it may help to return to the previous chapter and examine the Hollywood three-act structure and the elements of a good story. Use one of these as templates to develop your idea.

Option one: the three-act structure

Using a large piece of paper, a shared document or the classroom whiteboard, divide it up into three distinct acts:

Act one: the set-up

Working together as a team, develop your setting, main characters and antagonist/s. How will they be introduced? What motivates them? How will you draw the audience towards the first crisis within the story? At the end of Act One, your aim is to give the audience a reason to be engaged and a reason for the main character to act. For example, is their motivation to escape danger? To save a friend? Work together to define your first act.

Act two: the confrontation

Here, you will need to bring together some of your individual research and challenge the main characters and protagonists. Dot point all of the potential scenes, locations and techniques you will use to draw the audience into the climactic crisis. In the horror genre, it is important that you escalate the level of danger for the audience. Your aim is to gradually increase the pressure on the main character to draw them to the final act. Write down all of your ideas and place them in order.



FIGURE 5.13 Confrontation between characters is a vital part of the horror genre – what will your protagonist be faced with?

Act three: the resolution

In this act, you want the audience to realise there is only one way for the main character to achieve their goal. However, horror films are known for their 'plot twists' that surprise the audience and challenge their expectations. Here you and your group need to carefully weigh up what you feel is most important to the story idea you want to pursue. It may help to brainstorm several possible endings and decide as a group how you wish to conclude your narrative.

Option two: disrupt normal

Step 1: establish 'normal'

With a clear idea of who your audience is, you can easily establish the beginning of the story. You want your target audience to be comfortable and familiar with the setting and character. Discuss your ideas and decide on an opening sequence.

Step 2: disrupt normal

Using the first step, work together to determine how you will take your audience out of their comfort zone. This is where your audience research will be of great benefit to you. How will you play on their greatest fears? Create a list of elements that will help you do this:

- characters
- scenarios
- sound
- locations
- props
- colours
- camera and editing techniques.

Use this list to construct a sequence that will take the audience away from 'normal' and into a more frightening place!

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Step 3: create turning points

Here is where you and your team need to work on the really engaging scenes that take your audience in different directions. Your goal, as it is in the horror genre, is to keep the audience on 'the edge of their seats' with unexpected and seemingly improbable events. Create a list of how the story will incorporate some of the following:

- the elements of the character's 'normal' that you could incorporate
- other characters and their potential influence
- how escape, survival or success could appear impossible
- the realisation of a possible solution.

Step 4: develop the characters

How will your characters do something out of the ordinary to solve their crisis? Consider how you established the 'normal' of this character and situation. What elements of this could you use to show how the characters developed and rose to the challenge?

You could consider the following:

- The main character uses an 'ordinary' skill identified in the opening sequence to find a solution.
- A group of characters overcome difficulties or rivalries to solve a problem.
- The weakness of the protagonist is realised.
- A solution that was staring them all in the face is revealed.
- A romantic relationship develops in the face of adversity.
- A conflict between two characters is resolved.



FIGURE 5.14 Will your audience be able to handle watching your film?

Putting it all together

With all of your ideas now collated, work together to develop a complete outline or synopsis of the story you want to make.

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for further tips on writing characters for a fictional screenplay.

5.4 Pre-production Statement of Intention

As a team, nominate someone to write down your 'intention', which is a statement of the film you would like to make. Answer the following questions:

1 What experience do you want your audience to have?
Do you want to make them feel vulnerable? Do you want to scare them? Do you want to get their adrenaline pumping? Explain the basic experience of your film.

2 Who is your audience?
Explain, using your audience research, how you will use your understanding of who they are and the interests they have in relation to your genre.

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3 How will your story engage your audience?
Use the synopsis to explain how your story will reflect the ideas and emotions you want to evoke from the audience.
4 What codes and conventions will you employ?
Explain how you will employ, emulate and experiment with codes and conventions common to the horror genre.
5 How will you place the designated products?
Explain how you will weave the products into the narrative to appeal to both the audience and the demands of the product owners.
6 Legal and ethical constraints
Explain how the content of your narrative will adhere to the guidelines set out by both the school and government classification guidelines.

Defining roles and responsibilities

For the duration of the production task, you will need to determine the roles and responsibilities of everyone in the group. For the production to run smoothly and meet the purpose you have outlined above, it is essential that you work together as a team.

Examine the list of roles below; there are specific roles at each stage of production and it is essential that each group member takes on at least *one* role at each of the three stages.

Pre-production	Production	Post-production
Producer	Producer	Producer
Director	Director	Director
Scriptwriter	Director of photography (DOP)	Editor/s
Storyboard artist	Gaffer (lighting)	Sound effects manager
Location manager	Costume, props and equipment manager	Soundtrack composer
Promotions director	Sound coordinator	Promotions director/s
	Actor/s	

TABLE 5.1 List of production roles



FIGURE 5.15 There are many different roles that need to be filled in creating a production.

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The roles explained

The general roles of each person in the production are outlined below; their specific tasks are then included in more detail:

Production role	Responsibilities
Producer	Responsible for the organisation of the entire team and production at all stages
Director	Responsible for the artistic direction and production of the original idea
Scriptwriter	Detailed and written script for all actors
Storyboard artist/s	Complete and detailed storyboards of all visual elements
Promotions director	Mock-up design of print poster
Location manager	Locates, photographs and seeks permission for all required locations
Camera operator	Principal cinematographer on set
Sound coordinator	Principal sound recordist on set
Photographer	Principal photographer for print advertising
Location manager	Responsible for setting up locations prior to shooting
Gaffer (lighting)	Responsible for artificially lighting the set and monitoring naturalistic light sources
Costume, props and equipment manager	Responsible for charging cameras, SD cards, tripods and props and securing all costumes
Actor/s	May include some or all of the team
Editor/s	Responsible for editing multiple clips (can be more than one person)
Promotions director	Responsible for the production of the print promotional campaign
Sound effects manager	Responsible for the location and recording of specific sound effects required by the editor
Musical composer	Creates a unique musical score (copyright free) for each visual production

TABLE 5.2 Production roles and responsibilities



FIGURE 5.16 The director is the person responsible for the overall artistic direction of the film.

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Pre-production tasks

	1st task	2nd task	3rd task
Scriptwriter	Gain the outline from the group and complete a draft	Read through the draft with production team	Incorporate any changes needed to complete script
Storyboard artist	Meet with director and director of photography to discuss the style	Show the draft storyboards to the production team	Incorporate any changes to complete storyboards
Location scout	Meet with director, producer and scriptwriter to discuss the locations required	Find locations, take photos and have images and locations approved by production group	Find alternative locations if needed, and complete location specification of production plan
Casting director	Meet with director and scriptwriter to discuss ideas	Manage casting process, which includes actor availability	Cast the production and complete casting specification of production plan
Promotions director	Use the research to plan and prepare an advertising concept design	Design a mock-up poster that acts as a rough draft of the final product. Annotate the use of colour, written text and image positioning	Meet with the director and producer to discuss any potential changes that may be required to meet the intention document

TABLE 5.3 Pre-production tasks by role

Storyboarding

It is the storyboard artist's job to draw the storyboard for the production. Your job is to meet with the director and producer to discuss the style and direction of the narrative.

There are a couple of important factors for the storyboard artist to remember. First, be creative! Your production can be much more than a collection of medium shots. Second, your storyboards don't have to be masterpieces; some of the greatest directors have shocking drawing skills. Third, have fun!

Equipment needed:

- script
- storyboard sheets
- pencil
- eraser
- red pen
- blue pen
- lots of patience.

The diagram that follows is an example of how you might set up your storyboard. You will need to draw one of these cells for each shot you plan. You can get between six to eight cells to an A4 page.

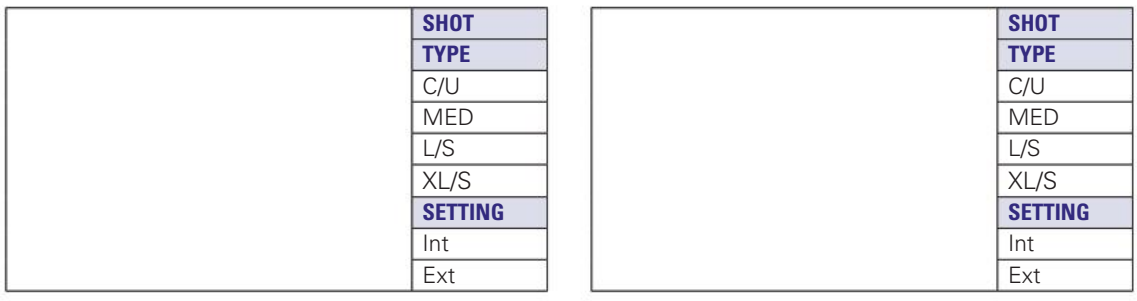


FIGURE 5.17 Storyboard layout example

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Scriptwriting

It is the scriptwriter's job to complete the script of the production; however, what is less obvious is how they must communicate information. The main rule of scriptwriting is not to say something that can be communicated with an image. This is why it is essential that you sit with the storyboard artist and work together. Having the main character say 'I'm tired' is unnecessary, particularly as you can have them yawn and stretch to communicate the same information. Similarly, if you want to show that a character is generous, rather than having them say 'I am going to be generous', you can have them donate to charity or help someone.

Conventional film scripts have standardised formatting. This is because:

- it keeps the start of each scene easy to see
- the dialogue is kept separate from the action
- it approximates a ratio of one page of script to one minute of finished film.

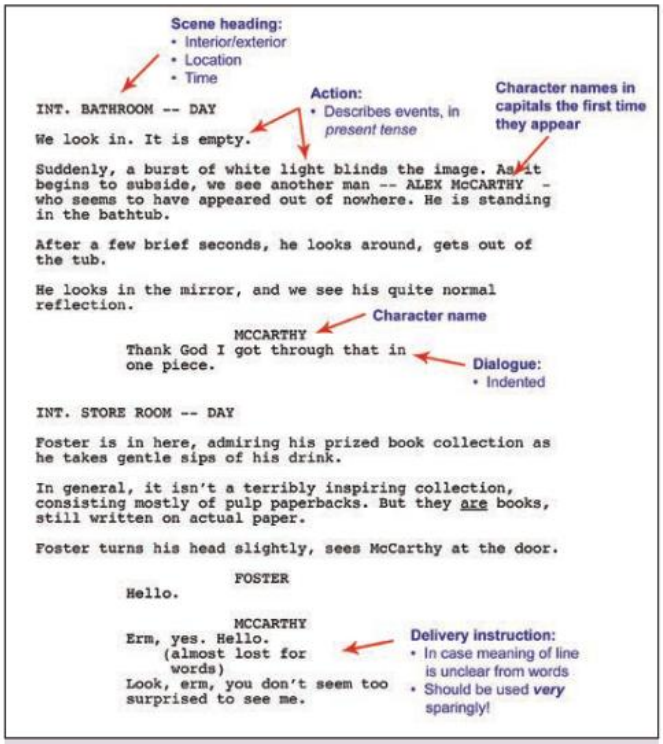


FIGURE 5.18 An example of screenplay formatting for a film production

The features of a properly formatted film script can take some time to get used to. Luckily, free technology exists to help you out. Celtx is an easy-to-use program that organises the formatting for you. Just be sure to grab the free version online!

Likewise, WriterDuet is a web app that's basically the screenwriting equivalent of Google Docs. As technology continues to improve, there will surely be more to follow!

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for a downloadable storyboard template, as well as tips on composing images for the screen and on writing a fictional screenplay.

STUDY TIP

See Figure 9.16 in Chapter 9 for an example of how you might approach your storyboarding.

Location management and permissions

The location scout's role, as the name suggests, is to find the locations for the film. While this seems simple, it actually requires a lot more creativity than you might think. Given that it is likely you will be required to shoot your film on and around the campus of your school, you will need to carefully consider how you will use these locations to their best effect.

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for a downloadable permission to film form template.

Not only does the location scout have to find the locations, but they also need to determine the suitability of each location for filming. Does it suit the desired setting? Will you be able to get permission to film? Is there enough light? Are there noise issues? Will people be using it at a particular time? All of these questions are essential to ask – and if there is an issue, the location scout will need to figure out if it can be resolved; otherwise another location should be found.

Unless you are going to have all of your productions set in a school, you will need to find locations around the school that you can use to simulate different environments. You will also need to consider the restrictions that might be placed upon the use of school locations.

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Work with the producer to determine the locations that will be the most suitable for the director and then take photos of each location to assist the storyboard artists and scriptwriter in the construction of the narrative.

Technology constraints and requirements

It will be important for the producer to make an assessment of the technology available to the production team. In order to best meet the demands of the director, the producer needs to ensure the best available equipment is in the hands of the production team. The producer will need to create a list that determines:

- the camera equipment required and available
- the lighting equipment required and available
- editing, sound production and special effects tools
- a shooting schedule that incorporates the availability of locations, equipment, actors and crew.

Date	Scene	Location	Actors required:	Crew required:	Equipment required:	Props and costumes required:	Description of scene:

TABLE 5.4 Shooting schedule layout example

The distribution plan

Working with your teacher and school, the producer will need to determine how the films will be screened and through what medium, and how the posters, teasers and trailers will be distributed to the target audience.

Your school might have an internal messaging system that will allow you to do this. You may need to upload them to a video sharing service and share the links via social media.

You will also need to investigate how and where the films will be screened. Does your school have a space where this can take place? If not, you will need to work with your teacher, the school and potentially other producers to find, access and prepare a suitable space.



DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for downloadable shooting schedule and shot list templates.

Write a short paragraph explaining how you intend to distribute all elements of your production. In short, how are you going to reach your audience?

Submitting the intention

The producer must submit the entire Statement of Intention on an agreed deadline. Before this is to happen, the producer should call a group meeting that collects the following elements for submission:

Submission task		
The written Statement of Intention with all questions answered		
Roles and responsibilities list		
Storyboard of all visual forms		
Intended locations (photographs) and permissions		
Shooting schedule		
A shot list		
Distribution plan		

TABLE 5.5 Statement of Intention checklist

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5.5 The production stage

principal photography the phase of film production in which the movie is filmed, with actors on set and cameras rolling

The production stage begins when the plan developed in the pre-production stage starts to be implemented. As the main focus of this stage is to complete the **principal photography**, the roles are focused around this being achieved.

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for some tips on acting.

Role	Prior to shooting	During the shoot	After the shoot
Producer	Uses the shooting schedule to prepare shooting tasks and crew	Ensures that the team is working effectively to remain on task and on schedule	Plans the next scene or shoot and ensures all footage and imagery is logged
Director	Must arrive on set early to plan and rehearse the shoot	Works with actors and DOP to capture all footage outlined in the storyboard and shooting schedule	Reviews the quality of the logged footage against storyboard to consider possible reshoots of alternative angles
Director of photography (DOP)	Works with storyboard artist and location scout, director and producer to complete all tasks on the shooting schedule	Organises and takes responsibility for camera on set (which includes framing and recording each shot, white balancing, card and battery life)	Is present at all film shoots to record action; reviews and logs captured footage
Gaffer	Meets with director, camera operator and location scout to determine mood for each scene and writes a lighting plan	Organises lights and equipment needed for the shoot. Manages the light equipment and responds to director's requests	Safely stores equipment and checks for any damage incurred during the shoot
Costume, props and equipment manager	Meets with director, scriptwriter and actors to confirm all shoot requirements from the shooting schedule	Sources all costumes, props and equipment and arrives on set early to set up. Manages and sources all required items	Maintains and manages all props and costumes throughout filming
Sound coordinator	Meets with location scout and director to determine sound requirements for each scene	Works with the director, DOP and actors to test, record all sound, dialogue and potential sound effects	Logs footage and works with DOP and director to assess quality of the recorded sound and plans any necessary re-recording
Actors	Work with the director, scriptwriter and storyboard artist to determine the mood of the narrative and rehearse scenes	Arrive on set in costume and ready to shoot key scenes. Actors must work with the demands of the director	Review logged footage with the director and DOP to assess the quality of the logged footage and consider possible reshoots of scenes

TABLE 5.6 Schedule of production tasks by role

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5.6 Post-production

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for some tips on editing your video.

As demanding as the production stage can be, you should never underestimate the time you will need for post-production. Editing and digital manipulation of sound and imagery can be time-consuming, rewarding and infuriating all at once. It is important to remember that in this stage you are piecing together the idea you developed in your Statement of Intention.

If everything went to plan in the production stage, you should be all set to take on your new roles and complete your project!

The producer and director need to work together to motivate and organise your entire team to ensure you meet the deadline.



FIGURE 5.19 The post-production stage is time-consuming, but rewarding.

Role	Prior to shooting	During the shoot	After the shoot
Editor/s	Meets with director, scriptwriter and storyboard artist to get an idea of where film is headed	Edits together **rough cut** of the film to then review with the director. Support editors work with the primary editor and promotions manager to create teaser clips and the trailer	Completes **final cut** in the highest quality format for the intended playback and distribution. See section 5.7.
Sound effects manager	Meets with scriptwriter and storyboard artist to determine the sound effects needed and writes specifications for production plan	Records all the sound effects for the film, trailer and teasers	Works with editor to incorporate sound effects into film, trailer and teasers
Soundtrack composer	Meets with director, scriptwriter and storyboard artist to determine the soundtrack requirements and writes specifications for production plan	Creates soundtrack for film, trailer and teasers	Works with editor to incorporate soundtrack into film, trailer and teasers
Promotions director	Meets with director to determine promotion for the film and writes promotions proposal for the production plan	Shoots required stills with the actors and works with support editors to match and complete the trailer and teasers	Completes and prints the movie poster and converts trailer and teasers in highest quality format for playback

TABLE 5.7 Post-production tasks by role

The format of a completed video project is referred to as a **codec**. These come in a huge and ever-evolving variety of forms. A codec is the compressed sound and vision data of your project in a small and easily transferable file size. You may be required to convert your completed projects in a variety of codecs to determine the best and highest quality playback.

rough cut the first version of a film after preliminary editing

final cut the final edited version of a film, approved by the director and producer

codec the format of a completed video project

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5.7 Methods of distribution

It's time to present your work to your target audience. Working with other groups, your teacher and the school, you need to promote the premiere screening of your work.

As outlined in your Statement of Intention, you will need to organise the screening of your work. This may require you to secure and prepare a space within your school or local community. It will be essential that the following tasks are completed:

1. The location of the screening is secured, the audience is invited and will be able to watch your film in a distraction-free context. You don't want them to miss any important details.
2. The promotional material is released. This may be online or through other audiovisual means around the school. You could even show the trailers at a year level assembly of your target audience. The teasers should be released online, either through a school-based network or via social media. You want to generate some 'buzz' before the screening to enhance audience engagement.
3. Printing and distributing the posters. Where will your target audience be during a normal school day? How can you ensure you will reach their line of vision and hold their attention with your imagery? Place as many posters as you can around the school to promote the screening to your target audience.
4. Test screen your film. The producer and director test the screening of your project before the premiere. If the video quality does not meet the standard required for the size of the screen you are using, you may need to review your original edit and try to convert your film again in a higher quality format.
5. Prepare feedback surveys. After your test screening, you will want to source some feedback from your audience to help write your Statement of Outcome. Keep it simple as nobody wants to fill out anything too complicated after watching a horror film! The goal of the feedback is to determine if and how you have achieved what you set out to do in your Statement of Intention. Possible survey topics could include:
   - **a** what they like about the story
   - **b** what they liked about the technical codes used
   - **c** what they liked about the conventions you employed
   - **d** what emotions they experienced.



FIGURE 5.20 Once the production is complete, screenings are arranged.

6. Screen it! Work with the other groups in your class to gather your audience and screen your films. Try not to influence your audience's reading of the films in any way. At most, you need to tell them to expect a horror film; however, if you have met the legal and ethical demands of the school and Classification Board, you should not have any need to forewarn your audience about the nature of the content.
7. Survey your audience to gather some feedback on your film.

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5.8 Statement of Outcome

Individual statement

Each person involved in the production must complete an individual Statement of Outcome that reflects on their experiences. These answers should be confidential and act as an honest reflection on what you have learned in your roles. The following questions need to be answered:

- How do you feel about the film you made?
- How did your group work productively together?
- How did you contribute to the pre-production process?
- Did you have any problems within the group? Explain what they were and how you resolved them.
- Did you fulfil all the requirements of your roles? Explain with specific references.
- Were you satisfied with your contribution? Explain.
- What individual problems did you encounter in your specific role?
- If you were to undertake your roles again, what would you do differently?

Producer's statement

The producer's last task is to collate the audience feedback and compare the audience reaction to the Statement of Intention. Answer the following questions and submit them with your personal Statement of Outcome in your role as producer:

- What did the audience like about your film?
- What did the audience dislike or not understand about your film?
- What elements of the feedback reflect success in your Statement of Intention?
- What could you have changed in the production process to achieve more positive responses in your survey?

When answering each question be sure to explain with examples from your production experience.



CHAPTER REVIEW

Summing it all up

By now the credits have rolled and the screen has long gone dark. Hopefully you are sitting with your team analysing the feedback your audience gave you and celebrating a job well done. Creating your own media narratives, especially one as taxing as a school-friendly horror film, can be a stressful but ultimately rewarding experience. If you made your audience scared, dart their eyes around to fellow audience members, or grip the edges of their seats just a little too tightly, then you have done your job. By now you are a veteran of at least two major production processes and can look to future projects with a wiser and more capable eye. You have navigated the legal and ethical constraints on great horror stories, you have planned, shot and crafted your narrative into a complete idea that was screened to your target audience. You know the pitfalls and challenges of the whole process but you also know what it means to tell stories and have an audience enjoy what you have to say.

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CHAPTER 6 AREA OF STUDY 3

MEDIA AND CHANGE

If I want to knock a story off the front page, I just change my hairstyle.

— Hillary Clinton

OVERVIEW

Do you have a smartphone in your pocket? Take it out and hold it in front of you. In your hand, you possess everything you may ever need to be a fully functioning, global media creator. Within that tiny device, over a hundred years of media communication technology has been shrunk, converged and digitised to give you, the user, the power to reach the eyes, ears and thoughts of millions of people around the world. You have a tool that has a capability that media industry owners formerly could only dream of. Throughout this chapter you will examine the seismic shifts felt by media makers and users since the advent of digital technology. You will learn about the dramatic consequences of the moment when the audience became the dominant creator of media messages and the way you, as a consumer and producer, sit in the middle of this unstoppable force of digital media.

FIGURE 6.1 (above): In today's world, it can be hard to break our addiction to media products.

OUTCOME 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss the influence of new media technologies on society, audiences, the individual, media industries and institutions.

To achieve this outcome, the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 3.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the nature and forms of new media technologies and their relationship to traditional media technologies and forms
- characteristics of digital media audiences
- the ways audiences interact and engage with the media as a result of the growth of digital technologies across media forms
- the influence of technological development, media convergence and hybridisation on society, audiences, the individual, media industries and institutions
- social, ethical and legal issues in the media industry in the last few years.

KEY SKILLS

- identify the nature and forms of new media technologies and discuss their relationships to traditional media technologies and forms
- discuss the characteristics of digital media audiences
- explain the ways audiences interact and engage with the media as a result of the growth of digital technologies across media forms
- analyse the influence of technological development, media convergence and hybridisation on society, the individual, media industries and institutions
- analyse social, ethical and legal issues in the media industry in the last few years.

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KEY TERMS

- ideology
- old media
- new media technologies
- social media
- digital media audiences
- hybridisation
- convergence
- short forms
- audience behaviour

WHAT'S AHEAD

SECTION 6.1	SECTION 6.2	SECTION 6.3	SECTION 6.4	SECTION 6.5	SECTION 6.6	SECTION 6.7	SECTION 6.8
Background	Old media	New media technologies	Hybridisation of media technologies	Digital technology and audiences	News media and change	Social media and the news	Skills: short-form content

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6.1 Background

Modern media is in constant state of flux. Gradual advances in the technology of media production have allowed for rapid advances in the way we create, consume and interact with what we read, see and hear. What was previously thought impossible in the early years of art, radio, cinema and television has become possible, and with this, the audience has changed too. New media and new media technologies are those forms of creating and accessing the media that have changed since the advent of digital technology.

In this chapter, you will explore the ways new media forms have come to replace old media. You will examine the ways in which digital technologies have altered the production and distribution process, creating a media environment that connects more and more people every day. You will examine what this means for you as a consumer and maker of media, as the traditional avenues of production have changed.

In this chapter, you will need to consider several questions: How has digital technology changed the way we consume media products? In an unchecked environment of online media and bit torrenting, how do musicians and filmmakers continue to make art and a viable living at the same time? With the expansive nature of online news production, how has the explosion of **social media** affected our understanding of the truth?

social media digital media forms like websites and applications that enable users to create and share content. Can provide access to news and social commentary on key issues.

To kick things off, refer to the timeline that follows for an overview of the development of media technologies over time, most of which will be referred to throughout the chapter.

Date	Development
1440	**The development of the printing press** in Europe
1500	**Printed books and pamphlets** spread through the world
1631	**First newspaper** printed in Paris
late 1700s	**Daily newspapers** spread information and help improve literacy rates
1890s	**Moving pictures invented**, starting the silent film era
1900–60	**Magazine publication** is at its peak around the world



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Date	Development
1920s	**Broadcast radio** is the most popular medium for shared audience experiences
1927	**Films with sound are born**. Cinema becomes the first mass medium to combine audio and visual electronic communication.
1935	**First demonstration of television**, the first mass medium capable of instantly and wirelessly transmitting audio and visual signals
1940s–70s	**Television in its golden age**, dominating the visual medium market
late 1970s–80s	**Cable and satellite television** provides access to more TV channels and service in remote areas
1980s	**Personal computers** become affordable and widespread
1990	**The internet** begins in the 1960s as a US Defense Department initiative. The development of digital code, microprocessors and fibre-optic cables were key technological advances that made the internet and digital communication possible. Rapid developments around 1990, such as the creation of HTTP and HTML coding and internet browsers, creates what we know today as the World Wide Web.
1996	**Google** search engine launched
1999	**Wi-fi** users begin to connect to the net wirelessly
2005	**Web 2.0 and social media** internet use becomes more social and communal, as evidenced by the popularity of such platforms and websites as Flickr, YouTube, Wikipedia and Facebook
2007	**Smartphones** Apple launches the iPhone
2012	**Social media** Facebook reaches over 1 billion members
2016	**The rise of video and music streaming services** Netflix streams to over 190 countries

TABLE 6.1 Timeline of mass media technology

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6.2 Old media

electromagnetic radio waves a form of radio waves that can travel through airspace and can be received by media forms like television, radio and telephones. Once the messages are received the waves are converted into sound and vision.

broadcast era a period between the 1950s and 1990s where large institutions dominated media production of film, television, radio and print within a specific geographic location

mass communication the process of using mass media to reach a large audience

ideology a world view, a system of values, beliefs and attitudes held by an individual, group or society about what is true or important

Ever since the invention of **electromagnetic radio waves** transmitting radio sound into the homes of millions around the world in the early to late 20th century, the **broadcast era** of radio, film and television dominated the cultural lives of audiences worldwide. **Mass communication** excited and enthralled its audiences. For many years, individuals and families could sit in the comfort of their own homes and listen to the words of world leaders and follow along with thrilling radio plays. The introduction of talking and sound to film meant a face could be put to a name, and that name could talk. The production of these early forms of communication was limited to the control of governments and the very wealthy, and many had early concerns that having only a few with the power to create the message meant the audience was susceptible to influence. As early as the 1940s, studies into the effect of the media were primarily concerned with how radio and film affected an audience so inexperienced with new technologies. Many researchers worried that repetition of dangerous messages could result in dangerous behaviours.



FIGURE 6.2 Irene Ryan listens to an old-fashioned radio as Daisy Moses, the grandmother character in the television comedy *The Beverly Hillbillies* (1965).



FIGURE 6.3 Adolf Hitler (1889–1945), German statesman, with supporters, around 1932–33

As you have learned from the political economy model earlier in this book, such concerns came to light. Powerful individuals like Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company, was once quoted as saying his customers could buy one of his cars 'in any colour they want. As long as it's black'. Such attitudes, held by those with power and influence, reflected how such individuals also treated the audience.

When the Nazi Party rose to power in Germany in the 1930s, a key pillar of their popularity came from their use of media. Newspapers, cinemas and radio were all controlled by, or subservient to the message of, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. To examine the means by which the Nazis used colour, symbolism and technical codes and conventions is a study in itself; however, its purpose was clear: to coerce and educate the masses into following radical ideas. With no competing messages, Hitler and the Nazis were able to sway a younger, more inexperienced generation of Germans to follow a new **ideology** and to war. The destruction of World War II and the crimes committed by the Nazis have since been studied in close proximity to the evolution of media technologies and the role they have when their creation is in the hands of a few.

With the advent of television, audiences were once again educated in a new media form that allowed them to experience an even broader range of media products like drama, news, comedy and documentary in their own homes. After its move from an obscure invention into a common commodity in suburban homes, the television quickly

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dominated cultural life – in what was known commonly as the birth of the broadcast era – more so than any other form of media.

Media forms and the creation of media products began to cater for a wide variety of audiences, and in the 1960s parents across the developed world began to voice concerns about the amount of 'screen time' their children were experiencing. With the development in technology came the 'literacy' of its audience. No longer were audiences restricted to a single voice or author; they were more savvy and discerning in their response to representations of the world around them.

In a televised presidential debate in 1960, the development of a new era of understanding for audiences began. Audiences who listened to the debate on the radio had found one candidate, Richard Nixon, to be their preferred choice. He was well spoken and sounded more experienced. However, those who watched the debate on television had a vastly different response. Nixon, not a man blessed by good looks, was overshadowed by his younger, less experienced but more charismatic opponent, John F Kennedy. There are many articles that support the premise that imagery proved to be more powerful as Kennedy won the election. Such a cultural shift in technology and audience behaviour began a shift in the balance of power between audiences and media creators. Through the invention of new and more powerful media technologies, the power began to gradually shift away from the few to the many, the audience.



FIGURE 6.4 With the advent of television, audiences were once again educated in a new media form that allowed them to experience an even broader range of media.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What was the broadcast era?
2. What were researchers concerned about with media messages?
3. How did politicians use the media to their advantage to influence audiences?

Old media production

Cinema

Cinema and the Hollywood studio system dominated media production in the 1930s. Five major film studios essentially controlled production and all work, fame and money made in the film industry was largely connected to these studios: MGM, Paramount, Warner Bros, RKO and Fox. These studios controlled so much of the system that they controlled many of the cinemas that showed their films to audiences. As such, these major studios, owned by a handful of wealthy individuals, controlled much of what audiences saw on cinema screens.

The production of feature film has experienced a number of changes with new technologies. Many new roles have emerged thanks to digital technologies and many have disappeared. However, the process has remained much the same. Whichever came first, the studio money or the idea, a film would be developed from a screenplay. Actors were hired to play the main roles and a director and crew were hired to develop the sets, costumes, lighting and sound for a director to craft into an engaging film. From the early incarnations of film, we can find some of the more captivating stories. The tools used by its makers were rudimentary and narrative drove production; a great story remained the focus. However, as the literacy level of the audience grew, along with demand for bigger and better films, producers responded in kind.

1959's *Ben-Hur* was considered to be the biggest film ever made in its era. The magnitude of the biblical story is the stuff of filmmaking legend. There were over 360 speaking parts in the script. A true blockbuster film, it boasted over a million props, 2500 horses, 10 000 extras and a set built for a single scene that replicated an 18-hectare colosseum for a high-action chariot race. The production of the epic release was as much a feat

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FIGURE 6.5 The chariot race scene from *Ben-Hur* (1959, dir. William Wyler)

of engineering and logistics as it was of filmmaking. Thousands of extras were costumed and made up at 5 am and got out again at 10 pm each day. The Hollywood stars employed in the film learned to ride the horses that would race through over 300 hand-built sets. *Ben-Hur* inspired a new generation of blockbuster films that was to push forward the development of special effects, eventually into the digital age which saw the possibilities expand.

Television

Popularity drove the production and diversification of television production. Traditional drama and comedy was often produced over a long period of time and so had to remain somewhat ambiguous with its content to avoid looking out of date. Live television like news broadcasts and variety shows allowed for spontaneity that excited audiences with the expectation that anything could happen. Thousands of people built long careers in the production of television as its revenue did not come from people buying tickets at the box office, but from the advertisers trying to reach the audience. To meet the demands of the advertiser and audience, a cast of thousands were required to produce high-quality television. A complex art, production required a number of roles that concentrated on the knowledge of specific technologies. Specialist roles required highly trained individuals to turn knobs and buttons in well-rehearsed, synchronised movements to create seamless television.

In its early years, television was controlled by even fewer companies than cinema and the output never fully satisfied the audience. To appeal to as broad an audience as possible, television producers often used the same sets, created simple storylines and uncomplicated characters. A strict number of advertising breaks meant that many half-hour productions were frozen in the same three-act structure of an opening sequence, a crisis and a resolution. A close examination of television production, right up until the late 1990s, will provide many examples of this formula. Put simply, the limitations of the technology enforced limitations on the quality of its production.



FIGURE 6.6 *The Brady Bunch* (1969–74) was one show where the bulk of the action took place in a series of sets.

One of the 1990s' most popular television shows was the controversial *Married with Children* (1987–97). Much of the situation comedy's script was played out in the living room of the Bundy family home where its lazy patriarch, Al, was constantly challenged by his obnoxious wife and children. The action and comedy was almost exclusively delivered in a single set in the family loungeroom and the audience rarely saw other rooms within the house; the audience was told when to laugh when the editor included a pre-recorded laugh track at the end of well-scripted punch lines. The hit show ran for 10 years and revolved exclusively around a handful of sets and plot lines. Regardless of its formulaic structure, the longevity of *Married with Children* speaks for its success. Its appeal to television producers lay in its slight variation from a safe story structure that would guarantee audiences and advertising dollars. In short, *Married with Children*, with all of its cheap sets, punch lines and predictability, made money for the television producers.

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Fast forward into the modern era and complex television can be made with a single presenter, camera and laptop. Production of modern television has long since left the studio and its canned laughter behind. However, a closer examination of this chapter will reveal that several other factors confront the future of traditional television production.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What traditionally determined the types of television shows that were produced?
2. What particular economic factor influenced the structure of television shows?

News production

The role of the journalist and their employer, the news media, is one that faces the ever-evolving challenges of new media technologies. The role of the news media has traditionally been to report and explain world events for audiences. Initially owned, again, by a few wealthy individuals, the role of the news media was to relay the happenings of the day to a curious population. In developed democracies, the news media play a vital role in informing the populace about the actions of their elected leaders. It would investigate, critique and provide a form of 'checks and balances' to ensure that those in power did not abuse it. The role of the journalist is simple: report the truth. If a reporter was to investigate a scandal, it is their role to tell both sides of the story impartially and without bias. It should not be the reporter's role to interpret and pass judgement on truth. That is the role of an informed audience.



FIGURE 6.7 *Evening Standard* editorial staff working on the night edition in the newsroom, London, 21 September 1971

Traditional news gathering has been critically challenged by the advent of new technologies and the demands of an increasingly connected audience. The role of the journalist was (and still is) to seek out a story, gather the facts, interview and speak to all parties concerned and then craft the story itself. For a print journalist, this would involve meetings with editors, typesetters, copywriters and the production of a complete story in a large printing press to be delivered and sold the following day.

Radio and television journalism evolved with the technology. The advent of live sound and imagery meant the producer could add a new exciting element to the coverage of the same scandal. Considering the impact that television had on the 1960 presidential election discussed earlier, it is not hard to imagine that audiences' interpretation of the truth changed when moving images came about. News production, however, still followed a slow and logical process. The images and sound had to be carefully collected using rudimentary technologies and physical film that had to be processed and reviewed before it was even considered for broadcast. That imagery or live audio was then matched to the scripted, rehearsed dialogue of the reporter into a neatly crafted story.

In 1972, two young reporters from the *Washington Post*, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, began following a trail of suspicious activity behind presidential candidate Richard Nixon's re-election campaign, especially the events surrounding a break-in at the Watergate Hotel, home of Nixon's political opponents. Relying on anonymous sources and a careful editorial staff, the two reporters were able to uncover, over a period of months, high levels of political corruption that eventually forced the resignation of President Nixon in 1974. The story, crafted and teased out over time, stands to this day as a high point in investigative journalism. It involved the CIA, the president,

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FIGURE 6.8 Reporters Woodward and Bernstein

secret meetings in dark alleys and the type of characters that only appear in fiction. Woodward and Bernstein were afforded the time to chase and pursue a story of great significance that validated the role of journalism in modern society.

However, many would argue the demand for immediacy in the digital age has seen the rapid decline of this journalism. News must be produced at a rate never seen before and the time and patience given to the two *Washington Post* reporters is rare in modern news gathering. With large-scale and frequent data dumps from digital **whistle blowers**, news media also suffer from an overload of information with little time to sort fact from fiction and present a balanced view for an audience. What then, does the digital age hold for the future of journalism?

whistle blowers groups or individuals who reveal hidden truths to media organisations and on internet platforms

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Define the role of the reporter in traditional news production.
2. Define the role of the audience in traditional news consumption.

ACTIVITY 6.1

Working in pairs, carefully examine the online pages of mainstream media news sites in your area over a week.

1. Identify how long stories stay on the front page of the website.
2. Investigate how often they claim to have an 'exclusive'.
3. List stories that have come from 'leaks' or 'unnamed sources' – do any of these stories lead to real consequences? Explain.

As with the changes to television and film, the introduction of new media technologies has seen an even more radical shift in the production and nature of news media itself. The advent of the 24-hour news cycle has meant journalists have less time to investigate, source and craft a story for the public. This chapter will ask you to examine what this has meant for the quality of news reporting and, ultimately, the truth.

6.3 New media technologies

New media technologies have developed and still develop at such a rapid rate that several new forms may exist that had not even been considered possible when this chapter was written. However, it is still vital to chart the transition from old to new media to evaluate the shift in production for producers and attitudes and behaviours of audiences. Hopefully, with this in mind, it may be possible, as students of the media, to predict and plan for future developments.

The transition from old to new media can be traced back to the gradual transition from analogue media to digital. Essentially, radio and television signals were sent via electromagnetic waves through the air, hence the term 'on the air'. Vinyl records, cassettes and videotapes all relied on materials that degraded over time. This forced the audience

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to rely on producers for media content. In the age of vinyl records, new music was a long anticipated event for fans and the recording of a band or artist would be listened to repeatedly as releases were often few and far between. The invention of cassettes caused a stir within the music industry as it allowed fans to copy music to 'tape' and thus avoid paying for the music directly. Tapes could be played on cassette players; however, for any chance of increased volume, a large stereo system, like a boombox, had to be used.



FIGURE 6.9 Old media technology: a record player

Things moved rapidly still with the invention of the 'Walkman': a compact tape player with headphones that could go anywhere the audience wanted it to – until the AA batteries ran flat. Film and television audiences endured long waits for their favourite programs as the physical roll of film had to be transported around the globe before it could be seen by audiences. While these rolls of film were easy to mass produce, they were delicate and could only be handled and screened by those trained in projection. As such, Australian audiences would often have to wait long periods before seeing the films and television hits of the United Kingdom and America. In many cases, the screenings would be a full six months behind the country of origin as the film or television program would have to prove its economic viability before an Australian media company would be willing to invest significant funds in importing and screening it to their own audiences. Therefore, Australian audiences, isolated geographically, were often 'behind' as they would only catch up with the artistic trends of Europe and the United States once a small group of wealthy individuals were willing to show it to them in cinemas and on their TV screens. The audience had little control over what it saw and heard in the analogue era.



FIGURE 6.10 The boombox was popular in the 1970s and 80s.

A dramatic shift came with the commercial use of binary data codes. Little more than a long sequence of ones and zeroes, binary data forms the long series of codes that create digital files. Digital data does not degenerate in the same fashion as its analogue ancestors, but can live an infinite life, remaining exactly as it was created. As such, the quality and speed of media production after the commercial use of digital files in the late 1980s and 90s meant music and film could be sold on CD and DVD. While the authors of such media products still maintained a level of control over their product, the audience became more adept in manipulating, copying and sharing digital data in new ways. The popularisation of the internet in the mid 1990s, however, changed everything.

Originally designed in the 1950s to protect sensitive military data in case of a nuclear attack, the internet existed as little more than a bewildering concept understood by only a handful of computer scientists and mathematicians. Its potential, for a long time, appeared limited to the capacity of the hulking computers that used it. As companies like Microsoft, IBM and Apple began to develop personal computers (PCs) that could be used in the family home, the growth of the internet soon followed. Suddenly, all of the binary data that made up digital media files like photographs, text, videos and music could be shared locally and, eventually, globally. With this came more control for the audience. Peer-to-peer file sharing, while slow and arduous, meant that digital files could be shared globally; and

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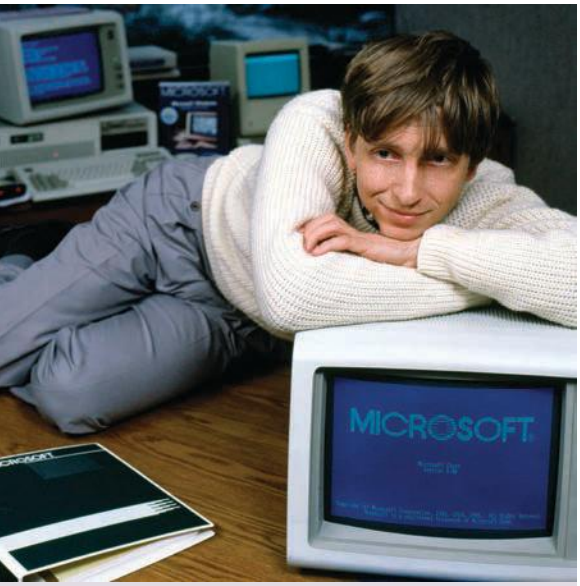


FIGURE 6.11 Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates with an early model of the home PC



FIGURE 6.12 Peer-to-peer file sharing, while slow and arduous, meant that digital files could be shared globally.

suddenly, audiences were not waiting so patiently to hear their favourite music. In a frightening development for media producers, the notion of internet piracy had begun.

In its early years, much of the content that appeared on the internet was created by those with the ability to write the code. However, the introduction of broadband speeds to ordinary users meant that by the mid 2000s, Australian internet users were able to do more on the internet. Previous connections, through a dial-up service connected to the home phone, involved sending an email, clicking 'send', making a cup of coffee, cleaning the house and then checking to see if your computer had sent the message. However, the use of the internet gathered pace and the popularity of search engines meant that available knowledge was soon at hand. The process of finding information, previously considered to be research, had been replaced by a brand name: Google. Faster speeds meant more was created and a new iteration of the internet, known as Web 2.0, broke a new dawn for media technologies.

Web 2.0

Think back to an earlier point in this chapter where you examined the role that a few had over many. For example, many people still study the role of Nazi propaganda in the 1930s to see what happens when the production of media is in the hands of a select few. YouTube, Facebook, Wikipedia, Instagram and Twitter represent the shift that placed much of the media and the means of production in the hands of the audience. All four applications are used daily by millions and, in some cases, billions of ordinary people who generate the content that appears on each platform. From cat videos, your current mood to 280-character rants, any and all thoughts, actions and ideas the audience had could now be shared with millions worldwide. Never have the audience had such power. The voices of a powerful few are often drowned out by the sheer volume of competing messages.

If you look back to the beginnings of this chapter, it is clear the impact such a shift in technology has had. Charting this course is essential to understand the challenges that face old media institutions like film, television, music and news media. No longer do the producers have all the control and influence, and in many cases, are now at the mercy of their audience's attitudes and behaviours.

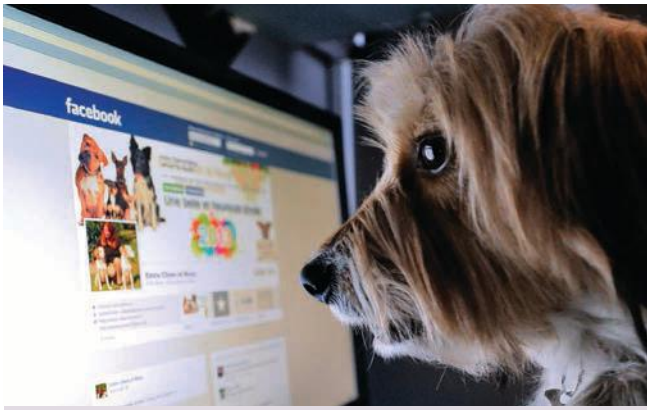


FIGURE 6.13 Facebook, Wikipedia, Instagram and Twitter represent the shift that placed the means of media production in the hands of the audience.

Mobile media

The impact of digital media cannot be summarised simply, nor will it be complete within this book; however, the emergence of smartphones

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ACTIVITY 6.2

Twitter and the Arab Spring

In 2010, a number of popular uprisings (known as Arab Spring) broke out across the Middle East in response to repressive governments that controlled media technologies like film, television and radio with strict authority. Any competing messages often meant jail.

1 Discuss the impact web 2.0 technologies would have upon these governments.

In 2011 the Egyptian government turned off access to the internet in Egypt in response to the influence platforms like Twitter were having on public debate and discussion.

2 In light of these and other events, what impact do you think open and public media forms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram can have on public debate and discussion?



FIGURE 6.14 A man walks past graffiti sprayed on a shop front in Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt.

and mobile access to the web can serve as an excellent means to examine it. No longer are the key stories of the day dictated by the news media, nor are the timelines and location of cinema and television releases a restriction for mobile audiences. Anything can be accessed anywhere at any time. The mobile represents a palm-sized compilation of specific interests and needs that are dictated not by a wealthy few, but by the individual. New media technologies have revealed a seismic power shift in the relationship between media authors and audiences.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 Create a flowchart showing the relationship between media producer, media product and audience for old media technologies.

2 Repeat the above task for new media technologies.

3 Briefly describe how new media technologies have changed the roles of the media producer and their audience.

ACTIVITY 6.3

Form into groups for a class debate!

1 List, then debate, the pros and cons of the emergence of digital media.

2 Consider the following media products or news stories and explain if they could be made better or worse with digital technology:

- *Ben-Hur*
- *Married with Children*
- the Watergate scandal.

ACTIVITY 6.4

1 Look back at the audience research tasks in Chapter 2 and create a media diary for yourself. (See page 58.)

2 Identify and list all of the media you consume in one 24-hour period.

3 Analyse the list and answer the following question: 'In one 24-hour period, how much 'old media' do you consume?'

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post-broadcast era the period following the introduction of digital technologies and the subsequent changes in audience behaviour and use of media technologies in a globalised context

The post-broadcast era

The changes that digital technology has brought have shifted the function and purpose of broadcast era technologies like cinema, radio and television. The broadcasters still exist, but in a different way in the **post-broadcast era**. Television, for instance, is no longer the centre of cultural life as it once was, rather it is the product of the influences and content that is being developed around it.

6.4 Hybridisation of media technologies

digital convergence the replacement of old media practices with new, digital practices. It can involve the convergence of letters and voice calls into email and text messaging.

hybridised media media forms that collect and deliver converged media products. Instagram is an example of hybridised media that includes text, images, hyperlinks and/or video in one form.

Digital convergence refers to the process of old technologies converging to one media source. For example, film and television were, thanks to digital technology, converged to DVDs, which enabled easier access for audiences. Over time, the influence of the internet and file sharing has meant that music is no longer sourced from large and intrusive hi-fi stereo systems, but from a laptop or smartphone. **Hybridised media** thus refers to a media product that is a result of a convergence of media technologies in one place, performing more than one function at a time.

Verbal and written communication, photography, filmmaking, calendars, alarm clocks, file sharing, video games, news media, sport, the internet, presenting, word processing, music production and physical health are but a small sample of what has now converged to mobile technology. Most of these functions can occur simultaneously too. Your personal fitness data can be synced to your digital mapping applications which can then update your social media profile which can then tell all of your online friends exactly how far you travelled on your run.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Define the term 'digital convergence' in your own words.
2. Think of and list some examples of hybridised media forms.

ACTIVITY 6.5

1. Take out your smartphone and create a detailed list of all the applications and services your phone provides. Include those that came standard with your phone and those you have added yourself.
2. Next to each service, research and propose the analogue equivalent. For example, if it is a music streaming service, research how music was heard and experienced before the advent of digital technology.
3. Calculate the approximate time you have saved by using these converged technologies in place of their analogue ancestor.

All new media technologies are essentially converged technologies that create hybrid media. They combine a range of old technologies and create new ones; with this comes new forms of communication and media content. For example, the internet is a hybrid of a number of technologies. It combines the one-to-one communication of a telephone with the one-to-many communication of print news, television and radio. It appears that the advent of digital technology, the advent of an accessible internet and the smartphone have altered the model previously held by a wealthy few described at the beginning of this chapter. No longer do some have the control to speak to many; there is a much greater balance between how much information an individual can access, but also how many people they in turn can communicate with.

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CASE STUDY 6.1

Tangerine (2015, dir. Sean Baker)

At the 2015 Sundance Film Festival, the feature film *Tangerine* was a breakout hit with audiences. It was shot entirely on a smartphone. Using a Steadicam rig to stabilise the phone, the writer and director used a US$8 app to shoot the film and in one scene, rode around the actors with a 10-speed bicycle to achieve the effect of a dolly shot. A variety of lenses, designed to attach to the smartphone, were employed with readily available post-production tools to tell a story that achieved international acclaim. While the film was made with cheap and available technologies it is important to note that it was a film narrative, created with the knowledge of 100 years of filmmaking history that told such a captivating story. *Tangerine* was by no means the first film to be made on a smartphone, nor will it be the last; however, it serves as an important signpost in the history of modern filmmaking and digital convergence. Anyone with the knowledge and skill with access to a mobile device can tell credible, engaging stories.



FIGURE 6.15 Movie poster for *Tangerine*

Analysis

1. Explain how advancements in digital technology allowed a film like *Tangerine* to be made.
2. Explain the process of convergence that allowed this film to be made on a smartphone.
3. Explain how the film *Tangerine* and its production process is an example of hybridisation.

Hybridisation in action

CASE STUDY 6.2

The Khan Academy

Hybridisation of digital media is not limited to media content traditionally owned by a wealthy elite. Larger institutions have been hybridised by mobile technology, one such example being the process you're undertaking now: education. In 2006, an educator named Salman Khan saw the potential for digital technology to reach more people than traditional avenues of high school and university institutions. Through the online incarnation of this idea – The Khan Academy – anyone can access videos, concepts and instruction, learning tasks, assessment and feedback on a huge range of topics from maths, science and history to literature. The not-for-profit organisation has hybridised a number of teaching tools, materials and technologies to deliver an educational experience. While it cannot replace the real-time interaction a student has with their teacher, all of the learning content is available simultaneously, any time, via an app. In 2016, the site had over 10 million unique visitors per month. An entire educational journey from foundation to Year 12 can be converged to a hybridised app downloaded from the internet.

Analysis

1. Examine the materials and practice provided by your teacher during this Area of Study.
2. Work in groups to propose a detailed summary of how your teacher could use digital technology to create a hybridised educational experience.

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Hashtags and hybrid media events

CASE STUDY 6.3

Charlie Hebdo and 'Je Suis Charlie'

Hybridisation of media is also visible through public events. If you consider important public events like a sporting final, or even the finale of your favourite television show, much of the experience and the technologies you use to participate are shared across a variety of platforms via your mobile phone, usually linked by a hashtag. In most cases, we can see the interrelationship between mainstream news media, social media and the circulation of messages, public discussion and ideas.



FIGURE 6.16 The hashtag #*JeSuisCharlie* ('I am Charlie') was – at least at the time of the event – the most popular tweet in the history of Twitter.

One such example can be analysed in the 2015 terrorist attack on the office of controversial French magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*. The public reaction to the attacks appeared immediately on a variety of media platforms, highlighting the hybrid nature that major international events now have. Over the weeks following the attacks, news and social media were inundated with images, stories, comments, links, videos shared by journalists and ordinary citizens. The attempts at well-sourced and balanced news coverage were intermixed with **memes** and commentary from a global audience of connected individuals and groups.

meme an image, video or piece of text that is shared among internet users, usually funny, to comment on and alter slightly

The broad discussion of the event is well illustrated by the fact that the hashtag #*JeSuisCharlie* ('I am Charlie') was – at least at the time of the event – the most popular tweet in the history of microblogging platform, Twitter. The tag was tweeted 6500 times per minute at its height and was featured in 3.4 million **tweets** in one 24-hour period.

tweets the name for the 280-character messages sent out and commented upon using the social media platform Twitter

While the phrase 'the world is watching' was never truer in this sense, it must be understood that this experience came through a large and diverse range of screens and audience experiences. However, it was the use of the hashtag #*JeSuisCharlie* that gathered most of these ideas and experiences in one place. The role of the hashtag could arguably play a significant role in defining the nature of hybridised media events as it served as a collection point for global discussion on a significant event created in a wide range of different technologies.

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Analysis

Research and list the most popular hashtags over the last 10 years. Explain what your list suggests to you about:

1. What digital media users consider important or valuable to discuss.
2. What other media forms were involved in the hashtag discussion.
3. How the hashtag represents a hybridised discussion of an event or idea.



ACTIVITY 6.6

As a class, research and discuss some local and international events that gathered significant public and media attention this year.

1. Identify the ways the event was discussed in traditional media.
2. Identify the ways the event was discussed in online formats.
3. Examine this list carefully and determine how many could be accessed via hybrid media platforms like a smartphone.

6.5 Digital technology and audiences

The impact of digital technologies on audience behaviour

When the Frankfurt School examined the impact of media in 1923, they were primarily concerned with the effect the media had on what they saw as naive, unsuspecting audiences. Scholars and theorists from what became known as the 'effects tradition', as you will study in detail later in this book (Chapter 11), proposed that a message from a media author would travel like a bullet from a gun, or like medication through a hypodermic needle to the receiver. The audience would then think and act just as the message suggested without questioning what they had just been told. Most studies that have come since the effects tradition studies have been considered limited in their understanding of mature, intelligent audiences who have arguably always had the capacity to interpret media messages. What you have read thus far should also pose another question: Does the audience simply receive a message? Is that all they do with the media?

Since the advent of digital media, the internet, mobile technology and social media the audience has experienced radical shifts in the way they interpret, challenge, contribute to and share the 'bullet' that the Frankfurt School concerned itself with over 90 years ago. Since the advent of high-speed internet, that 'bullet' has been shared, commented on, and the subject of debate, art and public commentary. It has been turned into a meme, a tweet and a hashtag and been reshaped in its meaning by a vast and connected audience.

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In 2015, Ofcom, the independent communication authority of the United Kingdom, published its findings into a 10-year study of digital media use. Its findings were as follows:

1 Nine out of 10 adults are online each day.

2 As more people connect outside of the home, 66% of people were using a smartphone as their primary connection to the internet.

3 While text messaging was used by 96% of smartphone users, there were huge increases in the use of free, instant messaging services.

4 Three-quarters of internet users in the UK had a social media profile.

5 While online video was a limited source in 2007, only 17% of 16–24 year olds stated that they would miss their television in 2015.

6 For the age group of 15 to 34, almost 100% used their mobile device for communication, 60% used it to search for content like video and photos and over 75% used it to create the same content themselves.

FIGURE 6.17 Results from a 10-year study of digital media use

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The mobile generation

This generation of people, aged 15 to 34 in 2016, are often referred to as the 'mobile generation' as they are the ones who were born into a connected digital age where digital media was commonplace; and in the case of those in your age group, it has always existed. There are many ways to define and dissect the behaviour of this group within society; however, one thing is clear – they can no longer be examined in the single-audience view of the Frankfurt School. The mobile generation move between technology quickly, are influenced by social trends and, most importantly, cannot be categorised as a single homogeneous group.



FIGURE 6.18 The mobile generation move between technology quickly, are influenced by social trends and, most importantly, cannot be categorised as a single homogeneous group.

ACTIVITY 6.7

1 Create a survey of the following behaviours that you or a classmate undertake each day and then compare them with someone your parents'/guardians' age.
   - **a** How many hours do you spend on your smartphone each day?
   - **b** How often do you check your phone without a notification?
   - **c** How many hands do you use to operate a smartphone?
   - **d** How often do you use your phone when out with friends?
   - **e** How often do you use your phone in the company of family or loved ones?
   - **f** How much of that time is devoted to social media and sharing apps?

2 Explain what your findings tell you about your/your subject's use of digital technologies and social media.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 Define the term 'mobile generation'.
2 What social impact did the Frankfurt School examine?

What has become clear for this group is that they, which is you, has almost unlimited access to the internet in and outside of the home, which means that you also have near-unlimited access to content like videos, photos and music. You have control over what you can access, you can access it anywhere and there appears to be no limit to what you can access. Contemporary studies have found that the mobile generation are watching less television, and listening to the radio and reading newspapers in decreasing numbers too. These facts would perhaps be alarming to those small groups who own many of these traditional media outlets; however, trends do not suggest the mobile generation use the media less, in fact, they use it more. How they use it is what has changed. It is natural for these users to switch between a phone's applications, a laptop, television or radio a large number of times within a very small space of time; one only needs to look at the media forms used in the response to *Charlie Hebdo*, discussed earlier, to see this in action.

The audience directs the media: music

Musicians and their industry were the first to feel the impact of digital technology. In days gone by, the biggest-selling artists directly influenced popular culture more than any other medium. From the heady days of rock 'n' roll in the 1960s to disco, hip hop, punk and pop in the decades that followed, music has played a defining role in the lives of people the world over. Musicians and the recording companies amassed enormous fortunes based on the popularity and talent of the artist and the work of the company to distribute the music itself.

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According to people of older generations, there was a sense of romance attached to the journey a talented artist would undertake to first 'get noticed' by a recording company and then 'make it to the top'. Success was judged by the frequency of radio play a song received and sales in music stores, the results of which would be published in music magazines each month that acted as bibles for the industry. A dynamic and sometimes fractious relationship between an artist, the record label, radio stations and magazines like *Rolling Stone* or *NME* would determine the visibility of the artist in the eyes of the public. All of this took place before the audience had much of a chance to hear the music they wanted. It was dictated to them by large recording companies who claimed to know what the audience wanted.

Prior to digital file sharing, long days would be spent in 'record stores' listening and discussing new music and taking the vinyl record home to listen further, reading the lyrics and liner notes and sharing the experience with friends. The arrival of the compact disc (CD) meant music had been compressed in a digital file. It was no longer a series or circular grooves cut into a record or a spool of flimsy electromagnetic tape in a plastic cassette. While the physical disc was smaller, large music collections could dominate space in the home and the discs had to be carefully maintained as they were prone to scratching and damage. No matter the format, audiences paid the artist and recording company, the owners of that music, for their work. It was a lucrative business.

What the audience received in return was a permanent record of an artist's work. The limited access audiences had to their favourite music meant the effort in obtaining it created a sense of value in the work. While the physical object would deteriorate, the legacy and impact of that music was permanent.

Digital file sharing has disrupted this process forever. While it had long been possible to copy music onto a cassette or CD, the original had to be purchased and the quality was always superior to the copy. However, the arrival of peer-to-peer sharing took the balance of power away from the music industry.

Peer-to-peer file sharing involves the online sharing of digital media files such as music, movies or software. It has existed in some form or another as long as the internet has been accessible; however, its rise followed the popularisation of its existence in the family home. In the late 1990s a small internet company named Napster rose to prominence as one of the world's biggest file sharing services. The music industry was already angry at the use of cassettes and CDs (which could copy legally purchased music); however, by 2000, they were terrified of file sharing. They feared that if anyone could download anything they wanted, no one would pay for music ever again.

CASE STUDY 6.4

Metallica v Napster

In 1999 a young entrepreneur named Shawn Fanning created Napster. It was essentially a file browser that allowed users to see MP3 music files on any computer that was connected to the service. In return for sharing stored files, users could access any of the music held by any other Napster account around the world. This, of course, was highly illegal. Music companies had for decades placed legal copyrights on their products to protect them from theft. Napster's growth was so rapid and widespread that the music industry was unsure how to tackle such widespread theft of their product.



FIGURE 6.19 Metallica drummer Lars Ulrich giving evidence at a US government inquiry into the impact of the internet on the music industry.

In 2000, an unreleased song by metal band Metallica was leaked online to Napster and was shared before its official release. The band were furious and took Napster to court for infringement of copyright. What followed was not expected. The band faced a huge backlash from their own fans. In taking on a free service that by this stage had millions of users around the world, the once counterculture metal band

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appeared greedy and represented the powerful authority that many of their fans automatically rallied against. Metallica won the lawsuit and Napster were essentially sent bankrupt as a result. Metallica may have won the battle, but lost the war. Despite the justifiable claim by the band that their work had been stolen and they had a right to make an income from it, music fans had spoken, and by 2000, file sharing was here to stay.

Analysis

To what extent do you believe that the internet directly affects the livelihoods of musicians?

Fast forward a decade and music was being shared, streamed and played predominantly through smartphones. To deliver this music to fans, recording companies scrambled to align themselves with any number of legal streaming services. No longer did audiences wait patiently for a long player (LP) album, or rely on radio to dictate what to listen to. Music was available via any number of video streaming services, peer-to-peer file sharing or on social media. The access to so much music anywhere at any time created a culture of a disposable product. The record store and sales of physical CDs and the LP format had been dying a slow death in the USA until a recent change in the trend.

Remarkably, more people are listening to music, more than ever in fact.

In 2016, listeners streamed over 208 billion songs. Streaming services now form the dominant method for audiences to legally access music. For a small fee, or sometimes for no fee at all, listeners can access almost any music or musician they want anywhere via an app on their smartphone. New music can be discovered while waiting for a train and old favourites can be replayed an infinite number of times while doing homework. The audience now dictates terms to the old structure of the music industry.

For many artists, however, generating an income was difficult once peer-to-peer sharing arrived. Streaming services do offer an income to artists. They pay a small percentage of funds derived from advertising and subscription fees to the artist each time their song is played; it is significantly less than what they could have made in the pre-file sharing era.

FOCUS QUESTION

Which of the formats and methods mentioned in this section have you used to access music?

In 2014, pop artist Taylor Swift moved her entire catalogue of songs off music streaming service Spotify, criticising the service for its payment of between $0.006 and $0.008 per song play. Despite there being, by late 2016, 40 million subscribers to the service, Swift decided that her work was not being valued appropriately. Consider this: at the time of the move, Swift appeared in over 19 million playlists on the service and boasted a staggering fact that 25% of their total subscribers at the time (30 million) had streamed at least one of her songs. While Swift may make a significant income, much of what she would make from Spotify would be taken by her record company, the legal owner of her music and then provide Swift with a percentage. However, in June 2017 she rejoined Spotify on a much more lucrative deal.

It is clear, then, that even the world's most popular artists find it difficult to earn a balanced income from their work. In 2016 Kanye West released his album *Life of Pablo* on an exclusive and subscription-based service 'Tidal' in an effort to force customers to pay to listen to the album. In the week of its release it was illegally downloaded 500 000 times.

However, new artists are finding a way to work within the digital age. Born into a culture of file sharing and digital access, many have found new and innovative ways to distribute their music to new audiences and make a living from their work. Recording an album, for any artist, is an expensive process. Instruments, studios, mixers and producers have to be hired to perfect the sound for release. The album must be heavily promoted by a marketing team and the artists flown all over the globe to play for audiences in promotional and concert events to generate sales. Once the album begins to pay back these expenses, the artist usually gets paid too. Music industry history is littered with stories of famous musicians who ended their careers with little more than what they started with.

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FIGURE 6.20 Chance the Rapper does not have a recording contract with any major label, and for the first few years of his career, none of his works were available on streaming services.

social media presence the level of visibility and popularity of an individual on one or more social media platforms

In 2013 hip hop artist Chance the Rapper released an album, *Acid Rap*, on the internet, for free. He has since gone on to release another hugely popular album via his website. Chance the Rapper does not have a recording contract with any major label and for the first few years of his career, none of his works were available on streaming services. However, he has generated global attention through other avenues. His music is central to his popularity and as such a constant concert touring schedule has seen him play to sold-out crowds around the world. Fans respond and interact through a strong **social media presence** that promotes the artist's clothing line and charity projects. In this case, an artist has been able to leverage the power and connection of digital audiences to maintain a constant presence that not only meets audience demand, but also acts as a challenge to the established music industry.

ACTIVITY 6.8

1. Compare the three cases mentioned above (Taylor Swift, Kanye West and Chance the Rapper). Prepare an evidence-based class debate: Do artists deserve to make a living from their music alone?
2. Each side of the debate must consider the following points:
   - changes in audience behaviour
   - the nature of illegal and legal downloading and streaming
   - the changes to music distribution and the means by which artists make money.

The audience directs the media – film

The traditional film production landscape has shifted dramatically. To ensure their survival, the corporations created by those wealthy individuals that controlled the media in the broadcast era have been forced to adapt and secure access to a mobile audience. In 2015, seven of the top 10 YouTube channels had been purchased by traditional media corporations. Clearly, access to digital technology has been married with the increasing competence of the mobile generation to not only use it, but demand more from it, and faster.

In the recent decades of superhero blockbusters, it has been a challenge for Australian-made films to be seen, talked about and, ultimately, profitable. Even in an era of mass communication online, Australian stories, despite some notable exceptions, rarely receive the same attention as their overseas counterparts that pump millions of dollars into traditional and digital advertising campaigns. Feature films of any size cost a lot of money to make, and to secure the money filmmakers often seek out grants from government groups and investments from private companies. Usually, these companies expect their money back and more if the film is a success. To release a film in an Australian cinema, the filmmaker must hope for positive feedback from the audience who do pay to see the film. For 100 or more days, most cinema chains demand that they have exclusive rights to screen the film, which means the film cannot be legally downloaded for months after its release. In an era of illegal downloading, it means the filmmaker is fighting a hard battle to return money, if any, to investors, actors, crew and the filmmakers themselves.

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2014's Australian zombie horror *Wyrmwood* was one of the most illegally downloaded films of the year. The creators of the film, devastated by the outcome of their film, made an impassioned plea to fans:

> *So, Wyrmwood is one of the most torrented films in the world right now. Let's be completely honest here - I can't really stop you pirating this film but consider this: our film was made outside the studio system on a 'DEFERRED PAYMENT' basis which means that heaps of VERY talented actors and crew still need to see $ for their amazing work in this film (it comes down to the basic facts that the peeps who worked on this film need to buy 'food' and pay bills & stuff) - so if you LIKE this film after you've torrented the bastard please consider purchasing it online if (and when) it's available to you … YOU WATCH. YOU BUY. (we eat …)*



FIGURE 6.21 A still from the Australian film *Wyrmwood* (2014, dir. Kiah Roache-Turner)

While the film did perform well in online stores and in the cinema, it barely broke even. In the same year, another group of Australian filmmakers decided to skip the cinema system entirely and release their film *The Mule* – a black comedy about an Australian drug trafficker – in online stores immediately after its completion. Rather than compete with the marketing monsters of Hollywood, the film had a live release on Twitter that reached an audience of 2.5 million people and appeared for sale online the next day. By making the film available immediately, they were able to gain greater attention and, ultimately, sales and a viable return for their artistic efforts.

ACTIVITY 6.9

1. Assess the mistakes you believe the makers of *Wyrmwood* made upon its release.
2. Clarify why you believe the *Wyrmwood* makers attempted to contact their audience.
3. Explain why the makers of *The Mule* decided to avoid a cinema release.
4. Account for the changes in audience behaviours that you believe impacted the release of both films.
5. Create a list of the pros and cons of releasing a film via a cinema chain versus online.

The audience directs the media – film and bit torrenting

The growth of media platforms that allow for peer-to-peer sharing has led to growth in illegal downloading of films, music and television, otherwise known as internet piracy. As media formats like film and music turned digital, the ease with which these files could be compressed and shared online exploded and a culture of piracy grew in place of the media environment cultivated by media owners who fed their audience content at will. As discussed earlier, the high-speed internet of the mid 2000s meant the audience could get what they wanted, whenever they wanted, usually without paying.

This had and still has enormous ramifications for those who choose to make a living creating media products. Major media corporations play a game of cat and mouse with internet users the world over as they attempt to protect the financial security of their product. As soon as producers develop a new method to tighten security, a new method to break that security is developed, usually using globally connected, collaborative online efforts.

Illegal piracy had become so commonplace by 2015 there had been over 1 billion Australian visits to online piracy sites in a single year.

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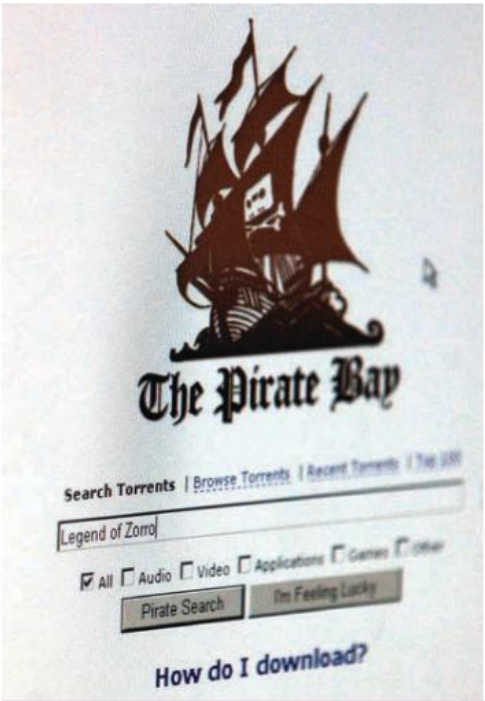


FIGURE 6.22 Illegal piracy has become so commonplace that by 2015 there had been over 1 billion Australian visits to online piracy sites like The Pirate Bay in a single year.

There are many reasons for this. Many argue that it is free, easy to do and rarely, if ever, would it be punished; others argue it is because Australia is isolated from major media markets and does not have enough media providers to allow active and selective audiences to see television shows or films released elsewhere.

In the broadcast era, it was common to wait at least three to six months for popular content to reach Australian screens. This was fine when you consider that there were no social media platforms around to spoil the ending of the audience's favourite show. Not so anymore. The rights to highly popular TV shows from America and the UK are often purchased by major Australian TV networks or subscription providers, and audiences either have to wait or pay an expensive fee to watch their favourite programs. The immediacy of digital technology has meant few have to wait, as that same show has been available for free online. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the balance of power surrounding media content has shifted towards the audience and many would argue that digital technologies have allowed this to take place.

In 2015, the makers of the 2013 film *Dallas Buyers Club* (dir. Jean-Marc Vallée) were angered by the scale of the illegal downloading of their film. They felt they had been denied the revenue they would have made if the film had been purchased and viewed legally. In an attempt to tackle piracy head on, they contacted Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in Australia to determine the names of people who had downloaded their film. Some of those identified were sent a letter that demanded repayment for the normal cost of the film and a penalty fee for legal expenses. Ultimately, the attempt fell flat but it is a certain indication of the frustration felt by those who make films on a large scale.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 What is bit torrenting?
2 Research how it works.

Consider this: the 2015 Australian film *Mad Max: Fury Road* employed a largely Australian cast and crew who had developed long and established careers and reputations as film professionals in their native country. By 2016 the film had sold just over half a million DVD copies and legal streaming downloads. It had been illegally streamed and downloaded over 3.5 million times.

ACTIVITY 6.10

The first *Mad Max* film, shot in 1979, was produced on a minimal budget. Made for less than $400 000, most of the filming took place in and around Melbourne and Geelong. Many of the extra outlaw motorcyclists in the film were actual outlaw motorcyclists! The filmmakers, George Miller and Byron Kennedy, raised funds to make the film by contributing their own savings. The film was a huge success and led to a four-film franchise (with more to come), launching the careers of a number of Australian film professionals as well as that of little-known actor Mel Gibson.

1 Closely examine the cast and crew of *Mad Max 4: Fury Road*. Examine the roles of the following people:
- George Miller – director
- Nic Lathouras – screenwriter
- John Seale – cinematographer
- Colin Gibson – production designer
- Margaret Sixel – editor.

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2 Now construct a detailed list of the films these same people have worked on.
3 Review the list of films carefully. Some of them are certain to be excellent and important films in Australian cinema history.
4 Propose a detailed response to this question and align yourself on either side of your classroom according to your positive or negative response:
   - Q: Should the Australian government do more to force internet service providers to ban illegal downloading sites?



FIGURE 6.23 Still shot from the first *Mad Max* film (1979, dir. George Miller)

The audience directs the media – television and bit torrenting

The scale of illegal downloading is difficult to police or make laws to prevent. For every online TV service that attempts to prevent overseas users, known as 'region blocking', there are twice as many virtual proxy networks (VPNs) that even moderate users of the internet can employ to circumvent these efforts. The demands of audience for immediate viewing as well as the capacity to 'binge-watch' their favourite TV series has in turn altered the behaviour of content creators.

Binge-watching of a TV series is a result of audience demand and, ultimately, piracy. Modern audiences want to watch TV shows in their own time, when it meets their own schedule. It's no secret that our lives are busier than ever and for many, programmed television is not compatible with a modern lifestyle. While no longer a new trend in audience behaviour, it is a symptom of access to connected mobile devices and highly developed internet platforms. If an entire season of eight or nine hours of content can be gathered at once, the viewer does not have to wait a week to see their 'cliffhanger' ending of an episode resolved; they can simply watch the next episode immediately. Audiences were often left frustrated by the long wait between episodes and the emergence of the next episode online on an illegal download site was too much for many to resist. A whole television series could be pirated before it had even ended its run on a normal television schedule. In response to this, 'on-demand' technology emerged to attempt to secure audience attention, revenue and the future of television and film production.



FIGURE 6.24 'On-demand' technology emerged to attempt to secure audience attention, revenue and the future of television and film production.

binge-watching the practice of watching an entire television series in one or a small number of sittings

In 2013, American streaming service Netflix attempted a solution. A 13-episode political drama series called *House of Cards* was released all at once. Subscribers could watch the entire series at a high resolution (something often missing from illegal downloads) at their own leisure for a small fee. While the show was a huge success, it laid the foundation for a new form of content delivery to audiences, as the results were astonishing. In the same way the CD gave listeners the chance to skip and repeat music in the 1980s, on-demand TV provided audiences with total control over their viewing experience. Millions flock to on-demand services daily for choice and quality and, surprisingly, to pay for what they watch.

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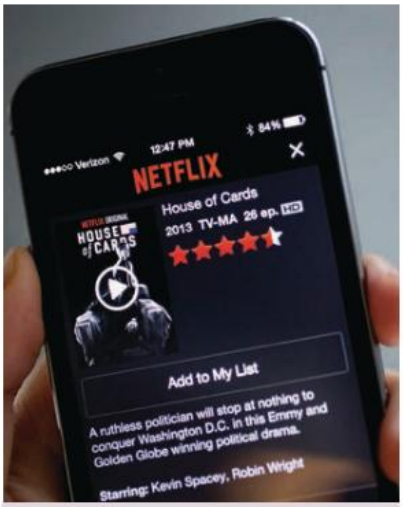


FIGURE 6.25 Netflix had a huge hit with the show *House of Cards*.

In response to this demand for content, there were over 400 scripted TV shows made in the USA in 2015 alone. This indicates a strong future for media producers and suggests that despite fears surrounding the future of the industry in an era of smartphones and illegal downloading, it is simply a matter of recognising the new power of the audience. Traditional television stations are bound by what they can show in a three-hour timeslot between 6.30 and 9.30 pm, known as 'prime time'. This is the time when, traditionally, most people turned their television on to actively view programs. Now, audiences can watch anything at any time of the day.

ACTIVITY 6.11

1 Explain the causes and consequences of 'binge-watching'.
2 Describe how on-demand services have changed the way audiences interact with television products.
3 Define the impact of hybridisation on television production and audience consumption.

6.6 News media and change

The role of news media has experienced enormous challenges in the face of new media technologies. Gone are the days of Woodward and Bernstein, mentioned earlier in this chapter, where a journalist would be given time to craft, fact check and deliver an important story. The public appetite for news as it happens has generated a new environment that has blurred the lines between what is and is not news and what is and is not the truth.

Journalism is a profession that has never strayed far from controversy. Always at the centre of any society's great debates, the role of a journalist is, as stated earlier, to report the happenings of the world back to itself. In that quest, media organisations were built on advertising models that drew an income from their audience. In the case of a newspaper or television news channel, the more attention it could draw upon itself with a breaking news story or scandal, the better chance it had to generate a profit. Naturally, this put rival news sources in competition with each other. The race to be first or to have the 'scoop' ruled the day of any news outlet.

The hunt for the scoop would be played out daily. In print newspapers, for example, a journalist would start their day early with a directive from their editor to produce a story. The day would be spent in interviews, press conferences on the phone and end around 2 pm when an editorial meeting would decide what would be in tomorrow's paper, which would go to print overnight to be in stores by 5 am. To attract the biggest audience, the most controversial or interesting stories made the front page. As the saying goes: 'If it bleeds, it leads'. The rest of the day would be left to plan and prepare for future stories.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 What does the old saying 'if it bleeds, it leads' refer to?
2 Do you think this approach to news is still used today?

While it seems like a frantic schedule, it did allow for news outlets to think carefully about the message that went to audiences and, most importantly, to 'fact check' each story. This meant the news that went to print was, as best as the journalist could ensure, factually correct. The same was the case for a television news broadcaster who went live to air at 6 pm. In both cases, a vast array of skilled professionals was involved in the fast but methodical news production process.

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Traditional news media practices

CASE STUDY 6.5

The landing at Anzac Cove

Each year, on 25 April, Australians celebrate 'Anzac Day' to commemorate the first time Australian soldiers fought in World War I. While the day is meant for a broader recognition of all Australians who fought in wars, the day was chosen for its link to an article written by the journalist Ashmead Bartlett, who observed the landing on the Turkish coastline and wrote the article that many historians argue changed the history of Australia.



FIGURE 6.26 *Anzac, the Landing*; 1920 painting by George Washington Lambert

From a boat floating off the Turkish beach, Bartlett observed and recorded the events of the day, presumably with a pencil and notepad. By the close of the day he was able to reach the shore and write a complete account of the day. An inspiring tale, the report glorified the actions of the Australian soldiers and played a powerful role in increasing the number of young Australian men who volunteered to fight in the war. The article was first printed in Tasmania's *Hobart Mercury* newspaper on 12 May 1914, a full two weeks after the event.

Ashmead Bartlett's Anzac landing dispatch

'The Australians rose to the occasion. They did not wait for orders, or for the boats to reach the beach, but sprang into the sea, formed a sort of rough line, and rushed at the enemy's trenches. Their magazines were not charged, so they just went in with the cold steel, and it was over in a minute for the Turks in the first trench had been either bayoneted or had run away, and the Maxim guns were captured.

'Then the Australians found themselves facing an almost perpendicular cliff of loose sandstone covered with thick shrubbery. Somewhere half-way up the enemy had a second trench strongly held, from which there poured a terrible fire on the troops below and on those pulling back to the torpedo-boat destroyers for a second landing party.

'Here was a tough proposition to tackle in the darkness, but these Colonials are practical above all else, and went about it in a practical way. They stopped for a few minutes to pull themselves together, got rid of their packs and charged the magazines of their rifles. Then this race of athletes proceeded to scale the cliffs, without responding to the enemy's fire. They lost some men, but did not worry. In less than a quarter of an hour the Turks had been hurled out of their second position, all either bayoneted or fled.'

Analysis

1. Account for why it took two weeks for Bartlett's story to be read by Australian audiences.
2. Carefully research the available technology in 1914. Work in groups to determine the steps required to send Bartlett's story from a beach in Turkey to Australia to be printed on the front page of a newspaper in Tasmania.
3. List and detail the steps required to see Bartlett's observations transferred into print.
4. Explain what the process tells you about the nature of news production in 1914.

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The media and the Vietnam War



FIGURE 6.27 Walter Cronkite reporting on the scene during the Tet Offensive in Vietnam in 1968

The Vietnam War (1954–75) changed the role of news media forever. Known as the first 'television war', American and Australian forces were sent to Vietnam to stop the Communist North Vietnamese forces from invading the democratic South. With them were a small army of journalists and news cameras that beamed the conflict back into the homes and onto the front covers of newspapers all over the world. Unlike the previous two world wars, a suburban family could see and hear the horrors of war on the 6 pm TV news while eating dinner. The American public and its news media initially supported the war as they felt it was a necessary element of the Cold War against Communist Russia.

Most news stories were based on press conferences from the head of the US military, General Westmoreland. However, as the coverage of the conflict progressed and news crews gained more access, the images of war on TV screens seemed to conflict with this message. News coverage of injured soldiers and distressed civilians seemed to challenge the US military's view.

In 1968, the power of the news media was realised during an event known as the 'Tet Offensive'. After a daring attack on the American-held city of Saigon by Communist forces during the Tet holiday, the American public were stunned by the capability of their enemy as the US Embassy in Vietnam was itself attacked. Journalists in Vietnam naturally began digging deeper into the real nature and status of the American war against North Vietnam. All was not as it seemed as two pieces of news media irreversibly altered American public opinion on the war.



FIGURE 6.28 Cronkite in the news studio back in the US

Example 1

A photograph of a South Vietnamese man executing what appeared to be a defenceless enemy fighter in the streets of Saigon shocked readers the world over. The horror of war had been made real for many and the idea that Vietnamese people were being executed in the street had infuriated many as it was not what the public were told the war was being fought for. The image was splashed across the front page of newspapers the world over and horrified audiences, who began to oppose the war.

Example 2

For much of the 1960s, TV audiences were used to sitting down at 6 pm to watch the daily news. As mentioned above, it was a compilation of time, investigation and an effort to present a balanced viewpoint on the issues of the day. The Vietnam War, by 1967, was taking up 90% of TV news coverage in this timeslot. The news was presented by an 'anchor', who introduced each story and, as was often the case, presented their opinion on key topics at the close of the broadcast, known as 'editorialising'. The best known and most trusted news anchor of the day was Walter Cronkite. Trusted and reliable, Cronkite was a popular presence on American news media and was well respected. Cronkite had witnessed many of the events around the Tet Offensive first hand and had returned to report his findings on the progress of the war to American audiences. His editorial was not positive.

The impact of this single broadcast was devastating for American political and military leaders. Then US President Lyndon B Johnson was quoted as saying that 'if I've lost Walter (Cronkite), then I've lost Mr Average Citizen'. Johnson did not seek to be re-elected shortly afterwards. Such was the power of Walter Cronkite and the

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news media that a US president was convinced that he had lost the confidence of his electors and avoided an election that would lead to certain defeat.

Many historians and media commentators argue to this day that in 1975, when American forces finally left Vietnam in defeat, it was because the power of the news media had single-handedly changed the public understanding of the conflict.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Why was the Vietnam War known as the first 'television war'?
2. What is 'editorialising'?

CASE STUDY 6.6

Walter Cronkite, 27 February 1968 during a CBS News Special Report

'Tonight, back in more familiar surroundings in New York, we'd like to sum up our findings in Vietnam, an analysis that must be speculative, personal, subjective…

'We have been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders, both in Vietnam and Washington, to have faith any longer in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds.

'To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past. To suggest we are on the edge of defeat is to yield to unreasonable pessimism. To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, yet unsatisfactory, conclusion.'

Analysis

1. Investigate and view the Cronkite broadcast online and explain the nature of Walter Cronkite's reach and influence over American audiences in 1968.
2. Carefully watch the entire broadcast. Explain the nature of the representation you see (use your skills from Chapter 1!). Referring to codes and conventions, explain how this message could potentially reshape an audience's understanding of the conflict in Vietnam.
3. This broadcast is often considered a great achievement for the role of journalism in society. Do you agree or disagree? Provide evidence to support your response.

CASE STUDY 6.7

Tet photos



FIGURE 6.29 Two versions of the famous Tet photograph from the Vietnam War

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Context is everything

The photograph of the 'Tet execution' was cropped for publication. Version one was the most commonly printed image. The second was the original and, as such, the public anger over the image was based on a partial truth. Many were angry the American soldiers were fighting and dying to defend the South Vietnamese Army who, as it appeared in this image, executed people in the street. Many audiences, not just American, were uncomfortable with this thought. As you can see in the second image, there appears to be a solider attempting to stop him. What was also not reported at the time was that the man holding the gun had just caught the culprit responsible for murdering members of his family in the midst of the battle. The man was also an enemy combatant in disguise.

Analysis

1 Do the two versions of the image tell the same story? Explain your answer.
2 Propose why you think the image was cropped for newspapers.
3 This image, along with Cronkite's broadcast, helped change American and Australian public opinion against the Vietnam War. Do you believe the news media acted responsibly in this case? Explain your response.

CASE STUDY 6.8

The Hillsborough disaster

Traditional news media often gets it wrong. In 1989, 96 fans of the Liverpool Football Club in England were crushed to death when crowds surged uncontrollably into the Hillsborough stadium to see their team play an important match. After the chaos subsided, popular tabloid newspaper *The Sun* printed a front page with the bold headline of 'The Truth' that blamed the Liverpool supporters for the incident. Reporters claimed that many of the club's fans forced their way into the ground without a ticket and during the crush looted the bodies of the dead, fought with police and prevented them from saving lives. *The Sun*'s reporting of the event shamed the fans of the club and, ultimately, citizens of an entire city.

A long campaign by the victims' families and dedicated journalists from rival newspapers forced several government inquiries into the event. They not only proved *The Sun*'s reporting to be false, but also that the local police were to blame for the event as they had failed to close gates, direct the crowd and had actually covered up much of the truth to avoid blame. For the victims' families, it took 27 years for the real truth to emerge from the disaster. Nevertheless, traditional journalism, watching itself, was able to reveal the essential truth.



FIGURE 6.30 The Hillsborough disaster in 1989 saw 96 Liverpool FC fans tragically crushed to death during an FA Cup match.

Analysis

1 If such an event occurred again, how would it be reported? Construct a list of the photos, vision and quotes that could be collected by journalists.
2 Explain whether it would be possible for the police to cover up such a failure. Explain why/why not.
3 Predict how you think mobile technology would have changed the reporting of such an event and, ultimately, the version of truth the audience was shown.

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ACTIVITY 6.12

'The traditional form of news gathering generated a more balanced and well researched form of news; however, developments in technology changed everything.'

To what extent do you agree with this statement? Use evidence and examples in a short essay response.

The 24-hour news cycle

Digital technology and audience demand shifted the news production process dramatically. With the increase of access to television stations in the 1990s in Australia and the USA, whole channels were dedicated to presenting the news that previously took up 30 minutes at 6 pm. This meant that 23½ extra hours of news content needed to be produced each day. With the cameras rolling there was now less time to move through the normal, methodical processes of news gathering – the news had to go to air as soon as it became available. This had serious ramifications for the quality and quantity of news available to audiences.

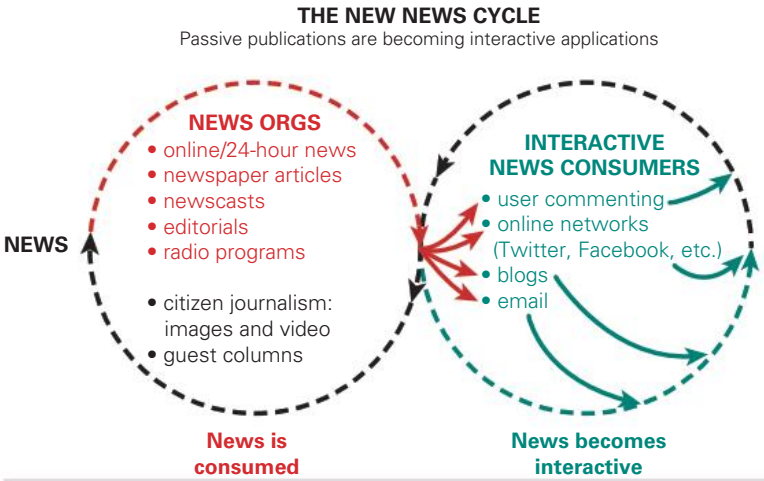


FIGURE 6.31 The 24-hour news cycle

Considering the competition between news services that had now become corporations like Fairfax and News Corp in Australia, or CNN, NBC and Fox in the USA, the competition for the scoop was fiercer than ever. While this is a logical conclusion to draw when considering television news services, it affected print media more drastically.

FOCUS QUESTION

Define the term '24-hour news cycle'.

Consider the Melbourne newspaper, *The Age*. In 2013 the long-standing newspaper stopped printing in the traditional broadsheet format due to financial concerns that the format was not as profitable as it once was. So many customers had begun to read the news online that the print format was becoming economically unsustainable to produce. It is still an expensive and complicated exercise to print a newspaper. With so many reading online in 2013, *The Age* inevitably joined the 24-hour news cycle like its television counterparts.

News is posted online when it happens and the facts are clarified afterwards. In order to fill the news cycle with vision and news updates, many have turned their eyes to the audience for content.



FIGURE 6.32 Citizen journalism is becoming more and more prominent.

Citizen journalism

The obvious availability of mobile media technologies has created a bottomless source of visual content for news producers. In breaking news, there is nothing that compares to the power of live video

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FIGURE 6.33 Today, significant events are recorded and commented upon by everyday people.

that puts viewers in the moment. **Citizen journalism** is not a new phenomenon. In 1963 Abraham Zapruder was recording the parade of US President John F Kennedy on his personal 414 Zoomatic camera. His footage of the president's assassination is one of the most famous pieces of film in modern history. While it represents one of the earliest forms of citizen journalism, it also began a trend of realism that audiences demanded from media producers. Until the emergence of mobile technology, it was not always possible to meet this demand. In 1991, a lone videographer captured the footage of police brutally beating African-American Rodney King, in a routine traffic stop in Los Angeles. The video, and subsequent trial of the police officers involved, ended in five days of rioting across one of America's most populated cities. The confronting nature of the video was arguably the first of its kind and was followed by countless videos that highlighted the reality of life in some of America's more disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

citizen journalism citizen-created video, photos or tweets that are used to provide a factual basis to news stories; usually found and distributed on the internet

Citizen journalism must be examined carefully. While mobile and digital technology has created access to realities and vision never previously available to news broadcasters, it comes with the need for audiences to be savvy and literate about what they are viewing.

Benefits of citizen journalism

There are more civilians than there are journalists. Therefore, there are more eyes and ears to record and report a story. Ordinary citizens can get to where journalists can't and, sometimes, won't go. They can find, record and provide accounts of key events as they happen – not when the professional journalists arrive. Consider the footage you have seen on news broadcasts and in social media feeds that reflect events as they happen. The impact of such vision and images is powerful.

Disadvantages of citizen journalism

Just because an ordinary citizen is present at a significant event, it does not make them a journalist. Reporters of major events to news media undergo specific training that helps them extract and present truth in a balanced and broadly researched manner. Not everyone is equipped in the same way. Why? Ordinary citizens are often burdened by a set prejudice and point of view. Professional journalists are taught to ignore this and present an objective, balanced version of events. A growing trend across major media organisations around the globe has seen the reduction of professionally trained staff. In their place has come more and more citizen journalism content.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What is citizen journalism?
2. What does a 'savvy audience' mean?

No matter the difficulties, citizen journalism and the 24-hour news cycle are here to stay. What must be carefully examined are the consequences of such actions. The long-standing principles of journalism are being challenged by a new collaborative ethos and reliance on the audience to generate the news. No longer is the journalist or news organisation the gatekeeper of truth. News must be in real time and for this to occur, we all need to participate.

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24-hour news cycle case studies

CASE STUDY 6.9

London bombing 2005

The moment a series of bomb attacks broke out across London, England, in 2005, news services like the BBC were flooded with emails containing images, eyewitness accounts and videos of the events as they unfolded across the city. Before the police were able to officially confirm what had happened, news services were using these images to tell the story. It was the story that brought citizen journalism into the mainstream. Within the first hour of the event over 50 photos had been sent to the BBC and were serving as the main focus for all updates on the 24-hour news service. By the end of the day, it had received over 10 000 images and 22 000 emails offering information.



FIGURE 6.34 Emergency services in action on the day of the bombings in London, 7 July 2005

Initially, it was not known what had caused the events on buses and trains and the London transport authorities had suggested that it was potentially a gas explosion. It took 13 minutes for the first image to be sent to the BBC and a video followed shortly after. When a citizen sent an image of a double-decker bus with its roof blown off, the BBC was able to clarify that a terrorist attack had taken place. In addition to this, citizen-created footage of the chaotic scenes in the London underground stations was used as the BBC's journalists and camera crews were unable to access the train stations affected.

Today, news services use the footage and images of people who are front and centre of any event that is newsworthy; thus, they rely heavily on the use of their audience's mobile phones to generate news.

CASE STUDY 6.10

CNN effect – how do we evaluate the 24-hour news cycle?

When the American Cable Network News (CNN) began reporting around the clock on major news events in the early 1990s it began a surprising trend in the effects of news media. With the need to cover events over a 24-hour period, CNN was able to saturate audiences with information regarding a war or conflict around the world, an important political event or a natural disaster. Audiences were literally bombarded with information and so those with the power to influence, such as politicians, to act on this information were often compelled to act faster than they normally would have in the past. The sheer pace that news now moves in compels them. 24-hour news services can cycle through stories in depth at a rate not seen before in the history of journalism. Any politician or public figure who is not up to speed with the news of the day can quickly find themselves left behind. Action from political figures is now, arguably, more responsive to public and media discussion.



FIGURE 6.35 Breaking news on a television

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The effect can be seen on audiences too. Saturation reporting of natural disasters, especially those that combine citizen journalist content with that of professional news gatherers, can have a profound impact on those who view and read it. During a natural disaster, audiences are inundated with confronting images of destruction and human suffering. For a 24-hour news channel, this imagery runs around the clock. As a result, audiences are exposed more than ever to the reality of natural disasters and are often compelled to act.

The 2004 Asian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the Sichuan earthquake of 2008 brought out the charitable heart of audiences around the world. In 2005, for example, the international community had donated almost $500 for every person affected by the Asian tsunami. A university study in the United States clarified a clear link between mass media coverage of natural disasters and the public donations.

CASE STUDY 6.11

Flight MH370

In March 2014, Malaysian Airlines flight MH370 disappeared off air traffic radars, carrying 239 passengers and crew. In the days and weeks following the disappearance of the flight, 24-hour news services searched for any and all clues to enlighten the audience on the whereabouts of the plane or even the possible causes of its disappearance. It was one of the rare cases where absolutely no information was available. The whereabouts of the flight was a total mystery.



FIGURE 6.36 This street mural in Malaysia suggests that the disappearance of MH370 was a puzzling event for everyone.

The lack of information meant several news channels were searching for content to fill the space. It was a huge story and one that sparked the curiosity and touched the fears of audiences all over the world. Theories, experts, counter theories and more experts were fronting interviews on what was, by 2014, a vast global expanse of 24-hour news services. The unsolved mystery forced networks to fill dead air while an extensive international search for the missing plane began.

The event highlighted the weakness of 24-hour news as global audiences were drawn away from the vigil of watching and waiting for news of the flight's location by spurious stories and potential explanations of journalists and major television news networks, desperate to remain at the front of any and all breaking news on the story.

What was missing from the story was an eyewitness account. There was no video that records the key event, no photo that reveals the missing piece of the puzzle. The total and utter lack of any citizen-generated content meant the major news networks could offer no meaningful information on a captivating story.

Analysis

Read case studies 6.9, 6.10 and 6.11.

1. Examine the local and international news events of a week or month around the time you read this chapter. How many have been based on footage or images captured by citizen journalists?
2. Describe the nature of the stories that this content told.
3. Do you feel these stories could or would have been told without mobile technology?
4. Explain how mobile technology has altered the news-gathering process as well as audience access to news.
5. Justify what you consider to be the positive and negative elements of the 24-hour news cycle.
6. Explain the impact digital technology has had on the increase of citizen journalism.
7. Do you believe the 24-hour news cycle can survive without citizen journalism? Explain why/why not.

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6.7 Social media and the news

Social media has had an immeasurable impact on the news media. Available anywhere and usually via smartphones, social media platforms, whether they be image, video or text based, allow fast dissemination of news events. News media audiences no longer need to be in a fixed location with a fixed media source like a newspaper or television to gather the news. Linked in to most social media news feeds, journalists and major media producers have been able to post stories as they happen. On text-based platforms like Twitter and Facebook, live updates of key events can be posted, and images and video, sometimes created by the audience themselves, form much of the news that gets created.

short-form content a style of video production that has emerged from the popularisation of digital media platforms like YouTube, Snapchat and Facebook. Often are short, bite-sized videos that cater to a more immediate mobile media environment.

News is now created, distributed and disposed of at a speed never before seen. In reshaping stories to fit into the closed environment of a social media news feed, the length of print articles and development of visual content has shortened significantly. It must be bite-sized content that can grab attention, be absorbed quickly and have an impact. To do this, visual news sources have to create **short-form content** that does not always have time for an examination of both sides of the story, a deeper investigation into the cause of a concerning issue or a retort from an opposing politician. The role of journalists has been reshaped to fit the demands of a social media audience.

Clickbait

Social media has created a highly competitive environment for news producers. In order to maximise readership and revenue from their advertisers, readers need to be drawn to their main news page from social media sites. The success of particular news stories can be evaluated by the number of 'clicks' and shares it experiences online. News value and its quality are often outweighed by the quantity and extent of its online presence. In a time when audiences are literally being showered in an 'information cascade', it is difficult to gain attention with a fast-moving audience. Social media users will commonly share articles in which they feel there is something valuable to be learned, regardless of whether it is true, false or incomplete. The more popular the story, the more likely it is to be shared and seen by even more people, creating immense and unstoppable momentum for the most popular stories.



FIGURE 6.37 Clickbait is often misleading and draws people in across the internet.

This popularity can be sold to advertisers to help make the news service more profitable. Online media use caters to impulsive users and a short headline or link can immediately change the direction of a user's experience online. News sources have resorted to using a method called 'clickbaiting' to draw readers in.

Clickbait occurs when a clickable headline link for a story is so provocative and sensational that it has to be viewed, only for the reader to discover that the text in the headline has little or no connection to the actual story. Essentially, the clickable headline does not deliver on its promise. Clickbait is used across the internet to draw unsuspecting users into viruses, malware and complex financial scams. It is used by news services because it is remarkably effective. It's not always easy to scroll past a link that reads: *'You won't believe what you read'* or *'Reading this will change your life'*. News sources rely on this impulsive behaviour to draw audiences in and, as such, sow seeds of distrust within their audience and, in some cases, make them indistinguishable from the countless other sources that do not possess the same authority of a trusted news source.

clickbait links and headlines found on the internet that are of a sensational and enticing nature. Intended to draw traffic and users to internet sites; can often be misleading.

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Social media *is* news



FIGURE 6.38 Social media presents a great challenge for journalistic standards and news.

The inclusion of social media in the normal gathering of news has led to a number of challenges for the pursuit of truth in news production. In recent years, journalists have switched from sourcing direct quotes and interviews from individuals related to key stories, to trawling the social media accounts of the individuals involved and using comments or images to reflect opinion or truth in their reports. One of the key roles any journalism student is taught is to always verify and confirm the sources of information in every story that's posted. Social media can be a minefield of false or easily misinterpreted information and so can create issues for the authenticity of the stories some journalists produce.

Ever since Gutenberg's invention of the printing press 500 years ago, the dominant form of information was the printed page. All authority and knowledge was primarily delivered in a fixed format of text on paper that encouraged readers to believe in the truth of what was printed on it. The saying 'don't believe everything you read' was born much earlier than the digital age; however, prior to the rush of the 24-hour news cycle, readers and viewers had a full day to digest, analyse news and settle on a common set of facts. These facts were often handed down from authoritative sources like Ashmead Bartlett or Walter Cronkite, who you read about earlier. These facts are now read on the printed page in rapidly decreasing numbers as they move onto handheld screens. The digitisation of these facts has meant the printed page has lost some of its authority and the relevance and reliability of digital text must now be closely and carefully examined.

FOCUS QUESTION

Define the term 'internet hoax'.

Anyone who has spent time around the internet knows a good hoax when they see one. In 2009, an Australian TV host had to apologise to the actor Jeff Goldblum after he reported live on television that Goldblum had died. Basing the story on reports found on the internet (which had started as a hoax) it had been picked up by a number of news services around the globe and the host was reporting the story as fact. As it was, Goldblum was alive and well at the time. While it isn't the first time such falsehoods have been reported in the news media, it does highlight the influence social media could potentially have over our understanding of the truth.

The rise of echo chambers

The growth of social media as a primary news source is no accident. As you have already read, the advance in smartphone technology has meant that a whole life of information, images, memories, skills and communication can be stored in a single device. In order to draw more users to their services, many social media platforms implemented **algorithms**, to provide more content that would appeal to the user. Just as search engines were designed to predict what you might be looking for, social media platforms analyse what you have liked, viewed and read in order to send you more information that is similar to this.

algorithms a set of digital instructions that internet applications use to provide responses to users; search engines use search instructions and previous-use data to provide new results the user is most likely to want

echo chambers an enclosed media space where only agreeable voices and views are heard and seen

Based on the belief that this will create a more personalised experience for the user, these algorithms have created what is known as '**echo chambers**'. Within one user's news feed, there is the power to like what appeals to them and validates their view of the world. They also have the power to hide and exclude those ideas that they dislike.

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What this means is that social media users, many of whom use it as their primary news-gathering source, are less likely to encounter information that challenges them or broadens their world view. All they are doing is liking and sharing information with people who agree with them and reinforce their beliefs. On the surface, this may not seem so bad; however, it means a great deal for the way audiences interact with the news media.

ACTIVITY 6.13

Examine this image. It is from a London street in 1984 where an office worker and a 'punk' teen argue about politics.

1. With reference to the image, explain how digital technology has influenced the way people argue about ideas and politics today.
2. Describe how you feel digital technology has influenced the nature of the arguments taking place.
3. Would an 'echo chamber' for each participant mean the argument would be more or less likely to meet a resolution? What reasons do you give for this? Explain.



FIGURE 6.39 A more traditional argument taking place

Power over what people read, see and hear is slowly leaving the hands of news media corporations and drifting into the hands of an even smaller group of social media corporations. In creating immense online communities that are effectively housed in closed echo chambers of ideas, social media corporations have made it much harder for news media producers to reach more people and grow their audience base. Many use clickbait and short-form content to reach as many as possible and so the authenticity of their stories, and the search for truth, becomes secondary to the search for an audience.

Echo chambers also challenge the very role of news media itself. As most news services represent some sort of political viewpoint, either at the request of its readership or ownership, many find their audience confined to the social media echo chambers of audiences who agree with them. However, as it has been mentioned previously in this chapter, the role of a journalist is to seek out a balanced, fact-checked report that tells both sides of a story. To maintain an audience within these echo chambers, literally awash with information, journalists must appeal to the views of the audience and the quest for balance has the potential to be lost. It's hard to determine who is to blame but, ultimately, the social media audience will inevitably open a news feed that only contains news articles that reinforce their world view and hide the view that challenges them. For society at large, this means the potential for social divisions can be greater as news and social media corporations compete for a share of an information-hungry audience.

In this mad rush to post the news and maximise sharing and online presence, real news can be lost in between the 'fake' news.

FOCUS QUESTION

Define the term 'echo chamber'.

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ACTIVITY 6.14

Examine your social media news feed and compare it with someone's in the class you don't normally sit or talk with.

1. Identify whether there are any news items that come up that you totally disagree with on your feed.
2. What reasons can you propose for this?
3. Outline how this might influence your thinking.
4. Now look at your classmate's news feed and explain the difference between the ideas you align with and those of your classmate. Explain why you think they could be different or similar.



FIGURE 6.40 Today it has become increasingly harder to distinguish between fact and fiction.

Digital media and the 'post-truth era'

In late 2016, Stanford University published a study that found 82% of the American teens it examined could not tell the difference between real and fake news online. The study showed a number of news articles and images to the high school students and many were unable to distinguish if the news was written by a biased source or if the image had been altered in any way. Almost two-thirds neglected to mistrust a post about financial planning written by a bank executive or a photo that had no source attributed to it.

The use of teens in this research on teenage digital literacy is an easy target, as your own understanding of the world is still developing. However, it is arguably better than your less technologically savvy parents! What this research does point to, however, is the ease with which false information can easily be accepted as fact and the emergence of a new era in the media landscape, commonly discussed as the '**post-truth era**'.

post-truth era an era in news media and political discussion where the sheer volume of information available clouds fact from fiction. In most cases, the emotive element of ideas is seen as more important than its factual basis.

ACTIVITY 6.15

The 24-hour news cycle and the growth of digital news sources has a role to play in the post-truth era. Consider this possible scenario:

- A journalist from an established news source publishes a detailed, well-researched and balanced article about a looming environmental disaster. The article brings new information to the public and gains a lot of attention as it has consequences for a variety of interest groups.

Stage one: public discussion

The topic gains traction in public discussion, and when this happens, it is common for news services to air public discussions between two opposing viewpoints. In some instances, where 99 experts shared the same view of the journalist's findings, and one did not, the television or radio broadcast will air the views of both

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as equally balanced. Two individuals will be set on a split screen on a news affairs TV show, each given a chance to air their views, and as is usually the case, talk over the top of each other. Before either side has been able to fully articulate their view, the compère will tell them both 'that's all we have time for' and cut to a commercial break.

While the original article may have stated that, as mentioned previously, 99% of experts support the article's findings, the televised discussion of the issue can obscure what would, in any other circumstance, calculate to a true fact.



FIGURE 6.41 The type of image that might accompany an article about environmental disasters.

Stage two: social media

Social media also plays a significant role in this. With the sheer avalanche of news and views on any particular topic, it can be very difficult to determine fact from rumour.

Consider the news story in our scenario again – it was published in a single newspaper, by a single journalist in a single morning. Over the course of the day that story can be shared online millions of times. It can be copied by other news services, online platforms, bloggers and video sites. Elements of the story can be manipulated, altered and distorted and reconstructed to fit a set of views that match the individual algorithms of social media users. Comments and vision from the news broadcast discussed earlier can be cut up and re-edited to represent any potential viewpoint on the environmental issue. The original story has multiplied into countless, varied versions of itself.



FIGURE 6.42 The message of an original news story is often lost in translation across social media.

Social media users like, share and comment on the version of the story that they feel is important, even if it has become misleading or false. Within those shares are comments from politicians, media identities and experts that may have been filtered through their own social media comments, posts and videos. There are now several layers of traditional and social media platforms that sit between the audience and the original story. It's now very unlikely that the original story will be the dominant version of this news event.

In the past, the news was chosen and curated by a trained, professional media producer who would attempt to appeal to the publisher's readership and create an informed society as a whole. Social media has overtaken this role and news is now curated by like-minded friends, contacts and families within an individual's social media environment. The question to consider in all of this is, what will happen to the truth? Will audiences be able to determine fact from fiction in a future digital world?

Stage three: echo chambers

Teenagers are one group of concern that are greatly affected by these trends. By 2016, teens were spending more time on closed chat apps, which allow closed private conversations, than ever before. Their interest in traditional media forms is at an all-time low. The ability for teens to read, view and determine the truth is thus restricted to the walled-off environment of these chat applications which are, arguably, even more restrictive than bigger social media platforms. When considering the findings of Stanford University, this could present

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one possible explanation for their inability to determine the nature of true and false news stories and create interesting scenarios for any who might encounter a version of the news created earlier in this section.

Stage four: post truth

The role of journalism of telling the truth is to create an informed public, able to make rational decisions in a functioning democracy. If the audience already find themselves in closed-off chat apps or predominantly use algorithm-driven social media sites for news, they will soon find themselves in 'gangs' of like-minded people, sharing the same information, true or false, that simply reinforces each other's views, driving each one to a deeper opinion on the issue or idea raised by our intrepid journalist, that by this stage, has travelled a long distance from established facts.

Pick one specific story from the day or week in which you are reading this chapter and closely examine a range of traditional and online news services.

Each time you click on or view an article linked to that topic, you need to make note of the following things:

1. Is this article the original source, creator of this piece of news?
2. If not, where has it been taken from?
3. Can you find any discrepancies between the original source and the republished versions?
4. Evaluate the credibility of the source you are examining. Do you feel it is a trustworthy source? You may need to carefully research what others have said about it.
5. If your teacher allows it, scan your social media feeds. If the story appears in your feed, note down any new sources of the piece of news and repeat steps 1–4.
6. What discrepancies have you been able to find? Does the story appear differently in the sources you actively sought out? What impact does the reliability of the source have on the version you read?



FIGURE 6.43 The role of the professional journalist is as relevant as ever.

News media and change: summing it all up

As you can see, the introduction of digital technology has had a lasting and irreversible impact on traditional news media. It must be noted that there are many positives to these trends. Traditional news media sources were often considered, as with any other media in the pre-digital era, to be the sole possession of a wealthy few. As such, those wealthy few had significant influence over what people read, saw and heard and so could, to some extent, control what society discussed. Digital media has severely undermined the influence these groups once enjoyed and opened society up for more open debate with more information than ever before.

However romanticised it may seem, the role of a journalist is still an important one. As **gatekeepers** of information, journalists act as the conscience of a society and could once upon a time determine what could be publicly discussed and what was considered inappropriate for common debate. The cascade of digital information, true, false and otherwise, has undermined the significance of this role and the role of news media must be carefully re-evaluated.

gatekeepers the theory that mass media could decide what was and was not a worthy piece of news or media; they decided what did and did not get through 'the gate'

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ACTIVITY 6.16

2016 was a significant year for social media and traditional news services.

Two events in particular, the US presidential election and the UK referendum, known as 'Brexit', drew great attention for the role news, fake news and social media played in determining their course and the respective outcomes.

For each event, complete the following tasks:

1. Briefly outline the event. Explain what arguments and platform that each event was based around.
2. Examine and research the role of traditional news media. How did they impact each event?
3. Examine the role of social media. How did the creation of echo chambers influence the outcome and public understanding of each event?
4. What role do you see social media playing in each event? Did it positively or negatively impact the role traditional media would or could have played in a non-digital environment? Explain.

ACTIVITY 6.17

Consider the following topics and construct an evidence-based response to this statement:

- 'The truth can no longer be trusted – do you agree or disagree?'

In your response, you should refer to:

- traditional media practice
- 24-hour news cycle
- social media
- clickbait
- echo chambers
- the post-truth era.

6.8 Skills: short-form content

Short-form content is a by-product of the digital age. As you have read throughout this book, traditional media has often dictated the means by which we, as the audience, consume media. Within these traditional institutions, be they film, radio, news or cinema, there were established practices for constructing meaning in media products. Each format had, and still has, its own commonly understood practices to construct media products. The emergence of digital technology has created a new media style, known as short-form content. In simple terms, it is a shorter, more immediate version of what came before. In the digital era, media creators vie for the attention of distracted, fast-moving media consumers and so have somewhat reconstructed the means by which meaning is created.

The emergence of video in social media platforms created much of the short-form content you see today. Usually a short clip, two to three minutes in length, high on visual impact and low on detail, the short-form video, for example, grabs your attention and tells a simple story. Consider the video feeds of celebrities that you follow online. Rarely, if ever, do they provide a complete and detailed version of reality. But they got your attention.

Short-form content has come to dominate the way in which the people who want a modern audience's attention – be they advertisers, news broadcasters, celebrities, political parties, sporting clubs or social interest groups, or ordinary users – actually get it. As discussed earlier in this chapter, smartphones have become the dominant form of gathering,

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FIGURE 6.44 Short-form video is a part of our everyday experience of social media.

accessing and viewing media, and so the attention spans of users are often divided across the countless platforms of old and new media these devices provide. Unlike the cinema, where the producer has your undivided attention (you've paid for the popcorn after all!), a smartphone has distractions within it, as well as those that you encounter wherever you choose to use it. It could even be in the class where you are reading this chapter!

As you have seen throughout this chapter, the rise of audience control over media messages has grown significantly with the growth of digital technology. It was inevitable then that the audience are able to create their own media products and thus rise to popularity. Through the use of video sharing platforms like YouTube, Snapchat or Instagram, these individuals have been able to cultivate massive audiences through specific, targeted short-form videos that demand the attention of an inattentive modern audience.

FOCUS QUESTION

What is short-form content?

Consider your own practice as you browse online or scroll through your own news feed. How often do you really spend on each new piece of information? How often do you make it through a whole video that was shared with you? Short-form content caters to this new practice of digital and mobile media use and, like established Hollywood traditions, it is beginning to develop its own set of common production techniques, codes and conventions. What must be examined closely is the influence digital technology has had on the construction and production of short-form content.

Short-form content case studies

CASE STUDY 6.12

YouTube stars: Lonelygirl15

The list of people, channels and groups that have reached fame are too numerous to mention here. Many will have come and gone by the time you read this and YouTube may have been overtaken by a newer and more popular platform. However, it is undeniable that short-form content creators have been able to leverage the immediate power of the platform to create a presence in the public mind that circumvents all of the traditional media industries we discussed earlier in this chapter.

One of the first 'YouTube sensations' was a series of videos made in 2006 under the name 'Lonelygirl15'. As a 15-year-old girl named Bree told her story of being a little nerdy and shy, the world became captivated by the style of storytelling. It usually involved a head shot of Bree speaking directly to the camera that was (in those early days, known as a webcam) mounted at the top of a laptop or desktop computer. The supposed reality of this style of address broke away from years of established storytelling that had been cultivated by traditional media. Editing was scarce too. This allowed for longer shots that revealed flaws, mistakes and a reality that was raw and unfiltered. The emotions, thoughts and ideas of Lonelygirl15 were spoken direct to camera, usually in her own home and told relatable stories to a mostly teenage audience. At the height of its popularity, Lonelygirl15 had 1.5 million views a week, which at the time was one of the most watched channels on YouTube.

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The vulnerability and honesty of the videos only came undone when viewers began to notice that the lighting and sound were of a quality that a normal webcam could not produce. Lonelygirl15 was in fact a hoax, played by a professional actor and produced by a Los Angeles-based production company. The show did continue long after it was exposed; however, its importance lies in the online reaction to the revelation and the codes and conventions it helped establish. The popularity of Lonelygirl15 was, in its early phase, put down to what the audience thought was raw authenticity. Audiences wanted more and from then on, it had to be real. Authenticity and honesty became a crucial element of short-form content. Importantly, the visual style and production techniques were being closely examined by an audience that was becoming more literate in their use.



FIGURE 6.45 A still from the fictional YouTube serial Lonelygirl15

What Lonelygirl15 did prove was that money could be made using these platforms. Long after the hoax was exposed, the videos became an online serial that amassed over 500 episodes. It was also the first YouTube series to use product placement. The money provided from one particular product placement in the series was enough to produce an entire season.

AMAZING FACT



FIGURE 6.46 Vlogger Casey Neistat

Casey Neistat is another notable YouTube personality. His short videos about social and commercial issues gained him quick notoriety, such as his first viral video criticising the Apple iPod's battery life in 2003. Neistat is probably most famous for his daily vlogs, usually featuring himself, and in 2012 he directed a famous Nike commercial, 'Make it Count'. In 2016, Neistat won GQ's 'New Media Star' Man of the Year Award, and by mid 2017 his YouTube channel had over 7 million followers.

CASE STUDY 6.13

YouTube stars: Caspar, ThatcherJoe, Alfie Deyes and Zoella

Fast forward 10 years to 2016. Caspar Lee and Joe Sugg (ThatcherJoe) are in their early 20s, live in England and have tens of millions of YouTube subscribers between them. Their videos, generally between two and 10 minutes, involve little more than a series of pranks, conversations with other YouTubers and comedy sketches. Both upload content weekly if not daily and are in a constant conversation with their audience. Much of the content comes from audience interactions. The vloggers ask their audience to comment and make requests and create the content to meet their demands. The more recent videos created by the pair have extremely high production values and have benefited from the advertising revenue their popularity has bought. However, their

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style remains much the same, as even though the nature and form of these videos changes from author to author, it is essentially an expression of their own lives created with tools that are easily accessible and often all found on a mobile device. They speak directly to the camera, use confessional close-ups and prefer fast-paced editing to demand attention.

Alfie Deyes is another such vlogger turned celebrity, turned best-selling author. Deyes' vlogs follow his daily activities from waking up, cooking breakfast and crying while cooking onions. The daily minutiae of Deyes' life has transferred into millions of viewers and subscribers. In 2015 when a London bookstore held a signing for Deyes' first hardcover book, a crowd of 4000 descended on the store – more than the same store had received for a previous signing with footballer David Beckham, who was once the highest-paid athlete on the planet. The winner of that year's Man Booker prize for literature had sold only 12 000 copies when the prize was awarded. By the middle of 2016, Deyes' book had sold over 300 000 copies.



FIGURE 6.47 YouTube stars Caspar Lee and Joe Sugg

Zoella, the older sister of Joe Sugg, is another such YouTube celebrity who has cultivated a huge following behind her make-up advice, fashion and trend videos that are a reflection of her own identity. By 2016 she had amassed over 290 million views of her channel. When Zoella published her first young adult novel *Girl Online* in 2014 it sold over 70 000 copies in its first week, making it the fastest-selling novel in UK publishing history. Clearly, Zoella's popularity was closely linked with a well-crafted and cultivated identity through short-form content.

Codes and conventions of short-form content

pull focus a camera technique that involves using the focus function to make one subject still and clear, while making the background, or other subjects, blurred

coverage refers to the amount of film or video shot from multiple angles of the same scene. It can also refer to footage used to provide context to audio and assists in engaging an audience with multiple visuals.

L cut an editing technique where the audio from a previous scene overlaps the vision from the following scene

jump cut an editing technique that abruptly cuts from one scene to another

A close examination of each of these vloggers and other forms of short-form video reveals not only a series of carefully constructed identities and stories, but also specific production techniques. Consider the use of technical codes and conventions you learned about in the previous chapter and apply this to your own planning for the production task at the end of this chapter.

Camera

With the advent of mobile technology and handheld high definition cameras (and the dreaded selfie stick), you are able to take close-up confessionals anywhere you go. A morning jog can be recorded, edited and uploaded! **Pull focus** is often used to draw attention towards your presenter even further. The screen must be filled with visual content and a lot of **coverage** needs to be shot to provide content for editing.

Editing

Sharper editing has also replaced the long drawn-out sequences of webcams. You should look to employ **L cuts** and **jump cuts** to maintain audience engagement. An L cut allows for the audio to be heard before the vision is seen, which draws viewers into a news scene smoothly and allows for vision to support moments where there is dialogue. However, a lot of short-form content requires abrupt changes to new locations or topics and jump cuts pace dialogue and vision closely together to make sharp, jarring changes from one scene to another. The pace of the editing means most of your vision only stays on screen for a matter of seconds.

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Sound

The quality of audio that appears in clips has followed the improvement and availability of the technology to create it. Low-volume audio tracks often act to support the pace of the story. Sound effects can also appear to assist a jump cut or a comedic or important moment within the clip.

Mise en scene

This depends heavily on the intention and audience of your video. However, the common focus of the content is usually on the presenter of the clip and thus distractions are removed from the background; whatever does appear should be relevant to the presenter and the idea of the clip.

Text

The use of text must be bold, often animated and use a variety of striking primary colours to draw attention to essential text. Subtitle text is often included to support the audience consumption of a clip. Short-form clips are often watched in environments where headphones provide the only source of audio or they appear briefly in a social media news feed where sound is an option the user has to activate. As such, subtitle text allows the audience to consume the clip and follow the action without having to use audio.



FOCUS QUESTION

How does short-form content modify the traditional codes and conventions of screen narratives?

Story conventions of short-form content

Don't forget what you already know

Your audience still want a story, they just want it faster and perhaps only a small element of it. Traditional stories of a beginning, middle and end still resonate with most audiences; however, the immediacy created by digital and mobile technologies has changed what your audience wants from your video, and when.

The first 10% counts

In a digital environment where the audience attention is drawn over millions of other competing messages, a short-form video must get a few things right in the first 10% of the clip. Rather than spend time developing character, the clip must start fast, get straight to the point and create a need for the audience to watch it. Quality short-form content does not wait to introduce ideas, rather it tells the audience what to think and feel straight away. You must think like a journalist, rather than a director. Good journalism establishes the 'where, what, why, when and how' in the first two newspaper paragraphs. Every second counts in short-form video, so you must move quickly!

Less detail, more action

Drawn-out explanations of plot and character must be simplified. It may be a simple matter of naming and explaining a character or idea on screen. The audience need to see drama immediately, rather than meticulous development. Little time is wasted on establishing locations or scenes. Viewers prefer to make natural assumptions about these elements that will help the story move quickly; your audience probably watches as much short-form content as you do, so it pays to reward their intelligence.

Don't bother with a big ending

On several online platforms, your audience is already seeing ads for what to watch next and being drawn away from your clip, so try not to build to a great crescendo at the end, but deliver the crescendo or climactic moment

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two-thirds of the way through. Much of the final third can be for comedic moments or outtakes. If your audience is still with you, this is the time to advertise your next clip and encourage sharing.

Other considerations: know your audience

Who is your clip for? You must identify that early and talk directly to *that* audience. That means using the same language and cultural ideas adopted by this group. If you're attempting to reach an older audience, you should research and consider ideas and cultural events that would resonate with them. This could be music, film, fashion or even politics. If it is specific to your age group, current trends and language will be essential to make it unique. Try not to generalise your audience's world, and show that you understand the diversity that makes your relationship with them closer. Do your research!

Other considerations: make it shareable

Short form is not just consumed; it is communicated too. You need your audience to know how to share your content. Depending on the platform of the content, you need to closely examine how it will be shared and how that method will increase your audience. Video streaming platforms often employ animated gifs and visual text and links to encourage audiences to click to the next video or link to other social media platforms. This is sometimes directed by the presenter or appears frequently throughout the clip or at the end.

Plan to the platform

You need to be aware of the time considerations of each platform. Some video sharing sites allow for clips of any length; however, you will not want to exceed five minutes. Your audience are watching you while on the move, so don't force them to sit still! If the clip is made for shorter video sharing platforms, you must adjust your planning and production accordingly. How are you going to construct or break up a story into 10- and 60-second formats?

ACTIVITY 6.18

Production exercise

In negotiation with your teacher, you need to decide on a topic for a short-form video you will create. It could be anything to do with current events around your school, in the media, or among you and your peers. Whatever you choose to make your video about, it is essential that you plan it collaboratively within a group and with your teacher.

Your task is to create a series of short-form videos on one specific topic. You need to create the same story across three different platforms.

- — 10 seconds – for social media, video sharing platforms (this could be broken into several 10-second clips that create a longer narrative)
- — 60 seconds – to be shared and viewed on larger social media platforms
- — 5 minutes – for more extended viewing on video sharing platforms

- Identify your audience and detail how you plan to appeal directly to them. Document how you intend to use language, camera, mise en scene and sound to do this.
- Identify and explain how you intend the clip to be shared and what techniques you will incorporate into the clip that will enhance this possibility.
- Execute your shoot and edit your clips. You will need to create text animations or internal hyperlinks too.
- Submit your clips on the platform your teacher chooses and review the effectiveness of each topic.

1 Identify what media codes and conventions you feel were the most effective.
2 Assess which format you believe discussed and delivered your ideas in the most direct fashion.
3 Explain how the success or otherwise of the video depended on the platform it was viewed on.

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CHAPTER REVIEW

Summing it all up

This chapter has provided a very broad overview of the impact of digital media technology on the media production and consumption process. To prepare for your assessment, you should carefully consider the following key points:

- Old media production was controlled and delivered by a few to an audience of many.
- The introduction of digital technology has irreversibly altered the established structure of media production.
- The hybridisation of technologies has meant audiences now communicate, consume and collaborate on media forms, globally in an instant.
- Hybridised technologies, like smartphones, have made dramatic shifts to the consumption, production and distribution of the media forms of film, music and television.
- News media and the pursuit of the truth have been challenged due to established practices becoming overrun by the demand for instantaneous digital news in the 24-hour news cycle.
- Terms like clickbait, echo chambers and post truth all indicate the enormous influence social media has on the audience's understanding of truth and reality.
- Short-form content is a new media form that has emerged from the broad availability of high-quality digital media tools.
- Short-form content uses its own set of codes and conventions to demand audience attention in a highly competitive and fast-moving digital media environment.

Revision questions

1 Define the impact of digital media technologies on established media institutions.
2 Recount the transition from the pre- to post-broadcast era.
3 Explain the nature and influence of new media platforms that have emerged in the post-broadcast era.
4 Identify and detail the function and use of a hybridised media product.
5 Define how news media practices have been challenged and altered by digital media technologies. Provide examples in your response.
6 List and discuss three codes and conventions used to engage audiences in short-form content.

Practice assessment questions

1 Discuss the impact of new media technologies on the role of individuals in consuming, creating and sharing media products. In your response, you must use examples from the pre- and post-broadcast eras.
2 Using examples and your own knowledge, define the impact of digital media technologies on the role of news media in modern society.
3 Discuss the impact short-form content may have on the future of traditional media practices and institutions.

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PART 3 UNIT 3
Media narratives and pre-production

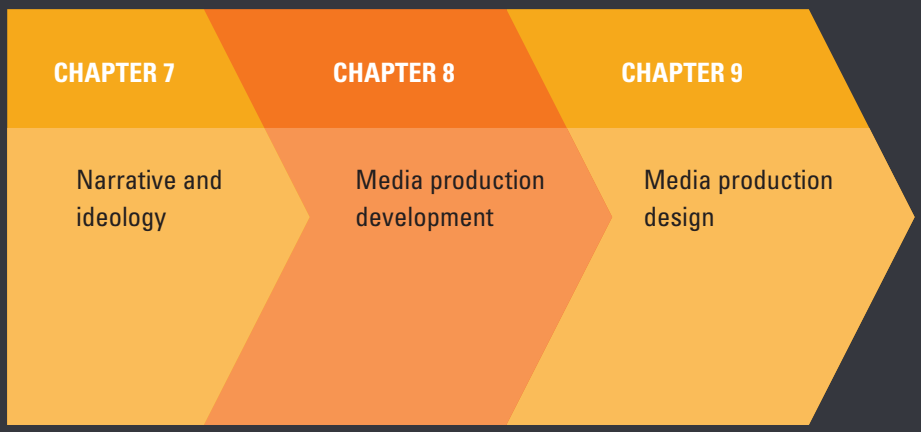
I steal from every single movie ever made. I love it – if my work has anything it's that I'm taking this from this and that from that and mixing them together … I steal from everything. Great artists steal; they don't do homages.

— Quentin Tarantino

OVERVIEW

Welcome to your final year of Media Studies! You are about to embark on one of the most challenging and rewarding stages in your education. Here is an opportunity to become the master of your own destiny as you have the chance to create your own media messages and ideas and turn that one great idea into reality. This stage of your study will take you into the physical and ideological construction of media messages and ask you to invest deeply in the work of those who have been before you, in order to research, experiment with and ultimately plan your own production. You will be challenged in this unit to consider how the construction of your own ideas has been shaped by the world around you, and you may find the inspiration to not only reflect these ideologies but challenge them as well.

WHAT'S AHEAD



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CHAPTER 7 AREA OF STUDY 1

NARRATIVE AND IDEOLOGY

The Golden Rule: He who has the gold makes the rules.

— Keith David, *They Live* (1988)

OVERVIEW

In George Orwell's book *1984*, he spoke of a world that had come under the control of an omnipresent 'Big Brother' – an all-encompassing government that controlled every aspect of the lives of ordinary citizens. Orwell was reflecting on the efforts by governments and institutions to use the media to guide and control the thoughts and actions of a populace. Even today, in a world of diverse and almost anarchic media communication, governments try to manage the media for ideological purposes. However, as you will learn within this chapter, ideology and its driving influence can come from a variety of sources and the media can be used as a tool to dismantle as well as construct these ideas of what is right and true. For the purposes of this area of study, the media products selected for study will comprise one of the following: at least two feature length film products of one hour or more in length or the equivalent length in television streamed radio or audio products; two photographic series of at least six images each; two print productions of at least 15 pages each. This chapter focuses on film and TV narrative.

FIGURE 7.1 (above): A modern classic screen narrative: *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001, dir. Chris Columbus)

OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse how narratives are constructed and distributed, and how they engage, are consumed and are read by the intended audience and present-day audiences.

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

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the characteristics and construction of media narratives in selected media forms
- how audiences from different periods of time engage with, consume and read media narratives
- the relationship between and the function of media codes and conventions to convey meaning in selected media forms
- the relationship between media narratives and the ideological and institutional contexts in which they are produced, distributed, consumed and read
- the way ideologies shape media narratives
- the relationship between media narratives and audiences
- appropriate media language.

KEY SKILLS

- explain the characteristics and construction of media narratives in selected media forms
- discuss how media narratives are constructed, consumed and read by audiences from different periods of time
- analyse the relationship between and the function of media codes and conventions to convey meaning in selected media forms
- analyse the relationship between media narratives and the ideological and institutional contexts of production, distribution, consumption and reception
- discuss how ideologies shape media narratives
- discuss the relationship between media narratives and audiences
- discuss audience engagement with, consumption and reading of media narratives
- use appropriate media language.

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KEY TERMS

- media forms
- narrative construction
- codes and conventions
- mise en scene
- cause and effect
- character
- neutral ideologies
- implicit ideologies
- explicit ideologies

WHAT'S AHEAD

SECTION 7.1	SECTION 7.2	SECTION 7.3	SECTION 7.4	SECTION 7.5	SECTION 7.6	SECTION 7.7	SECTION 7.8
Background	Media narratives and forms	Audience and media consumption	Media codes	Media conventions	Narrative and ideology	*Moonlight*	*Struggle Street*

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7.1 Background

Whether it was Ogg telling Urg the location of a new water source or an anxious golden deity telling a village of teddy-bears about war adventures around stars, we have always liked to tell stories. These tales may be for the sole purpose of sharing unique information that we feel is necessary to pass on. They may also be told to engage and captivate others, using humour, terror, sadness or joy, with the aim to deliver it so our audience remains engaged and through doing so, increase our social standing.



FIGURE 7.2 Even C-3PO from *Star Wars* is a compelling storyteller – especially when he meets the ewok creatures who mistake him for a god in *Return of the Jedi* (1983, dir. Richard Marquand).

How and where we see, hear and engage with those stories as audience members depends heavily on the form in which we engage with them. Be it in the darkness of a cinema surrounded by strangers, huddled over a smartphone screen on public transport or flipping through a newspaper in a café on the way to school, the way we engage with and enjoy media narratives comes from an understanding of the construction of media codes and conventions. Media narratives present versions of the world through the process of combining a cause and effect relationship between events and characters.

Media narratives may be extended and developed in a fixed period of time like a 90-minute feature film or a one-hour documentary. However, they may also be developing or serial narratives, such as television news, or an animated series such as *The Simpsons*, who it appears, never age. They may also be mini-narratives, like a television or magazine advertisement that only provides a minor element of a media story which requires the audience to fill in the gaps. Media stories can be limited to 280 characters on social media platforms that still have the power to captivate huge audiences.

context refers to the time, place, location, social and cultural situation in which media products and societies exist

Understanding how these stories are constructed and understood by audiences also requires us to be aware of the **context** of their production. For example, think of your favourite film. Now consider how and where it was made. Were there certain social or political ideas that dominated the society that made it? What economic or technological pressures influenced its production? How do we know when we see it?

In this chapter you will explore the rich relationship between different media forms, the types of narratives we find in them and the relationship these stories and their audiences have with the societies and ideologies that created them.

7.2 Media narratives and forms

Media narratives

fables stories that contain a moral purpose or message for children

Our reasons for engaging with media narratives are our own. From early on when we read fairy tales and **fables** in children's books, stories have helped us understand the world around us. They help us solve problems, understand where we have come from, where we are and what might be waiting for us around the corner. The reality is, we need stories. Depending on the week you have had while reading this, your mood could dictate the type of story you want to engage with. You may get to Friday night and want to engage with a complex documentary about a murder trial that is intricate, detailed and demands your full attention. Or, you may

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be exhausted from study and prefer to curl up with a light romantic comedy where you already know the two main characters will be together at the end, but you watch it anyway. Stories enrich our lives and are an essential element of the human experience. We need them.

Media narratives can come in many shapes and sizes; however, their structures share universal ideas. A story could investigate the personal history of an individual, it could be the news of the day, a fairy tale, a triumph against adversity, an unlikely romance or a non-fiction tale so tall it is stranger than fiction itself. What helps us engage with stories are the common ways these stories and characters who drive them are arranged, ordered and held together. As you have read already in this book, a good story generally follows a problem and a disruption from the normal world. We love to see how others face these challenges as they help us understand the human experience of the world.

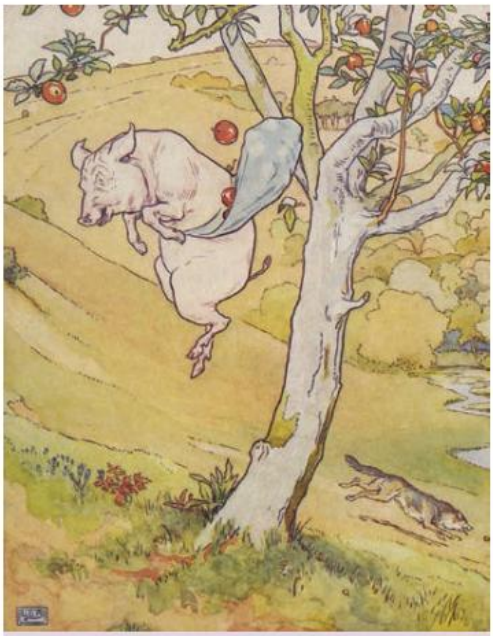


FIGURE 7.3 'The Three Little Pigs' is a well-known fable.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 Why do we need stories?
2 How do we use stories?

ACTIVITY 7.1

Fairy tales

Consider the children's story of 'The Three Little Pigs'. The purpose of 'The Three Little Pigs' fairy tale is to teach the lessons of patience and hard work. The pig who takes a little longer to build a house out of bricks is able to outsmart the wolf and survive. So by avoiding distractions and laziness, the third pig was able to realise success. Such a story at this stage of your academic career may sound annoyingly familiar. However, the structure of the story is engaging and could easily be translated into a loud, fast-paced action film with dazzling special effects to engage an audience. The danger the first two pigs face relates to our own fears and insecurities as we all experience moments where we look for an easy way around a problem. When the wolf attacks and destroys the pigs' houses, the audience is engaged by the fear and anxiety each event generates. The gnawing reality of our conscience and common sense draws us to the satisfied conclusion that the route to safety taken by the third pig is the one that will provide what we as the audience want most – lasting happiness!

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Examine the story structure of each the following fairy tales and fables:

- 'Cinderella'
- 'Snow White'
- 'Hansel and Gretel'
- 'The Adventures of Pinocchio'.

1 Outline the message it attempts to convey.
2 Summarise the problems the characters face.
3 Describe how they overcame the problems.
4 Explain how the audience is engaged by the events of the story.

ACTIVITY 7.2

What stories do you like?

Construct a detailed list of all the stories you have engaged with in the last week. It can include anything from television, film and books to memes and social media videos.

1 Explain why each one was engaging. For example, do they have interesting characters? Themes? Genres? Moods?
2 From your answers to the previous question, write a short summary about your own story habits. What kind of stories do you gravitate towards?
3 Consider when you actually engage with them. For example, do you only watch films or online narratives at night after school and homework? Explain what this tells you about what you actually use stories for.

Media forms

To understand the world of media narratives, you should first understand the physical shape it takes. This is known as a media form. Each media form allows for a variety of experiences and this in many ways often dictates the way the story itself is made and read by an audience. Media forms can be film, television, animation, a comic book, a photograph or a video game. They can be delivered in a multitude of shapes in digital and online products like streaming audio and video, podcasts and websites.

ACTIVITY 7.3

Work as a class to construct a list of as many media forms as possible.

tangible media product where the audience determines the length of time it engages with it

intangible media product that has the engagement time fixed by the author

Media forms can be **tangible** and **intangible.** Tangible media forms are those that the audience determines how much time they engage with them. A series of photographs does not have a set time period to detail a narrative. That is decided by the person looking at it. Intangible media forms are found in products where the creator has defined the duration of audience engagement. For example, a television program, film or DVD all exist for a defined period in order for the audience to engage with them and understand the narrative.

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FIGURE 7.4 A typical scene from a silent film

Factors that influence the construction of stories

Media forms are reliant on the technology used to create them. This has obviously altered over time. What was possible in the stories told in the silent film era was limited by the lack of technology to synchronise sound with vision. As such, silent films relied on the actors to use gestures, movement and expressions to communicate the story. Consider the advances that have taken place now that the audience is a direct contributor to online vlogs and narratives!

ACTIVITY 7.4

1. Investigate the filmmaking technology available during the silent film era of the 1920s.
2. Now compare this with your favourite film from the past year. Propose how the limitations of technology would impact the story.
3. Explain whether it would be possible to tell the same story. Describe the changes you would need to make in the production process.

It should be no surprise, then, that the form the media narrative takes will affect how it is constructed. Different story ideas can be communicated in different media forms. Visual storytelling, arguably the most dominant form, has the capacity to use sound and imagery together to help audiences engage with the narrative. However, digital and online forms allow for the audience to interact and, in some cases, like video gaming, participate with and guide the story itself. Games like *Grand Theft Auto* or *Minecraft* not only allow for a '**sandbox**' experience for the audience, where they can roam around at will and create their own story, but they can be played online where multiple users can participate in the same outcomes.

sandbox a style of video games that allows for 360-degree freedom of movement and interaction with the virtual environment

What is consistent between all media forms are the stages of production.

Development

Before a story is told, the ideas and themes are developed. The creator must consider the target audience and which forms will best communicate and engage these ideas. For example, if the story is targeted at children, like the fairy tales you read about earlier, media forms are explored as the creator considers how new ideas can potentially impact how engaging the story will be for the audience. It is important to note here that the social, political and economic context can drastically influence the development of an idea. As you will see later in this chapter, the ideas that dominate society can seriously influence the way authors create stories. What is possible to say in an animated short film in Australia may not be possible to say in other nations that have strict, government-controlled censorship of media products. Conversely, people within those countries develop new and inventive ways to challenge these ideas.

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FIGURE 7.5 King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette depicted as a two-headed strange beast in a French political cartoon from the 1780s. The cartoon reflects the growing critical view of the monarchy at the time.

In the 1780s, the citizens of France were unable to criticise a weak and indecisive monarchy due to strict censorship. In order to share frustration, artists and critics would draw crude cartoons of animals that belittled members of the monarchy. The queen, criticised for her greed, was often drawn as an ostrich, the king's ministers were depicted as birds and ducks. The society and context that the authors of those political cartoons operated in dictated the codes and conventions of the cartoons. In this sense, it is easy to understand how media products can not only reflect dominant ideologies of society, but develop ways to challenge them too.

Pre-production



FIGURE 7.6 Director Alfred Hitchcock stands beside the screenplays for his many films.

Once a story idea is developed, the production is planned for the audience. Here the author of the story takes on the task of developing, planning and organising the production. Be it fictional or non-fictional, careful and deliberate planning ensures that the successful narrative can be developed. At this stage, the author must carefully consider the relationship between the intended genre and the expectations that it will elicit from the audience. Media codes and conventions play a significant role in not only engaging the audience in media products, but to develop genre expectations.



FIGURE 7.7 *The Night Of*'s Riz Ahmed, co-creator Steven Zaillian and John Turturro

As you will see later in this chapter through the example of the 2016 crime series *The Night Of*, genre can play a significant role in how an audience positions itself for a story. As audiences engage with crime dramas, there is an expectation from the genre that a mystery must be teased out and revealed in the conclusion. Writers Richard Price and Steven Zaillian planned and crafted a story that not only drew an audience in with the cynical characters typical to crime genre conventions but explored methods of engagement that generated multiple storylines. Along with all of the technical planning and considerations that go into a televised mini-series, careful thought is given to the arc of the narrative in order to guide the use of codes and conventions.

Production

Each media form has a range of specialised roles that are crucial to effective and engaging storytelling. Feature film and television production often have the look and feel of several unrelated jigsaw pieces coming together as sound, vision and special effects teams craft ideas, yet their value comes from a singular vision of an author, looking to utilise a wide range of tools. However, in the case of live streams or broadcast news, the spontaneity of the event can create captivating narratives. One of Australia's oldest and most revered television hosts, Graham Kennedy,

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hosted a comedy and variety program called *The Graham Kennedy Show* (1972–75). Its short run was hugely engaging for Australian audiences as it was shot live and, by the nature of the hosts and his guests, was extremely unpredictable. The show was known for outrageous moments which culminated in the show being cancelled by the Channel Nine network when Kennedy made a bird sound that was a poorly disguised swear word. The long-running American comedy sketch show *Saturday Night Live* has engaged audiences for over 25 years due to its live production recording. This allows for engaging moments that reflect the same spontaneous danger that Kennedy and others had made so famous on live television.

That same spontaneity can be found in other media forms like podcasting. Some of the most famous podcasts from around the world, such as *Serial* or *S-Town*, rely on carefully crafted and edited stories that deliver content across a variety of platforms. However, the personal nature of podcasting means that live recordings of conversational content allow for more spontaneous storytelling that happens during production. Hosts of the hugely popular *Stuff You Should Know* podcast, Josh Clark and Charles Wayne 'Chuck' Bryant, read stories to each other about simple ideas like 'how swearing works' and other ideas from science, culture and human life. By breaking down complex ideas in a conversational format, the two use a script of 'how something works' to create a spontaneous reaction to a set narrative while in production.

The 2015 German film *Victoria* certainly took the idea of narrative within production to the extreme. The full run time of the film is just over two hours and it is shot in one single take. During the film, a young Spanish waitress gets caught up with a group of friendly East Berliners who, over the course of the evening, become embroiled in an armed robbery and a high-speed police chase. Director Sebastian Schipper certainly laid much of the foundation for the narrative in the pre-production stage with camera movement, rehearsals and meticulous planning. However, as it was a single two-hour shoot, the performance of the actors lent itself to greater improvisation and thus a more engaging lead character. The audience was able to engage with her situation in real time.

Post-production

Advances in modern storytelling technologies have meant that traditional news sources use multiple platforms to present news and thus the line between when a story ends and develops has become blurred. Traditionally, a news story would be sourced by a journalist over the course of the day and either broadcast on the evening news or detailed in print the following morning. Since the demand for information has increased in the post-broadcast era, news is available 24 hours a day and the story can change direction, even once it is published. As is often the case with major news stories breaking, they will first appear in an online forum such as a newspaper's website or even on **micro-blogging** platforms like Twitter. The competition to 'be the first' with news is as fierce as ever among news outlets and so some stories develop a life of their own after the first moment of publication.

micro-blogging synonymous with the platform Twitter, this refers to communicating within a strict restriction on the length of text available to the user

hyperlinks embedded links within online text or images that allow the user to branch away from the main narrative



FIGURE 7.8 Traditionally, news stories would break in either the morning or afternoon newspapers, or on the nightly TV news broadcast.

Once the details of a story such as the disappearance of the Malaysian Airlines flight MH370 are first published, days and weeks of rolling news coverage provide a constant stream of information that adds, in some way, to the original publication. Tweets, comments and **hyperlinks** to additional stories and information mean that the line between production and post-production of a news story is long since lost.

The same advances in technology have meant that the roles essential to storytelling have changed and increased with post-production too.

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Peter Jackson's three *Lord of the Rings* films all benefited from a full year of post-production to ensure each one told an authentic story. Given the critical nature of the audience reaction to Jackson's interpretation of a long-popular book trilogy, a huge crew of animators and visual effects artists completed work on over 2000 individual shots that included special effects. This work was important and a fundamental element of telling a story that moves beyond reality into fantasy and, arguably, would not have been possible without it.

Distribution

As you have seen with news in post-production, the distribution of stories can impact the nature of the narrative too. The rolling nature of news in post-production benefits in part due to the nature of its distribution. In the past, when the news was confined to a fixed 30-minute broadcast at 6 pm, or a physical paper at 5 am, what was and was not the story rested on those two moments. Today, news is distributed across television, print, online and through social media and online platforms like Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube and Instagram. The same news item can be shared through a variety of platforms in a single instance. This in turn allows for a larger audience, scattered across those platforms, to become engaged in the story. This too creates an interesting examination of how different audiences use different media forms to engage with the same story.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Which media forms might need the most time spent in development and pre-production?
2. What about production?
3. What about post-production?

ACTIVITY 7.5

Using a local online news service like *The Age* or the *Herald Sun* in Melbourne, choose a current news story that is being broadcast on multiple platforms to examine.

In the box below, record your experience of the same story across those platforms. You may need to work in small groups to access all of them!

Once complete, evaluate how the distribution of a news story impacts the audience's engagement with the narrative.

Story title:	What details are provided?	How much of the story are you able to gather?	What impact does the format have on your understanding?	Do written or visual elements dominate the format?	Does it provide for hyperlinks? If yes, list them
The newspaper					
The website					
Facebook					
Twitter					

The role of institutions in distribution

Institutional factors can influence the distribution of media narratives. As most media narratives are planned to be delivered to a specified audience in a planned location, government and economic institutions can influence an audience's interaction with a narrative.

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As you will no doubt know as a user and student of media, Australia has a Classification Board that oversees the classification of video games, film and literature. Institutions like these can restrict access to certain elements of narratives for ideological reasons. As you would have already read and will so again in Unit 4, Chapter 11 'Agency and control in the media', the role of classification is a significant one in the distribution of narratives to audiences.

In the case of video games, fixed and playable elements of video game narratives like *Left For Dead 2* or *Grand Theft Auto* were refused classification for the nature of their violent and sexual content. These products, however, are at the 'end user' stage of distribution and the efforts of classification are to prevent a product deemed inappropriate to be distributed to the wrong audience.

However, institutions like YouTube have far more relaxed rules that oversee the content audiences can access and, as such, have a greater ability to distribute a wider range of narratives. While YouTube in particular has some age restrictions that can be easily worked around, the nature of that content can be subject to immediate feedback through likes and comments.

ACTIVITY 7.6

The way a media product is distributed contributes to the way it is consumed and feedback is shared with the creator.

For the following media forms, evaluate how distribution affects the way audiences engage with the form.

Form	Distribution method	Location of access	Feedback time to creator
Free-to-air television			
Feature film			
Video games			
YouTube serials			
Instagram 'stories'			

Narrative in media forms

The form the narrative takes can dictate the nature of the narrative itself. There are obvious differences between visual and audio narratives, and advantages that moving image stories have over others. Digital technology has, of course, altered the nature of storytelling for the audience as they are now able to participate, provide feedback and actually drive the narrative themselves.

Moving image narratives

A narrative within a classic Hollywood feature film is contained and intangible. You would be well aware of the nature of story in cinema that follows a problem towards a resolution. Non-fictional films like documentary still provide stories across a variety of styles that ask an audience to make sense of a story. However, that story line, for the vast majority of films, is contained to a short period of time, usually between one and three hours. As such, the director has a fixed period of time to tell a story. This lends itself in part to the nature of film reception. It is usually intended that a film is seen in a darkened cinema, or inside the home and as such the attention of the audience needs to be carefully managed across that time. In doing this, the director creates challenges and problems for the character to tackle and move towards the



FIGURE 7.9 Suzie (Kara Hayward) and Sam (Jared Gilman) in *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012, dir. Wes Anderson)

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FIGURE 7.10 High-school student Morty and his grandfather Rick (both voiced by Justin Roiland) from the cartoon *Rick and Morty* (2013–)

conclusion. In Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012), the main characters Sam and Suzie desperately try to escape the adults and vengeful scout troop to live and love in peace. Along this journey, Anderson engages the audience by continuously placing Sam and Suzie in dangerous and entertaining situations. This, of course, is told with the full arsenal of sound, vision and stylised acting.

Animation, regardless of its length and form – be it the 22-minute serial *Rick and Morty* (2013–) or the long-form animations like *Monsters, Inc.* (2001, dir. Pete Docter & David Silverman) – can develop stories and narratives that extend well beyond the scope of live-action film. Limited only by imagination, animated stories can bring multiple elements to life. The long-running animated series *The Simpsons* is one such entity. Reaching its 30-year anniversary on screens in 2017, *The Simpsons* have never aged. Bart is still in grade four, Lisa is still overachieving in the 2nd grade and Homer still never learns, 30 years on. The longevity of *The Simpsons* owes much to its great diversity of characters, the interrelationships that are possible between them and the sheer magnitude of storylines that creators have been able to craft from them.

ACTIVITY 7.7

Examine a full character list online of *The Simpsons*.

1. Choose five from outside the main characters of the family; for example, Moe, Barney or Millhouse.
2. Research and list the number of episodes where these characters played a central role in the narrative.
3. Explain how your findings reflect the extended narrative possibilities that animation creates.



FIGURE 7.11 The cast of the Netflix show *Stranger Things*

Television is experiencing a small renaissance in the era of binge-watching and streaming television. For many years, it was considered a commercial younger sibling to feature film; however, the sheer volume of online streaming services that are not only providing access to television programs, but are actively engaged in making more and more, is increasing. The nature of storylines in television is diverse. While each is a series, like Netflix's *Stranger Things* (2016–), which has an overarching story arc of a group of young boys trying to find a lost friend, each episode must act as a smaller story within that. By the end of each episode in *Stranger Things*, a new development towards the resolution of the story arc is revealed; however, a smaller battle within the war is either won or lost for the main characters. This allows for the development of primary and secondary storylines between characters and events that can exist within an episode that have no consequence on the main story arc.

FOCUS QUESTION

Recalling your earlier studies into visual narratives, what is the purpose of a story arc?

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ACTIVITY 7.8

Pick your favourite television series and unpack the nature of the story arc.

1. Explain the overarching story arc of the series. What is the goal of the main character? For example, in 2016's *Luke Cage*, the main character's goal is to rid Harlem of crime and gangsters.
2. Research an episode list of a single series of that television show. List the storylines that occur within each one. Discuss how these storylines illustrate the potential for narrative within television.

Still image narratives

It is true that a picture can say a thousand words. Due to the static nature of a photograph, especially a portrait, we are not restricted by a fleeting glimpse across a cinema screen, nor are we held back by the time limit set by the author. As a tangible product, photography lets the audience determine the time it engages with it and thus is able to spend as much time as possible to develop an understanding of a potential narrative, or create one of their own.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. How can a photograph suggest narrative possibilities?
2. Something to consider – is photography a more 'sophisticated' narrative form because the audience has to use their own imagination to interpret the meaning of the product?

ACTIVITY 7.9

Examine the following portraits.



FIGURE 7.12 Does each portrait suggest a narrative to you?

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1 Describe what story or idea immediately comes to mind when you see each image.
2 Explain whether this idea changes the longer you look at the image.
3 Use the image to construct a character profile that has a name, age, occupation and interests.
4 Reflect upon your profiles. Explain how the extended time you had to look and engage with this story helped you create a new one yourself.



FIGURE 7.13 The conventions of comic books and graphic novels offer a range of storytelling possibilities.

Comic books and graphic novels also allow for a wide range of narrative possibilities. The drawings of action do not need to always rely on text and can present opportunities for audience interpretation. Powerful and engaging images can also be presented in a more literal sense and the author can choose when and where to allow the audience this option of literal or ambiguous storytelling. Within a physical comic strip or graphic novel, the author can utilise a range of text and imagery to guide and entertain readers; however, they can also employ much finer techniques like upper or lower case text, the arrangement of frames and the distance or 'gutter' between them to intensify action and generate interest.

Online and video game narratives

Ever since a couple of Italian brothers were inspired to rescue a princess and defy death in *Mario Brothers*, video games have allowed audiences to determine storylines and actively participate in creating them and guiding the characters towards the outcome. The key advantage of video games, even though they follow similar themes of challenge and achievement to other media forms, is that the player is encouraged to determine the outcome. Imagine being able to dispose of an annoying character in a romantic comedy? They have the capacity, too, to allow players to work collaboratively on projects to arrive at their own outcomes. In *World of Warcraft* and first person shooter games like the *Battlefield* series, teams of players interact from a variety of locations all over the globe to work towards determining the outcome of storylines. Games like *Fallout*, *BioShock* and *Mass Effect* all allow the player to choose the path of their character's development. This obviously presents an enormous amount of narrative potential.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 Do video games use traditional screen narrative storytelling conventions?
2 Something to consider – what ways can video games offer 'rich reward' for gamers as a narrative form?

When a player chooses the path of character development, they are choosing a narrative; the depth of the narrative is often equal to the effort a player puts into developing a character. In the *Grand Theft Auto* games, the character is developed by completing tasks and challenges. However, in the more recent edition of the franchise, *GTA 5*, the audience have the opportunity to develop multiple characters in challenges that intersect. Your character can reach their goal by legal means of playing the stock market, or by stealing cars and robbing banks. The outcome of the story arc is in the hands of the audience. An interesting element of this is, of course, the impact the play can have on the audience; for example, if an important character in the game dies in a plot-related death that can in turn have an impact on the difficulty the audience faces in resolving the narrative. In 2009's *Call of Duty 2: Modern Warfare*, the player had the option to opt in or out of the story, where they could choose to participate in one particularly gruesome scene and level. In this instance, the player was able to actually regulate how far they wanted the nature of the content to go. In this sense, there is a rich reward on offer for video game audiences that few other media forms can offer.

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ACTIVITY 7.10

Investigate the following games and determine the level of player interaction in the narrative:

- *Sonic the Hedgehog*
- *Batman: Arkham City*
- *Watchdogs*
- *World of Warcraft*
- *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*
- *Red Dead Redemption 2.*

For each game, explain:

1 What is the role of the player?
2 What is the storyline within the game?
3 What level of control does the player have to determine the outcome?
4 Does the game allow the player to determine their own storyline? Explain how this takes place.



FIGURE 7.14 Video game narratives have come a long way in a relatively short time. Pictured is *Grand Theft Auto 5.*

Social media narratives

Social media, an almost ubiquitous element on every major platform today, allows users to create their own visual narratives through sound and vision or still imagery. Text is also an important element of these stories, as is a developing language of symbols known as **emojis**. Through this medium, the audience is the creator as they have complete control over the narrative and can select and omit elements of their own representation on screen. In larger platforms like YouTube, where individuals have created identities and financial empires out of their cultivated stories, content is often generated by audience feedback. One example is the 'Facebook live' function, which allows users to live-feed video and respond to comments and text in real time. This can be used to guide the narrative itself and in this sense, the audience has determined significant control over the direction, arc and outcome (if any) of an online narrative.

emojis small digital images or icon signs used to express an idea or emotion in electronic communication



FIGURE 7.15 Emoji icons

Any search of the 'top live' stories on Instagram can take a user into an almost random assortment of live stories being broadcast all over the globe. In addition, users can interact almost immediately.

ACTIVITY 7.11

Summing it all up

Look back over what you have read and complete the follow questions. Use evidence and examples in each response.

1 Define the term 'media form'.
2 Define the difference between tangible and intangible media products. In your response, explain who this affects and the way audiences read them.
3 Explain how the production process can be influenced by the media form. Use examples in your response.
4 Define how the nature of the narrative can be dictated by the media form.

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7.3 Audience and media consumption

Time and technology have always been secondary to audience engagement. While new tools provide new opportunities to engage audiences across multiple platforms, the aim of the director, writer, programmer or vlogger is to capture the audience's attention and emotions. They will use whatever tools are available and appropriate. As you have seen across your entire study of media and audience, regardless of time period, technology is the determining factor as to how the media narrative is constructed and distributed. The director makes a film for their audience to enjoy. Engagement occurs when audiences are interested in the form, content, genre and construction of the narrative (and are immersed in it).

FOCUS QUESTION

Recall from your earlier media studies – what does 'reception context' mean?

In this section, you will examine how audiences from different periods of time engage with, consume and read media narratives. Or, in simpler terms, how and why was a television show like *The Brady Bunch* ever considered remotely funny? Well, you kind of had to be there to get it …

You will need to revisit the ideas of *audience reception* and *consumption* (see Chapters 4–6) to understand how the societal context, available technology and audience interests determine the construction of media products.

Consider the two films *American Sniper* (2014, dir. Clint Eastwood) and *The Thin Red Line* (1998, dir. Terrence Malick). Both are films about war, and not just one battle, but the nature of war itself. However, they are made for different audiences. *The Thin Red Line* relied heavily on imagery to tell multiple stories about a range of characters, none of which are central to the outcome of the narrative. The audience for the film, one of only a handful of films made by the director Terrence Malick at the time, would be one that is drawn to the use of imagery, abstract storylines and sound codes to engage the audience in ideas and themes as much as a story arc. *American Sniper*, on the other hand, tells the 'true story' of an American sniper in the Iraq War. Director Clint Eastwood used codes and conventions different to those of Malick to approach a similar idea for a different audience. Rather than use abstract notions on long drawn-out scenes typical to Malick's film, Eastwood uses fast-paced action, visual effects and character-driven storylines to engage the audience. As you will see in this section, the work of media creators has changed to meet the needs of an increasingly technologically sophisticated audience.


DAILY NEWS FINAL

FAKE RADIO 'WAR' STIRS TERROR THROUGH U.S.

"War" Victim

"I Didn't Know"

FIGURE 7.16 A newspaper headline shows the controversy of Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds* broadcast in 1938.

Audiences consume media based on the technology at hand. In the beginning of the 20th century, the methods were limited to film, print and radio, and the interaction audiences had with each was usually fixed to a specific location. Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds* (1938) radio play was credited with creating a public panic when audiences mistook the broadcast fiction for a real alien invasion of Earth. As ludicrous as this sounds, it is plausible when considering that whole families would sit around the radio in the family home to enjoy these media products. In the silent film era, audiences watched their favourite narratives while an orchestra in the cinema played the soundtrack live.

Over time, the introduction of television, VCRs, DVDs, smartphones, high-speed internet, even screens on planes, has diversified the ways an audience can consume media narratives and as technologies developed over time, media narratives altered due to the different viewing habits of the audience. As you read in Chapter 6, 'Media and change', short-form content like social media and YouTube videos has restructured the use of codes and conventions to tell the story. Gone are the careful

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story set-ups and character development – much of the action is found in the first half of the video to maintain the attention of an audience with a keyboard and multiple distractions.

Back when films could only be consumed in the cinema, content creators knew the conditions in which audiences would receive their films. There would be a large picture screen, immersive sound apart from the rustling of a chip packet, and the audience's undivided attention. As time brought new technology (from the drive-in to the mobile phone), content creators could no longer be completely certain that audiences would be 100% focused – this resulted in the need to engage audiences differently, with contemporary music, and mind-blowing special effects.

Consider the 1979 version of the film *Alien*. Director Ridley Scott had, by modern standards, a very rudimentary set of tools to gain audience engagement. The only methods of promotion to draw audiences to the cinema were posters, print reviews, TV and cinema ads. Word-of-mouth, contemporary social interest in science fiction and horror genres, and well-known big-name actors helped Scott draw the audience into their seats. Once there, his break from normal genre conventions meant audiences were instantly engaged in the media product. The lead character Ripley is the only one to survive the alien as the known actors, Tom Skerritt and William Hurt, were the first to die at the hands of the bloodthirsty antagonist. As audiences began interpreting the product, Scott employed a variety of codes and conventions, based on the audience's understanding of genre, immersive sound and long-shot duration of space and spaceships. The restricted narrative, borrowed from the horror genre, drew an engaged response.

Compare this then with the 2017 release of the film *Alien Covenant*, the fifth film in the *Alien* franchise. The film offers the same techniques on a louder, faster and bigger scale thanks to increased technological capabilities, and was followed almost immediately with the film available to stream online and purchase via a cinema-standard Blu-ray and DVD release. Audiences were bombarded with advertising through television, social media, print and online forms. Ridley Scott, who returned for the 2017 film, now has a much broader range of tools to attract and engage audiences to his narrative; however, there are a range of challenges he must consider to ensure that engagement is sustained.

Audiences today and beyond, who are used to films with montages and fast editing, may find it very difficult to engage with a narrative from 1979, and so may not have seen or properly understood the original film or understand



FIGURE 7.17 In the original *Alien* film, Ridley Scott employed special effects such as a model for the spaceship (left) and a special costume for the actor playing the alien creature (right).

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FIGURE 7.18 In 2017's *Alien Covenant*, Ridley Scott basically remade the original *Alien* film for a modern audience used to fast-paced screen narratives.

the common themes and ideas that exist between them. The conditions in which audiences receive narratives can also impact their ability to read them. Should an aspect of the narrative be disrupted (missed dialogue, unnoticed facial expressions), particularly one integral to the plot, audiences tend to become confused, and therefore become disengaged. Technologies such as smartphones (which could be used to stream the 2017 film) may have increased the locations in which to consume narratives, but it doesn't mean they will be comprehensively read.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 Define the term 'montage'.
2 What narrative purpose could a montage serve?

ACTIVITY 7.12

Comparing media products

Remakes and reboots are a common tactic for large media institutions to attract audiences. They draw on the nostalgia of older audiences and use a tried and tested story with new ones, using new technologies and codes and conventions that were sometimes not available during the production of the original. Interestingly, the location of the audience of both the original and the remake can in many ways alter the production of the narrative.

Investigate the trailers or short two-minute clips from the following examples and write a report for your teacher that highlights the:

1 changes in the use of codes and conventions
2 influence of the time-period geographic location for the audience reception of each media product
3 influence of technological advances over time
4 influence of technology in the reception and consumption context of the remake.
   - *The Office* (UK, 2001–03) vs *The Office* (USA, 2005–13)
   - *Infernal Affairs* (China, 2002, dir. Andrew Lau & Alan Mak) vs *The Departed* (USA, 2006, dir. Martin Scorsese)
   - *Ben-Hur* (1959, dir. William Wyler) vs *Ben-Hur* (2016, dir. Timur Bekmambetov)

7.4 Media codes

As it is essential to your understanding of any media narrative, you must of course be aware of the relationship between and the function of media codes and conventions to convey meaning in as many media forms as you can. As each one responds to the needs of an audience in a given time and place, the use of codes, often in concert with others, helps develop common story conventions that are understood by audiences.

Camera

Cameras control the light and the formation of the image in film, video and still photography. Their positioning, movement and operation influence the style and meaning of the images and hence our understanding of the story.

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The camera angle of the shot helps define the mood of the overall scene. The camera can be subjective or objective and allows us to use our own understanding, background and experience to create meaning from the image.

The use of camera can be examined through the table below:

Shot selection	Angles	Movement	Focus	Qualities
Extreme long shot	Low angle	Pan	Depth of field	35-mm film
Long shot	High angle	Track	Foreground	90-mm film
Mid shot	Eye level	Zoom	Mid ground	3D
Medium close-up		Tilt	Background	Animation
Close-up		Dolly	Deep focus	Video
Extreme close-up		Handheld		
Wide shot				

TABLE 7.1 The uses of camera as a technical code



FIGURE 7.19 A close-up can be used for important storytelling purposes.

Selective use of camera can easily communicate the mood and action of characters, the purpose of objects and the direction of the story. Shot selection is of course the most fundamental element of camera, which allows the audience to focus on specific elements of a scene. A close-up can bring the audience into a shot, which can help the audience examine specific details; conversely, as you learned in Chapter 4, a long or wide angle shot allows for more information like locations, other characters and action to be clear and visible throughout the scene.

However, the use of angles, movement and focus can help add further meaning to images. For example, a low-angle shot is one of the most commonly used angles to shoot superheroes. When the camera is pointing up, below the actor, it places the audience in a position of weakness and in turn creates a sense of power and respect in the subject.



FIGURE 7.20 Camera angles can influence the way the audience views a character – in this image of Marilyn Monroe, her stance and the low-angled framing make her seem powerful.

Camera movement is, of course, specific to visual media forms like animation and film, and it allows for a great deal of information to be shared with the audience in a short space of time. In many of Wes Anderson's films, he employs **tracking shots** that follow alongside the actors and settings to explain the roles of each player in his narratives. In the film *The Darjeeling Limited* (2007), Anderson uses a break in the action of the narrative to pan across the windows of the train carriage each of the characters is sitting in. As the camera tracks across the side of the carriage, the audience are able to see each character in a private moment where each is performing an action that develops their role in the story. Tracking shots are also used heavily in action films and allow the audience to be a part of the thrilling car chase or escape across city rooftops.

tracking shot where the camera follows along with moving action, usually when the camera is mounted on tracks that allow for smooth movement

Handheld camera vision has become more popular with the advent of camera-stablising technologies and is often used to give the product a more 'in the moment' feel. Handheld camera was popularised by the long-running police drama *NYPD Blue* (1993–2005). The bulk of this series was shot with fluidly moving handheld cameras, which played a significant role in positioning the audience's point of view from one

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FIGURE 7.21 In this example from *X-Men: First Class* (2011), the use of the technical code of camera focus helps develop our understanding of the character. As Charles Xavier (James McAvoy) is a telepath who can read others' minds, it makes sense to use focus on the actor's face to convey Xavier's extreme level of concentration.

of a distant observer to that of a character actually *in* the narrative itself. Handheld has long been a technique used in documentary film (mostly out of necessity) as the images are required to be live and in the moment. Fictional products like *District 9* (2009, dir. Neill Blomkamp) used a combination of handheld camera and fixed shooting in the opening sequence of the film to position the audience to think they were watching a documentary about aliens who had landed in South Africa. However, you should always exercise caution with handheld camera shots, as the independent thriller *The Blair Witch Project* (1999, dir. Daniel Myrick & Eduardo Sánchez) was shot exclusively on handheld cameras and many audience members complained of motion sickness!

Focus, when used selectively, can help to drive a narrative and draw the audience's attention to specific details. In this image from *X-Men: First Class* (2011, dir. Matthew Vaughn) the camera operator has used a medium depth of field to draw attention to the character Charles Xavier's ability to use his mind. While the background of the image certainly appears that it may add something to the audience's understanding of the product, at this point in time the camera operator and director have chosen to pull the audience's attention to the character.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Why is careful shot selection important in telling a screen story?
2. How can camerawork help develop the narrative?
3. Why does handheld camerawork make a scene seem more real?
4. How can the technical code of focus be used to enhance a story?

ACTIVITY 7.13

Examine this still from the film *Léon: The Professional* (1992, dir. Luc Besson).

1. List all of the camera techniques you see have been used here.
2. Using the Name/Describe/Why/Effect technique explained in Chapter 4 (case study 4.1, page 129), explain how the camera has been used in this image to communicate meaning.



FIGURE 7.22 A young Natalie Portman and Jean Reno in *Léon: The Professional*

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Acting

Acting refers to the physical action of the actor playing a role within a media product. Acting is a code and a tool used by media authors to create meaning through a performance of physical movement and dialogue. Simple facial expressions convey meaning as do posture, movement and positioning in relationship to other actors. Vocal tones and inflections can add weight to dialogue and emphasise ideas and relationships between characters within a product. You may not realise it, but humans are experts at reading body language. Our movements, posture and even our glances tell others a lot about what we are thinking and feeling. A quick glance (or a glare) from your teacher can often be all you need to realise that you need to concentrate on your work! So a careful study of the subtlety of actors' movements can often be enough explain a narrative. In the 2009 Australian film *Samson and Delilah* (dir. Warwick Thornton) the two lead actors, teens who lived in a remote community outside Alice Springs, do not utter a word for the first hour of the film! As such, the audience is forced to track their thoughts through the movement of their eyes and body language.

ACTIVITY 7.14

Examine this still from the film *Samson and Delilah* (2009) and explain how acting has been used in this image to communicate meaning about the character.



FIGURE 7.23 Rowan McNamara as Samson in *Samson and Delilah* (2009, dir. Warwick Thornton)

Effective acting as a production tool allows the audience to share emotions with a character played for that specific purpose. Over time, the style and role of acting within media products has changed dramatically, as in silent film it was a vital function to express meaning due to the limitations caused by the available technology. Genre also determines the acting style required to communicate ideas.

FOCUS QUESTION

What are some ways that acting, as a media code, can engage an audience in a narrative?

The choice of actor is another influential factor in the creation of meaning. The audience's understanding of the actor, the roles they have played in the past and the public persona they cultivate can influence the way the audience reads it. In the 1960s Paul Newman was a leading actor within the Hollywood system. He was known for playing an anti-hero outsider, a rogue who played by his own rules. In *Cool Hand Luke* (1967, dir. Stuart Rosenberg), audiences were easily able to read Newman's character, Luke, who fought his own personal ideological battle with authority. However, today a modern audience may experience more difficulty in understanding his motivation.

Setting

The physical location where a story takes place can drive narrative forward, by referring to the time, place and construction of the location where the action of a media product appears. It helps create a mood and can inform the audience about a character's state of mind or the challenge that might lie before them.

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ACTIVITY 7.15

1 The choice of actor often dictates the kind of roles that audiences expect. Examine the following actors and determine the kinds of roles they have normally played:
   - Heath Ledger
   - Arnold Schwarzenegger
   - Meryl Streep
   - Robert De Niro
   - Samuel L Jackson
   - Zooey Deschanel.

2 Sometimes actors are chosen to play roles that *challenge* these expectations. From the list you have made from the actors above, can you find any roles they have played that challenged audiences' expectations by departing from their normal role?



FIGURE 7.24 Guy Pearce in the opening scene of *The Hurt Locker*

The setting as a media code acts to set the 'reality' in which the audience finds a character. It could be a particular year, country or environment. It can also be used to show the audience where the character has come to at a particular point within a narrative. A film may choose to place the character in an abandoned warehouse, surrounded by martial arts experts, signalling the final showdown in the narrative.

In Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker* (2008), the opening scenes of the film establish the role of the setting in the narrative. Set during the second Iraq War, in the midst of a chaotic city of broken roads, traffic, harsh high-key sunlight and constant noise, the main characters, bomb disposal experts, must remain calm to realise their goal. In some media products, the setting itself can be considered a player within the story arc as the main character must look to overcome it first.

ACTIVITY 7.16

Examine this still from the film *Blade Runner* (1982, dir. Ridley Scott). From the details you can see in the foreground and background of this image, explain how the setting in *Blade Runner* might engage the audience in the narrative.



FIGURE 7.25 Harrison Ford in a scene from *Blade Runner*

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Mise en scene

This refers to the arrangement of props, objects, actors, lighting and make-up that appear within a scene of a media product. Or put simply, it refers to everything within the frame:

- acting – how the actor is positioned
- lighting – how and where the lighting is used
- props/objects – the information each object tells us about the scene
- colours – how moods, feelings and ideas are communicated
- setting – where the shot is set can help explain the scene
- costumes – what the actors are wearing; this includes *how* they actually wear it.

Careful and well-planned arrangement of mise-en-scene elements can determine the nature of a media product for an audience and enhance engagement. How a media product uses the space a camera records can tell rich stories. For example, the use of a shadow over a character's face riddled with scars can engage an audience in a story behind the immediate dialogue or action.

ACTIVITY 7.17

Using this image from the film *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (1976, dir. Clint Eastwood) complete the following tasks.

1 List all of the mise-en-scene elements you can see:

- acting:
- lighting:
- props/objects:
- colours:
- setting:
- costumes:

2 Explain how mise en scene has been used to communicate meaning in this still from *The Outlaw Josey Wales*.

Hint, it may help to think about what the elements communicate beyond just the immediate and obvious action of the gun being fired.



FIGURE 7.26 Clint Eastwood in *The Outlaw Josey Wales*

Extension task

Complete the same activity for the earlier image from *Blade Runner*.

STUDY TIP

Visual composition

Consider the visual composition of the shot from the samurai film *Yojimbo* (1960) directed by Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa. Kurosawa was known for the symmetrical way he balanced the visual elements of his frames, and for his use of depth of field. In the foreground we have the samurai hero of the film, and actor Toshiro Mifune is playing the scene looking tense. Though Mifune dominates the frame in this composition, through the use of mise en scene Kurosawa shifts the power in the narrative

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from the hero to the villain. For example, Mifune's hand is positioned on the table, attempting to conceal an incriminating letter from the bad guys he has been deceiving. The antagonist has taken Mifune's sword, and holds a gun on the hero. Notice how Mifune's eyes do not look directly at the other actors – this is so the audience can study the expressions on Mifune's face as the scene plays out, and perhaps it subtly indicates that the character has something to hide. Therefore, by placing his actors in a certain stylised way, employing props and quality acting, Kurosawa is able to unfold his screen narrative in a visually dynamic way that would engage his audience. Understanding how these elements of mise en scene work will assist you in planning your own film production.

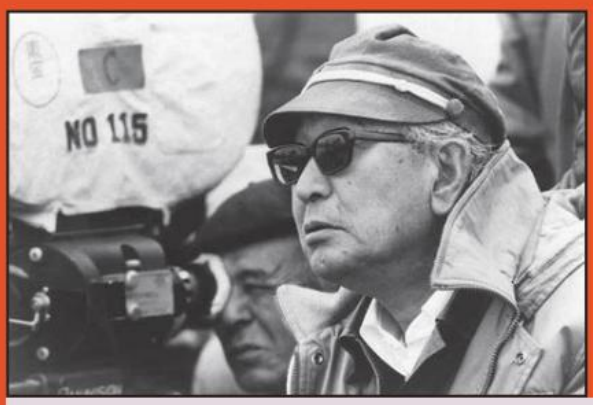




FIGURE 7.27 Japanese director Akira Kurosawa, and a still from his samurai film *Yojimbo* (1960) featuring actor Toshiro Mifune (screen left)

STUDY TIP

A note on the difference between the terms 'mise en scene', 'camera framing' and 'visual composition'

Something to keep in mind is that when discussing any single shot in a screen narrative is that, firstly, the shot has been framed by the director/camera person using camerawork. Then, for all the components that go into that frame we use the term mise en scene (actors/props/lighting etc). Finally, to refer to the combination of framing and mise en scene – what we see on screen – we use the term 'visual composition' – meaning how the shot has been composed by the director.

Editing

Editing defines the shots and the process by which they are arranged on screen. Used successfully, editing can be cut to create a variety of moods and ideas. It can create excitement or slow down a scene for greater understanding of an idea. When looking at editing, consider the following questions.

- How is the vision cut?
- How is it placed?
- What type of pace does this create?
- Is the vision and sound cut in a rhythm?
- Have particular editing techniques been used?

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Editing can be used to show transitions between time and place. It can help in the structuring of time, allowing the audience to move seamlessly from one place in time to another. Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) features excellent examples of editing to transition between time and place. As a slightly evolved primate discovers the brutal power of a bone he found on the ground, he throws it into the air. As the camera follows the bone, Kubrick cuts to a spaceship (the same shape and position as the bone), thus transporting the audience thousands of years in a single moment. The scene was used to not only transport the audience forward in time, but to inform the audience of the great progress human technology has made.

FOCUS QUESTION

How can editing engage an audience in a narrative?

Hollywood film editor Walter Murch has said of editing: 'Where is the audience looking? What are they thinking? As much as possible, you try to *be* the audience … think of the audience's focus of attention as a dot moving around the screen … the editor's job is to carry that dot around in an interesting way'.

ACTIVITY 7.18

Editing is a common feature of action narratives. Quick cuts between events heighten the excitement and engagement of audiences within the action. For this activity, you will need to research some action films.

Choose a scene from an action film that has been edited to enhance excitement: for example, the first fight scene in the opening sequence of *The Matrix* (1999, dir. The Wachowski Brothers).

1. In a two- or three-minute sequence, calculate the number of cuts the editor makes between shots.
2. Describe how the shots are ordered. For example, does it cut back and forth between two characters? How does this help move the action forward?
3. Describe the rhythm of the editing over the length of the scene. Does the rhythm of the editing change; that is, do some shots stay on the screen longer than others? Propose why the editor might have chosen to edit the scene this way.
4. Explain the effect that editing has on the audience.

Lighting

Lighting communicates meaning and mood in media products. The use of shadow can hide a character's expression and thus suggest a sinister motive. Bright, high-key lighting can illuminate a scene to make all objects within it visible and position the audience to feel safe and calm.

Lighting can be naturalistic, imitating lighting found in reality. Lighting can also be expressive, communicating in an artistic way how a character is feeling or the mood of a particular scene.

Lighting can also be high-key or low-key. High-key is when there are multiple lights being used to remove any shadows within a shot. Television sitcoms are usually shot with this lighting technique. High-key lighting is often used in musicals and comedies. Low-key lighting promotes the use of shadows and is often used to enhance a mood of mystery, danger, etc.

As discussed in Chapter 4, three-point lighting is one of the most common forms of media production lighting. With the light sources arranged behind the camera to come from three different directions, it gives the scene depth and illuminates shadows behind a subject. Three-point lighting is a common technique used in fashion photography, television interviews and vlogs.

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ACTIVITY 7.19

1 Each of these images is an example of the lighting effects mentioned previously. Try to match the film still with the effect:
   - **a** Low-key lighting is used to hide the character's eyes.
   - **b** Naturalistic lighting, possibly using the three-point lighting method.
   - **c** Low-key lighting, causing expressive shadows on the wall.
   - **d** Low-key lighting, causing expressive shadows outside.

2 Choose one of these film stills. Describe the use of lighting in this scene, and how it helps to engage the audience.

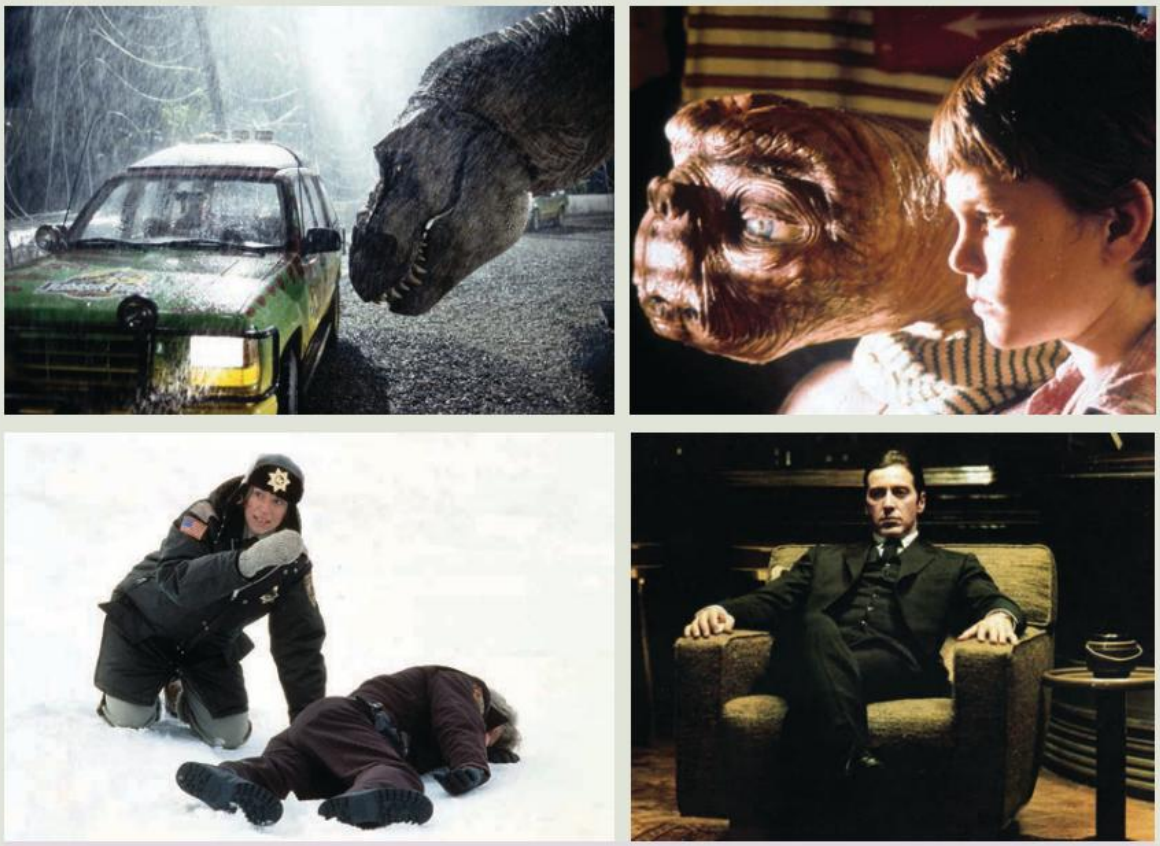


FIGURE 7.28 Stills from *Jurassic Park* (1993, dir. Steven Spielberg, top left), *E.T.* (1982, dir. Steven Spielberg, top right), *Fargo* (1996, dir. Joel & Ethan Coen, bottom left) and *The Godfather* (1972, dir. Francis Ford Coppola, bottom right)

Sound

An essential element of visual storytelling since the invention of synchronised audio, sound can be discussed in a variety of ways:

- **diegetic sound** – the sounds we hear in everyday life like dialogue, birds chirping or wind in the trees
- **non-diegetic sound** – the sounds we don't normally hear. These can be sound effects or music. It is used to help *enhance* a scene or mood in a film.

Sound can be described in a variety of ways. Think of the mood or pitch that non-diegetic sound can make to help us understand a story.

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ACTIVITY 7.20

Research and listen to the soundtrack from one of your favourite films.

Your job is to record all of the diegetic and non-diegetic sound in a key scene. Examine the following example:

You should look to record the instruments used and attempt to explain them too. Which ones were used and how? What moods did they generate and how do they work with the vision and diegetic audio?

Film: *Jaws* (1975, dir. Steven Spielberg)

Key scene: 'Chrissie's last swim'

Diegetic sound: sound of the waves, birds, ringing bells from ocean buoys, rushing water, screams

Non-diegetic sounds: string instruments, light piano notes, sharp horn instruments

How is sound used in this scene?

Diegetic and non-diegetic sound is used in the movie Jaws (1975). At the beginning of the scene we hear only diegetic sounds of the two characters running down to the water. In the background we hear the waves gently lapping against the shore as well as wind and birds chirping in the background, suggesting that it is close to dawn. As Chrissie swims out into the water alone a low, rumbling cello begins and introduces a foreboding tone as it increases in volume and pace. As soon as the shark attacks Chrissie, a combination of diegetic screams and thrashing water sounds accompany a chaotic mixture of piano, high-pitched strings and a xylophone which leads towards a crescendo of Chrissie's disappearance under the water. As soon as this happens, the audience are abruptly left with the original diegetic sounds of birds, waves and the beach wind. The director Steven Spielberg chose to use this audio to place the audience in the midst of a frenetic shark attack, taking them in and out of danger at a rapid pace. After the non-diegetic audio disappears, the audience are given time to breathe, assess what had just happened to the character and suddenly fear for the lives of all those near this beach.

Now it's your turn.

Pick a scene from your favourite visual narrative product and complete the following tasks:

1. Identify and list all of the non-diegetic sounds you hear.
2. Identify and list all of the diegetic sounds that you hear.
3. Explain how sound has been used to communicate meaning within the scene.

Special effects

Special effects are a constantly evolving element, which since the beginning of filmmaking have gone from rudimentary tools of making objects disappear and move position with editing, to the creation of modern imagination of faraway planets inhabited by entirely blue people whose lives are eerily reminiscent of the story of Pocahontas. They are essentially visual tricks and illusions that can make events that don't exist in real life exist on screen. Without special effects, the entire city of Tokyo would never have to endure the constant threats posed by Godzilla and Mothra.

Special effects can be broken into two categories:

- **visual effects:** this refers to creating entirely virtual shots. Changing the background or creating the background. Adding actors, characters or creatures and changing actors entirely. Adding objects or props or removing them. A background to an ancient world or cutting off Lieutenant Dan's leg in *Forrest Gump* (1994, dir. Robert Zemeckis) all count as visual effects.

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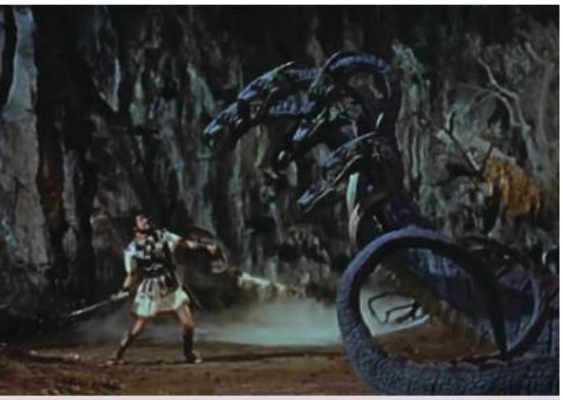


FIGURE 7.29 A still from 1963's *Jason and the Argonauts* (dir. Don Chaffey). Special visual effects like this battle against a *stop-motion* hydra came out of the work of Hollywood pioneers like Ray Harryhausen.

- **mechanical effects:** this refers to anything that is physically created, like the use of mechanised props, scenery and scale models, and pyrotechnics. Blowing up a building, flying a spaceship into space, or a bullet in the leg all qualify as mechanical effects.

ACTIVITY 7.21

Revisit the action films you wrote about for the editing activity (Activity 7.18). Choose one and answer the following question.

- Explain how special effects have been used to enhance audience engagement.

7.5 Media conventions

Storylines

Narratives, regardless of the form they take, are driven by stories. That is what engages us and is why you, the Media Studies student, are reading this. Most products have primary and secondary storylines and they often come together. How do the plots in your media products interconnect? Do they involve the same characters? Perhaps these plots provide more information about characters or add depth to the plot.

The study of story can be broken up into these areas:

- **story principles:** any good story must follow the simple principles of establishing a character, developing a challenge or problem and finding a resolution
- **story form and structure:** this refers to the way the story is told and the means by which it is structured.

For example, you may explain the *story form* by describing:

1. Where the story is set.
2. What events start the story? (In film and television, this is often referred to as the opening sequence.)
3. Who are the main characters?
4. What challenges do they face?
5. What happens to them on their journey towards the conclusion?
6. What is the outcome of the challenge and what is the impact on the characters? (In film and television, this is often referred to as the closing sequence.)

Story structure then refers to the way the answers to the above questions are structured throughout the product. For example:

1. How, when and where are the main characters introduced?
2. How and when is the challenge set up?
3. What events or ideas are introduced to move the characters along to the main challenge?
4. How is the challenge met by the characters?
5. How is it resolved?



FIGURE 7.30 Harry Potter (Daniel Radcliffe), Ron Weasley (Rupert Grint) and Hermione Grainger (Emma Watson) in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001, dir. Chris Columbus)

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- **Generic story structures:** this refers to the way the story organises these elements in a familiar pattern that audiences can easily understand. Such as a Hollywood love story that follows a pattern of boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl.
- **Character and story arcs:** these are ways to explain the way a character or story travels across the whole narrative. It is sometimes easier to deconstruct a story (or plan your own) by visualising the story with a pen and paper across a large 'arc' on the page. Over the course of the story, the character usually 'rides' this arc to arrive at their destination, which can be victory, failure or change.

A good way to study storylines is to chart the story arc on paper (as described above) and then examine the relationship between the opening and closing sequences of the story. In literature these are often called the 'first' and 'final' acts.

denouement a French term that refers to the unravelling of storylines to draw the narrative to a conclusion



ACTIVITY 7.22

Read the following text and answer the questions at the end.

The opening and closing sequence

The opening sequence is the first part of the media product where the story, characters and setting are being set up and introduced. It is where the reality of the movie is communicated to the audience. It's also where the possible storylines are being set up, and expectations are created by the audience. For instance, if a character will have supernatural abilities later in the movie, they will be suggested in the opening sequence, so the audience has something to look forward to, as they expect to see them being used later in the film.

In most movies, there is a protagonist: the main character on whom the movie is centred. It is this character's actions that push the story along. There is also usually a character attempting to stop the protagonist from achieving their goals. This character is known as the antagonist.

The closing sequence

The closing sequence is where all the storylines are wrapped up, the main questions are answered and the audience is able to leave the story with all their main expectations resolved and, to some extent, left wondering what would have occurred if the narrative was to continue. If you consider the steps required to tell a story from earlier in this chapter, it can be considered a crucial element of a story. This process is referred to by the French term **denouement**, which means 'outcome' or 'untangling'. Imagine the storylines and ideas as pieces of string that we're all wrapped up in while watching the movie, which we need untangling from before re-entering reality.

Closing sequences can also leave the audience with storylines that are unresolved, making us question what may happen after the events of the movie. This can be done either to engage us beyond the boundaries of the movie or allow the audience the opportunity to propose their own ending.

Choose a film you intend to study this year and complete the following tasks:

1. Go online and read the synopsis of the film you intend to study. Using a pen and paper, draw the story arc on a page.
2. Explain the form of the story and how it is structured.
3. Explain how the character arc relates to the story arc.
4. Examine the film and explain how the film was introduced.
5. Examine the film and explain how the film was concluded.
6. Describe how the elements of both the antagonist's and protagonist's storylines were resolved.
7. Was any element of the story left unresolved? Explain why you think the director did this.

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Character

Stories are driven by relatable characters. If the audience can identify with them, they will usually take an interest in their challenges. In the film *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*, the character of Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) leads the narrative as he is an innocent, naive but capable man from a desolated planet. He has no enemies and is thrust into an extraordinary situation. His mentor, Ben 'Obi-Wan' Kenobi (Alec Guinness), is immediately identifiable as the wise old mentor who will guide him through his journey. We are, however, positioned to dislike or even be suspicious of some characters. When Luke meets the brash smuggler Han Solo (Harrison Ford), his arrogance is somewhat off-putting for audiences. Over the course of the story, the relationship of the three proves to be the key to victory in Luke's quest.

Thus, the relationship between characters is also essential to the story. For the main character, or protagonist, to succeed, they may need to resolve conflict with other characters, win allies or gain the trust of people who will help their quest. The intersection of these relationships can be seen as primary or secondary storylines within a media product.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 What are some of the reasons why elements of a narrative might be left unresolved at the conclusion of a film?
2 Research and explain what purpose back story or exposition plays in a narrative. Explain whether this is used more in some genres than others.



FIGURE 7.31 *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) features relatable characters whose relationships drive the story forward. Pictured is Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) as protagonist and Obi-Wan Kenobi (Alec Guinness) as his wise mentor.

STUDY TIP

When examining characters in media products, you must ask the following questions:

1 How are characters established?
2 When and how do you first meet the protagonist?
3 What are they doing?
4 How are they dressed?
5 How are they lit?
6 What shot is used?
7 What personal information do we know about them?
8 What motivates them and how/when do we learn this?
9 When do you first meet the antagonist? What is the relationship between the two?
10 How is this established?

If your narrative product is able to do all of these things and you can confidently answer them, you should already be able to build expectations for what might happen in the story.

Cause and effect

Stories are defined by cause-and-effect relationships between characters, events and actions. The protagonist will have their motivation and this sets up the cause-and-effect chain, where their actions (cause) create effects. A cause-and-effect chain could be seen, for example, as the number of guards Bruce Lee defeats before he arrives in the lair of the evil villain in the movie *Enter the Dragon* (1973, dir. Robert Clouse). However, Bruce Lee needs a reason or motivation to do this. Without character motivation, and therefore cause and effect, the narrative cannot progress.

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ACTIVITY 7.23

In the Bruce Lee film *Enter the Dragon* (1973, dir. Robert Clouse), the main character's goal is to defeat an evil villain who has an army of devoted followers. As Lee cannot defeat the army alone, he breaks into an underground jail and frees the prisoners held there. The effect of this action is that Lee now has an army of equal size to help him take on the antagonist, Han.

Now revisit the media product you examined in Activity 7.21 and answer this question.

- Explain how cause and effect helps move the narrative forward between the opening and closing sequences of your chosen narrative.



FIGURE 7.32 Bruce Lee in *Enter the Dragon*

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What is a 'cause-and-effect chain'?
2. Define the narrative term 'cause and effect'.

Point of view

Point of view looks at from which perspective a narrative is presented to the audience. Some narratives have a shift in point of view, while others only ever present what the protagonist experiences. Point of view helps us understand the nature of the narrative and how much information the audience are being provided. This can enhance engagement in the story as the audience may not be able to predict the ending, as some elements of the story are hidden, or they will know what to expect and are engaged in watching the character deal with each situation as it arises. These are known as restricted or unrestricted narratives.

Another way of thinking of this is by contemplating whose side the audience is on. It can be indicated by a voice-over or by the audience only knowing as much as the main character. When determining the point of view, you need to examine how the audience is provided with information. If the audience unravels the story at the same time as the characters, this is known as a *restricted narrative*, as it is only told from the direct and peripheral vision of the main character. Restricted narration limits the viewer to what characters know (or less), which can create greater curiosity for the viewer and lead to surprise.



FIGURE 7.33 Harrison Ford as the title character in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989)

Unrestricted narratives are often told from an outsider or 'third person view'. If two characters are in a room arguing, the audience is in there with them, but unlike restricted or first person stories, the audience is simply observing in an omnipotent position, where the characters are not aware of the audience's presence. Unrestricted narration is when the viewer knows more than the character, which can help build suspense. Film narratives often utilise both restricted and unrestricted narration to some extent.

The point of view can change from scene to scene to make the narrative more exciting. The 2006 film *Babel* (dir. Alejandro González Iñárritu) tells a story of six unrelated characters whose stories intersect.

Media codes like camera can be essential to helping us understand point of view. In Figure 7.33, we see Indiana Jones in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989, dir. Steven Spielberg). It is important to note that a

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FIGURE 7.34 Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) and Corporal Hicks (Michael Biehn) discuss strategy in *Aliens* (1986).

restricted narrative does not mean we are physically seeing the action take place through the eyes of the character (as in a first person shooter game). In this image, we see Indiana Jones' reaction to a particular scene that he experiences, and so the audience ride the emotion of the story along with him, but are restricted by the knowledge that he gains along his journey.

However, in this image from *Aliens* (1986, dir. James Cameron) the audience is positioned further back from a discussion among the characters as an observer of the action, and as such can bring knowledge of other events from the narrative to their understanding. In this scene, the audience have been able to gather information about the aliens that have surrounded Ripley (the main character) and her team. This conversation between the team creates the sense that the audience is within the scene and is one of the team, working on the solution together, thus making it unrestricted.

ACTIVITY 7.24

Task 1

Use the following images from various films and determine whether they are restricted or unrestricted narratives.



FIGURE 7.35 Sean Connery in *Never Say Never Again* (1983, dir. Irvin Kershner)



FIGURE 7.36 Cate Blanchett and Rupert Everett in *An Ideal Husband* (1999, dir. Oliver Parker)

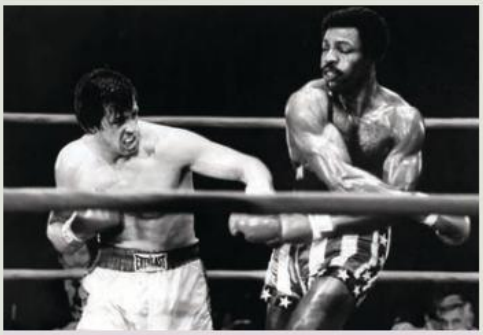


FIGURE 7.37 Sylvester Stallone and Carl Weathers in *Rocky* (1976, dir. John G Avildsen)



FIGURE 7.38 Peter Sellers, Ursula Andress and Orson Welles in *Casino Royale* (1967, dir. Ken Hughes et al.)

Task 2

Choose one and answer the following question:

- Using media codes, explain how point of view is established in this narrative.

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The structuring of time

Structuring of time as utilised in narratives is not how time passes in the traditional sense, but how time is structured in the media product. Are there flash-forwards? Flashbacks? Is time manipulated in any way? These conventions allow the storyteller to take the audience forwards and backwards out of the 'real time' of the story itself. For example, in order to understand the origin story of a superhero, and thus understand their intrinsic motive, the author may 'flashback' to a moment in the past that explains how and why they became the character they are. Conversely, a 'flash forward' can give the audience an idea of what may be waiting in the future of the narrative, which builds anticipation within the audience. In the film *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1992, dir. James Cameron) the opening sequence includes a flash forward to a world where a nuclear war has destroyed Earth, which in turn gives the characters motivation to work with a time-travelling cyborg to prevent the disaster.

Structuring of time can also be examined for its *expansion* and *contraction of time*. In some narratives, time can be expanded to slow action down to show as much detail as possible from a limited time period. For example, when James Bond is defusing a device that has the potential to destroy Earth (for the umpteenth time) he will work feverishly against a countdown clock. The 10 seconds he has left to defuse the device rarely correlates with real time. This is done to enhance the excitement and tension of the audience.

Time can be contracted too. Ever wanted to defeat your bullies but don't have time to receive advice from a quietly spoken but wise man living in your apartment building *and* train to be a karate expert? No? That's OK, just do it all in a montage. Over a series of connected, but seemingly unrelated scenes edited together, you can learn the very basics of your chosen martial art all the way to the more complex task of standing one-footed in a boat. When a lot of information or time needs to be communicated to an audience, time can be contracted to show a number of events in a period of mere minutes that could equate to a few days, weeks or years within the story. This technique is useful to show character growth.

In addition, contraction of time can be found in several narratives to communicate the passage of a fixed amount of time. An opening shot of students entering a high school is usually followed by the sound of school, which then cuts to a group of students sitting in a class. Nobody really needs to see the students going to their lockers, milling around in front of the class and racing to get the best seat, when the action is primarily concerned with what happens in the room.



ACTIVITY 7.25

Considering the range of narratives you have examined in this chapter, choose one to complete the following question:

- Explain the relationship between structuring of time and the story arc of your chosen narratives.

Putting it all together – media codes and conventions

Use case study 7.1 in class to analyse the first episode of the 2016 police procedural *The Night Of*. Once complete, use the notes and scenes from the first episode to deconstruct how codes and conventions can be arranged to create meaning. Later in this chapter, you will examine how the role of ideology, time, place and context influence the construction of media products. You will also have the chance to return to this case study and examine how political events of the past 20 years worked to influence this narrative.

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CASE STUDY 7.1

The Night Of (2016)

The genre of crime stories has a long history and there are several variations upon the theme of crime and humanity's seedier underbelly. Nothing takes an audience away from an established normal more than a hideous crime or heinous murder. Yet few things re-establish normality more than the work of a diligent police officer or detective who catches the criminal in question and returns safety to society. The stories, often referred to as police procedurals, allow the audience to follow the investigation of a crime, or even a series of seemingly unrelated crimes as the audience attempt to decode the mystery for themselves. The classic 'whodunit' has been a staple feature of literature, television and film stories. It usually involves cynical police detectives who use intuition and experience to unravel mysteries. The accused are often the characters who appear the most innocent as a game of guessing 'whodunit' between the audience and the author maintains engagement. Traditionally, the stories would begin with the emergence of the detective at a crime scene. As the detective examines clues, interviews suspects and edges closer to the truth, danger usually ensues. It is the role of the audience to follow the clues and attempt to guess the intentions of a variety of possible perpetrators introduced in the story.

The 2016 television series *The Night Of* borrows heavily from the genre; however, unlike previous incarnations of a tried and tested story structure, *The Night Of* focuses primarily on the accused individual as well as the detectives, lawyers and victims of the crime. The nine-episode story centres on the investigation of the brutal murder of a young woman in her apartment and the prime suspect in the case, Nasir 'Naz' Khan (Riz Ahmed). As each episode unfolds, the detective on his case works with his own instincts to uncover the truth in the case; however, in an attempt to properly represent Naz, his lawyer begins his own investigation to reveal an alternative version of events. Instead of tracking the singular findings of a trusted investigator, the audience are presented with two potential realities and multiple storylines as the erratic behaviour of Naz begins to cast doubt on both versions of events. Despite the departure from established police procedural storylines, the co-creator of the show and director of the first episode, Steven Zaillian, has employed a number of genre-specific techniques to communicate the story to audiences.



FIGURE 7.39 Riz Ahmed plays Nasir 'Naz' Khan in HBO's *The Night Of*.

The Night Of is told from the point of view of a third-party observer. All characters within the story share equal footing, which allows for multiple storylines to intersect and add to the mystery of the murder. In the first episode of the series, we are introduced to Naz and told his version of events. He is presented is a naive, innocent character who ends up in the wrong place at the wrong time. However, as the series unfolds, the detective Dennis Box (Bill Camp) and the low-brow lawyer John Stone (John Turturro) begin to uncover alternative versions of the same event. While in prison awaiting trial, the audience is shown another version of the accused Naz as he spirals into drug use and prison life between court appearances. The use of an unrestricted narrative allows for the audience to see more than just the work of a diligent investigator, but all facets of the mystery in order to expand audience expectations.

The cause and effect of Naz's actions drive the story forward. In the first episode, when the details of Naz's night with the murdered woman are revealed, he awakes in her apartment after blacking out from a cocktail of drugs and alcohol and discovers the murdered girl's body in the bedroom. Panicking and unsure of what to do, Naz picks up a kitchen knife that had been used in the murder and inexplicably takes it with him as he flees the apartment in horror. While an act of foolishness which is in line with Naz's character, the possession of the murder weapon links him directly to a crime he may or may not have committed. Shortly afterwards, Naz is

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arrested for erratic driving and the knife and blood of the victim are soon discovered, leading to his arrest. The audience immediately fear for Naz, as while it is not yet established that he is guilty or innocent of the murder, his panicked actions do not suggest he is capable of the crime in which he has suddenly implicated himself.

Character is essential to the story of *The Night Of*. The introduction of each character's 'normal' helps build audience expectations and eventually challenge them as the series progresses. When the audience first meets Naz, he appears in a natural setting of his local bustling New York neighbourhood. The normal, daytime setting allows Zaillian to create a familiar, honest character whose anxious nature is revealed by darkness. As Naz's character develops, the audience experiences the change as the same darkness of the prison alters his character. When Naz returns to the bright naturalistic light of the courtroom during his trial, the audience's expectations are challenged as he is no longer the relatable figure he was in the story's opening scenes, enhancing the mystery of the narrative.



FIGURE 7.40 John Turturro plays lawyer John Stone.

The two characters on the trail of the truth are at home in the darkness. Comfortable with the seedy underbelly of the city they live and work in, both Detective Box and John Stone feed off it in their own way. The key investigators in police procedurals are often professionals, jaded by their experience with the darker side of humanity, and Box is no different. Days from retirement, he simply wants Naz behind bars so he can retire in peace; however, as the clues reveal themselves, he begins to doubt his judgement and his investigative instincts drive him to dig deeper. In contrast, Stone is a bottom-feeding lawyer who takes money from clearly guilty criminals. He haunts the police lock-ups of New York at night to meet with old and new clients. Viewed with varying degrees of scorn and derision by the city's legal community, Stone's interest in Naz's case leads to a path out of his poor reputation and offers him a chance at redemption. The motivations of all three characters intersect to engage the audience. As Naz descends into more criminal behaviour behind bars, Box and Stone begin to uncover more and more about Naz that challenge each one's intentions. In keeping the story's theme of light, Stone and Box are searching for illumination as Naz descends into darkness.

Key scene – the beach – Naz's arrest

A key scene in the first episode of the series combines a number of the crucial media codes and conventions that define the crime and police procedural genre. Naz was arrested for erratic driving shortly before police found the crime scene and so they are yet to make the connection that he was at the scene and still has the murder weapon in his jacket. What follows is a drawn-out and often excruciating wait for the police to discover the inevitable. Naz cannot leave the station and his meeting his fate is only a matter of time.

Sitting alone on a bench in the station, Naz ignores the dialogue of the police officers running through procedure, which is the only sound the audience experiences. It is mundane and technical; however, it emphasises the fear that wracks Naz as close-ups of his eye cast to the floor reveal that his thoughts are not on the words of the officers. As he is called to the desk to be released for the driving charge, he is searched by one of the officers. Simultaneously, Box returns from the murder scene and begins discussing the evidence with the officers in the room. The dialogue of the case details plays over close-ups of the officer's hands searching Naz's arms, legs and jacket. Within the jacket is the knife that Naz picked up in a panic. It has the blood of the victim on it and thus the decision to leave with the knife will lead to his imminent arrest. Audiences of crime stories are often rewarded for connecting clues from earlier scenes to later ones. The knowledge of the knife in his jacket builds immense anxiety for both the audience and Naz's character as its discovery is imminent.

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As the police continue to discuss the murder evidence, Zaillian cuts between close-up shots of the search taking place across Naz's body and Box and the fellow officers arguing over the evidence, seemingly oblivious to the increasing vulnerability and panic of Naz whose eyes begin to dart around the room as his breath quickens. A non-diegetic soundtrack slowly builds using an unnerving low rumble that increases in volume as the officer gets closer to the location of the knife in his jacket. As soon as the officer locates its under the clothes, Zaillian cuts to a close-up of the officer's reaction and louder crash in the soundtrack. It is clear that the officer has found something significant.

As Naz is turned around, a shallow-focus mid shot is used to show the officer pulling the murder weapon from his jacket and Detective Box, out of focus in the background, begins to discuss the type of weapon he believes was used in the murder he has been discussing. The dialogue of his description plays at the exact moment the bloodied knife is pulled from his jacket. The element of cause and effect provides the story with the crisis facing Naz at this time. The combination of codes provides a pivotal moment in the key storyline of *The Night Of*. As Naz is now placed under arrest, the determination of his guilt or innocence becomes the primary focus of the main characters of the story.



FIGURE 7.41 Series co-creator and director of *The Night Of*, episode one, Steven Zaillian

Analysis

1 Explain the impact point of view has on the audience's understanding of *The Night Of*.
2 Describe how lighting assists the audience to learn about characters in *The Night Of*.
3 Describe how cause and effect drives the story forward in *The Night Of*.
4 Explain the use of camera in developing relationships between characters.
5 Explain how genre expectations have been established by codes and conventions.
6 Describe how editing is used to structure time in the police station scene.
7 Explain how sound has been used to engage the audience.
8 Describe the way acting has been used to define three characters.

In each response, you should attempt to use the following sentences to structure your paragraph response:

- **Name:** The code or convention used and the form and media product in which it appears.
- **Describe:** In as much detail as possible, using the correct terminology, explain how the element works.
- **Why:** Explain why the media director did this. What were they trying to communicate to the audience?
- **Effect:** Explain the impact of this element and the director's decision to employ it.

7.6 Narrative and ideology

> The media's the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power.
>
> — Malcolm X

This quote by African-American activist Malcolm X continues to be relevant some 50 years after it was first spoken. Media narratives are incredibly powerful vehicles that communicate stories, views, agendas, opinions and ideas, all of which have the ability to shape our view of the world. Audiences are drawn into these narratives and begin to see these messages as the creator intends with the aim of framing the content around particular ideologies. An ideology is a world view, a system of values, beliefs and attitudes held by an individual, group or society about what is true

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or important. These ideologies are shared through culture about how society should be run, and the media play a key role in disseminating these views and values.

Neutral, implicit and explicit ideology

Ideologies are present within almost all media narratives. Media theorist John Hill (discussing the medium of film) once wrote that 'every film … is determined by the ideology which produces it'. Using this logic, the analysis of any media product can offer insights into the workings of ideology within the society in which it was created. The creators of media products can imply an ideology in an implicit, explicit or neutral way. **Neutral ideology** refers to media narratives that exist purely for entertainment purposes; a form of escapism. This category of media product is rare as almost all narratives contain a meaning or message within the storyline. **Implicit ideology** is a subtle communication of views and values and is often reflected through the hero and villain, with the implied ideology being carried through the hero, enforced by the audience's cultural understanding of conventions. Disney films apply implicit ideology throughout many of their narratives; for example, in Disney's 1994 animated film, *The Lion King* (dir. Roger Allers & Rob Minkoff), the film's villain, Scar, is portrayed as being an outcast and somewhat dangerous to the rest of the lions in the film. Scar represents a selfish and autocratic leader who could be a comparison to a dictator. During his speech to the hyenas the imagery shares a likeness to Adolf Hitler's wartime speeches.

neutral ideologies those media products where the main purpose is to entertain rather than persuade the audience one way or another

implicit ideologies found in media products where the protagonist and antagonist represent conflicting ideologies

explicit ideology exists in media products that are made to persuade the audience to think a certain way

The morally decent and heroic character of Simba gains control and his leadership is celebrated and the savannah is restored to its rightful state of lush greenery.

Explicit ideology is evident in narratives that have been purposely constructed to convey a clear message about a particular issue, value or idea. For example, the 2006 documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth* (dir. Davis Guggenheim), intended to raise the public consciousness about the issue of global warming and the impact that humans are having in contributing to climate change.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Define the term 'ideology' in your own words.
2. How do media creators inject ideological viewpoints into their narratives?



FIGURE 7.42 At one point in *The Lion King* the villain Scar (voiced by Jeremy Irons and pictured above left) orders his hyenas around like troops in a military parade. This symbolically recalls the way Adolf Hitler addressed his followers in Nazi Germany, pictured above right in 1938. *The Lion King*, therefore, contains an implicit ideology about leadership.

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ACTIVITY 7.26

1 Create the following table and list as many texts as you can under each category. The first few examples have been done for you.

Neutral ideology	Implicit ideology	Explicit ideology
Main purpose being to entertain rather than persuade the audience one way or another.	Implicit ideology texts are where the protagonist and antagonist represent conflicting ideologies.	Explicit ideology texts are made to persuade the audience to think a certain way.
Honey, I Shrunk the Kids!	*The Lion King* *Shrek*	*An Inconvenient Truth* *The Great Dictator*

2 Select one of these texts and write a paragraph evaluating the ideology that has been presented by the creator/s of this text.



FIGURE 7.43 American former politician Al Gore beside a poster for *An Inconvenient Truth*

Institutional contexts

The creators of media texts hold considerable power when it comes to espousing ideologies, as they have the ability to produce and distribute narratives that can reach a large audience. *Institutional context* refers to the people that have a role in the construction, production and distribution of media texts. These 'institutions' can be media companies and organisations like Twentieth Century Fox or the BBC, producers and/or production companies like Working Dog, and distributors and/or media platforms such as YouTube or Netflix. Inevitably, who owns these institutions will often impact upon the content and, at times, the ideologies that are communicated within the media narratives. Within media institutions, financial considerations are always at the forefront of any decision to create and distribute a media text. Financial backing can be difficult to attract and these institutions want substantial box-office returns or strong ratings wins to make a profit. These factors are also important when considering the impact implied or explicit ideology can have on a media narrative.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 Define the term 'institutional context'.
2 Speculate how institutional context could influence the ideological viewpoint of a narrative.

Major Hollywood studio Columbia Pictures is one of the most successful and enduring production companies in film history. During the 'Golden Age' of Hollywood (1930s–1950s), Columbia was producing over 40 films a year and it attracted big-name stars and directors to its stable. Columbia Pictures since its inception was known for taking on what many in Hollywood would consider 'risky' narratives, and this was particularly evident throughout the 1960s and 1970s, where 'youth pictures' made by independent directors, arthouse and auteur projects were being produced. Two examples of these films that pushed boundaries were 1967's *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (dir. Stanley Kramer) and 1969's *Easy Rider* (dir. Dennis Hopper).

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner was made at the height of the civil rights movement and while considerable progress had been made by African-Americans in their struggle against racism and segregation, America was still very

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much in the midst of racial tensions. The narrative is based around a progressive, educated, young white woman who brings home her African-American fiancé to meet her parents and gain their blessing. The film was a poignant and daring treatment of interracial romance that received much criticism, yet widespread acclaim. It was a film that captured much of what was happening in the United States at the time, with the Supreme Court ruling in favour of abolishing the laws that prevented interracial marriage in 1967, as well as the assassination of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr in 1968, while the film was still showing in cinemas. Two of the film's stars, real-life lovers Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracey, were paramount in getting the project off the ground and despite his ailing health – Tracey died not long after the film completed – they were committed to making this socially progressive film. According to the late director Stanley Kramer's wife, Karen Kramer, Columbia was 'scared to death of this film' and tried to use Spencer Tracey's failing health as a reason to back out of the project. Kramer, Hepburn and Tracey put up their salaries as insurance for Columbia as they believed so strongly in the message of this film. Ultimately, the decision to make the film paid off, with the narrative becoming a huge box-office success and a culturally important film text that provides genuine insight into the ideology of race relations in America in the 1960s.



FIGURE 7.44 Dennis Hopper as 'Billy' and as director of *Easy Rider*

1969's *Easy Rider* (dir. Dennis Hopper) was again another risky project, produced and distributed by Columbia. The film's leading stars, Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda, were given free creative rein to produce this counterculture classic, which explored the political tensions that existed in America in the 1960s, the rise and fall of the hippie movement, drug use and the notion of 'shirking' mainstream lifestyles for a more nomadic existence, shattering the American Dream. The film courts controversy with its drug use, sex and violence and marked the beginning of what is now considered a new wave of Hollywood films. Columbia allowed Hopper and Fonda to make the film unscripted, to film while under the influence of drugs, and they cast many of the actors along the way. Stylistically, the film was a landmark in its use of jump cuts, flashbacks and flash-forwards, handheld camera and improvised performances; a nod to the psychedelic experience.

Like *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, *Easy Rider* is another example of how media institutions hold significant power through the creation and distribution of ideologies contained within media narratives.

CASE STUDY 7.2

Working Dog Productions

One of Australia's most successful and enduring media institutions is Working Dog Productions. Founded in 1993 by writer-producer-performers Rob Sitch, Santo Cilauro, Tom Gleisner and Jane Kennedy with producer Michael Hirsh, Working Dog has grown from a group of university friends involved in student revues into an entertainment industry force that has created an impressively diverse body of work. Some of the projects that Working Dog has produced include Australian film classics such as *The Castle* and *The Dish*, as well as numerous television series such as *Utopia, Russell Coight's All Aussie Adventures, Have You Been Paying Attention?* and *Thank God You're Here.* Working Dog has produced work that has aired commercially on network television and for the ABC and SBS, as well as stage shows and book publishing. The members of Working Dog are fiercely protective and controlling of the work they do and are involved in every step of the production process, from development right through to



FIGURE 7.45 The fictional Kerrigan family of the Working Dog film production *The Castle* (1997, dir. Rob Sitch)

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sales and publicity. One aspect that characterises Working Dog projects is that they don't create long-running series and take their time to develop and refine what they produce.

Analysis

1. Investigate Working Dog Productions and view two to three different texts that it has produced; for example, *The Castle, Frontline, Funky Squad, Have You Been Paying Attention?, Utopia*, to name a few.
2. Assess if these texts reflect any specific ideologies – either implicit or explicit – and, if so, identify them.
3. Explain whether there are any common ideas/themes/issues that Working Dog Productions convey.
4. Identify any specific codes and conventions that are common throughout these texts.
5. Identify and explain differences between projects produced for commercial television as opposed to the ABC or Working Dog's own films.

With the rise of social media and platforms through which media texts can be shared, more and more media creators are becoming their own 'institutions'. While independent creators may not be able to reach the breadth of audiences that traditional institutions do, YouTube 'sensations' and 'going viral' are also channels through which ideologies can be shared through media texts.

The creator, the text, the audience

Have you heard of the saying, 'What comes first? The chicken or the egg?' The idea being that you cannot have one without the other. This concept could be applied when studying narrative and ideology. What comes first – the social movement or the texts? Do the texts help to shape, influence and drive the ideology, or do they indeed start the conversation about the social issue? Since the rise of pop culture throughout the mid 20th century, it is easy to see that media texts play a key role in the dissemination of ideologies and, in some cases, have been pivotal in bringing to life social change. The creators of texts respond to the world and climate around them, capturing snapshots of the society in which they are produced. The relationship between the creator, the text and the audience is significant in that a text holds the power to convey new ideas, reinforce existing ideologies, or challenge the status quo.

FOCUS QUESTION

Define the term 'status quo'.



FIGURE 7.46 The punk rock band the Sex Pistols performing in London in 1976, with lead singer Johnny Rotten front and centre

The ability to shock, protest and push the boundaries is none more evident than in the medium of the music video. This experimental media form is a useful resource to explore the relationship between ideology, text and audience. Music video rose to prominence in the late 1970s and early 1980s and quickly became a medium where creators could express their ideas about the world in a short, engaging and often explosive way. Britain in the mid 1970s was going through major social upheaval and conflict, particularly between the working class and the upper, educated ruling class. Punk rock band the Sex Pistols exploded on the British music scene in 1976 with their debut song 'Anarchy in the UK', a loud, brash, angry stab at the Establishment which served as a voice and symbol of working-class rage and frustration. The clip, and subsequent performances of the song, showed the band aggressively posturing and sneering at the audience. An ideology was born – to rebel against rules, challenge those who try to impose their views and values, say and

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do whatever it is you want. Punk rock was seen as a threat to social and political stabilisation, so much so that the song was banned from the airwaves five weeks after its release due to the band using profane language on live television. This is a clear demonstration of how a media text can help construct a social movement or an ideology.

Music videos have played a key role in shaping ideologies through making powerful social and political statements. In 2013, American rapper Macklemore released the massive global hit, 'Same Love', a song that campaigned explicitly for marriage equality. Macklemore's song and the accompanying video made a strong and positive statement about gay rights and reinforced the need for progress. The video follows the story of a young boy, growing up and realising he is gay. The character faces prejudice, both among family and in society, but finds happiness and contentment with his partner. The narrative shows a marriage proposal, a huge, celebratory wedding and the closing scenes show the couple as elderly men, saying their final goodbye as one passes away. The emotive clip aims to show same sex relationships being the same as straight relationships and the song became somewhat of an anthem for the campaign to legalise gay marriage throughout the United States. The 2014 Grammy Awards featured a powerful performance of the song, where Madonna and Queen Latifah joined Macklemore in performing the song along with 33 couples – straight, gay, interracial – who were married on stage. GLAAD President Sarah Kate Ellis stated that the performance and the song itself were central to the public discourse on gay marriage. 'When such a critically acclaimed and popular rap artist in front of 33 couples puts marriage equality center stage at one of the biggest events of the year, it is the latest in a long line of signs that our nation not only accepts, but celebrates the love and commitment of gay couples today,' said Ellis.



FIGURE 7.47 At the 2014 Grammy Awards during a musical performance led by Macklemore, 33 couples – gay or straight – were married on stage. 'Same Love' helped bring widespread attention to the marriage equality debate.

The song helped drive the push for marriage equality and in June 2015, President Barack Obama announced the Supreme Court decision for all states to recognise gay marriage. This example illustrates how we can see the relationship between an ideology, media narratives and how the audience's views can be shaped.

Pop music has often been overlooked in its capacity to shape and influence ideology in favour of more 'serious' music genres, such as rap, grunge, punk and folk; however, due to its wide reach, pop music and videos are also a veritable gold mine of ideologies. The very catchy and seemingly harmless 2013 R'n'B track, 'Blurred Lines' by Robin Thicke, along with producer Pharrell Williams and rapper TI, soon became known as a song that promoted and espoused the sexual exploitation of young women, with many critics suggesting that the song suggested sex without consent. The music video featured the three male artists surrounded by scantily clad – and in the unedited version, topless – models who were vying for their attention. The song sparked a conversation about sexual politics and the objectification of women in music videos. With lyrics such as



FIGURE 7.48 Boston University students protest at a concert by Robin Thicke in March 2014, objecting to the lyrics of his song 'Blurred Lines'.

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'You know you want it …' and the 'Blurred Lines' perhaps relating to issues around consent, the song and video were heavily criticised by many for their overt sexual innuendos. The debate also involved the issue of negative influence of children, with many calling for explicit music videos to be regulated in the same way that films are. Legendary singer Annie Lennox was one such supporter of this, stating that 'I have to say that I'm disturbed and dismayed by the recent spate of overtly sexualised performances and videos … Boundaries need to be put in place so that young kids aren't barraged by market forces exploiting the "normalisation" of explicit sex in underage entertainment.' 'Blurred Lines' was an international hit, with the song and video enjoying much success. This is a strong demonstration of how media texts can be received in different ways for different audiences as a result of the context in which they are created and viewed and the ideological influences that are at play.

ACTIVITY 7.27

1 Below is a list of words that reflect an ideology. Select three of these terms and define them in your own words:

- racism
- consumerism
- equality
- sexuality
- feminism
- conservatism
- diversity
- anti-establishment.

2 Investigate a song/music video that explores these issues and after viewing the media product, write a paragraph about how you received this product and how another audience (could be from a different time in history, place, demographic, cultural or ethnic background, age, etc.) may have received this same product. For example:

- *Racism – prejudice, discrimination or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior.*

This ideology is shown in Beyonce's song and video, 'Formation' (2016). The clip features powerful symbols of the divide between black and white America, such as the floods and aftermath of Hurricane Katrina where the response to the largely black population was slow and mismanaged; a police car, where in recent years there have been many cases of brutality against African-Americans; and Beyonce dressed in costume from the slave era. As a white Australian female, I view this media product as a powerful statement about the state of race relations in current-day America and admire Beyonce's fierce and feminist stance. An African-American audience may view this in a more emotional and connected way as they are directly involved in the issue and may feel more strongly about the messages she conveys.

CASE STUDY 7.3

How an ideology can shape media narratives

The representation of homosexuality and gay issues within mainstream media texts has evolved significantly over the past 50 years. Prior to the 1973 American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, 2nd Edition (DSM-II), homosexuality was still medically classified as a mental disorder, a disease that was not congruent with 'normal' human sexuality. Homosexuality was seen as shameful and wrong, with gay men and

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women often living closeted lives to avoid the prejudices of a society that saw their identity as mentally unstable. The early rumblings of change came soon after the now infamous Stonewall Riots of 1969, where New York city police stormed renowned 'gay bar', the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village. The bar, a safe haven for the gay community, was raided and, for the first time, the gay community stood together in solidarity and fought back and protested for their rights.



FIGURE 7.49 Stonewall Inn in New York was the scene of riots in June 1969. Demonstrations at the site led to the formation of the modern gay rights movement in the United States. This was how the riots were reported at the time by one newspaper.

Many point to this event as the birth of the gay rights movement, which through pressure and protest, had homosexuality taken off the list of mental illnesses. Gay culture, and indeed gay characters, was still very much on the fringe of mainstream media throughout the 1970s and 1980s, with stereotypes and negativity reinforcing dominant societal views about homosexuality. Gay characters were often defined by their sexuality and little else and were portrayed as predatory and promiscuous. In the British comedy *Are You Being Served?* (1972–85) the character Mr Humphries is one such example. Mr Humphries was characterised by his feminine walk, his high-pitched voice and his catchphrase of 'I'm free!'. Mr Humphries frequently spoke of a 'companion' referred to only as 'my friend', with the exact status of this relationship never explored. Long-running American sitcom *All in the Family* (1971–79) featured several episodes over its nine-year run dealing with issues about sexuality and featured homosexual characters who were more often than not ashamed of their sexuality.

Analysis

1 Describe how ideology in the 1970s determined the construction and representation of homosexuals in media texts.
2 Investigate a series of still images and clips of the character Mr Humphries from *Are You Being Served?* and explain how codes and conventions have been used to support this ideology.

The evolution of the gay rights movement can be seen through mainstream media texts, particularly in the 1990s. In 1993, the US government introduced the controversial 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy which prohibited any homosexual or bisexual person from disclosing his or her sexual orientation or from speaking about any homosexual relationships while serving in the United States armed forces. The act specified that service members who disclose that they are homosexual or engage in homosexual conduct should be discharged. The policy aimed to 'boost morale, order and unit cohesion'. This controversial policy drew criticism from supporters of gay rights who saw it as a bigoted and unfair burden to place upon gay servicemen and women – stay quiet about who you are, or don't serve in the US forces. One media text that took on this issue was the hit sitcom *Seinfeld*, when in 1993 the now-infamous episode, 'The Outing', tackled the policy in a humorous, yet poignant way. When Jerry and George are mistaken as a gay couple, they respond with the line, 'Not that there's anything wrong with that …' and are approached by a serviceman in uniform who congratulates them on being open about their sexuality. He goes on to say that they serve as an inspiration and even if it results in his discharge from the army, he, too, wants to be open about his sexuality. This line is met with a long, loud cheer and applause from the live studio audience and goes down as one of the most memorable moments in gay pop culture history.

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Jonathan Demme's 1993 film *Philadelphia* was another important example of how ideology can help to shape and create media narratives. The film was one of the first to acknowledge the issues of AIDS/HIV, homosexuality and homophobia in 1990s USA. The film centres on the character of Andrew Beckett, played by Tom Hanks, a gay lawyer who is fired because of his sexuality and his AIDS diagnosis. The film was initially only given a small cinema release, but soon found an audience and the message resonated with many. Hanks won an Academy Award for Best Actor and the film became a box-office hit.

The 1990s also saw popular comedian and sitcom star Ellen DeGeneres 'come out' through her character of Ellen Morgan in a 1997 episode of *Ellen*. This much-hyped episode caused a huge reaction with DeGeneres appearing on the cover of *Time* magazine and on the Oprah show to explain her decision to come out. The episode was widely celebrated as another major milestone in the advancement of gay rights in the United States, but also demonstrated that there was still a long way to go, with the episode being banned in some states, including Alabama, and many sponsors pulling advertising from the network.

FOCUS QUESTION

Was *Philadelphia* neutral, implicit or explicit in its ideological stance?

Since the late 1990s, the ideology around homosexuality in many parts of the world has seen the gay rights movement progress and evolve and it could be argued that the media has played a large and significant role in this attitudinal shift. In 2003, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* aired on US cable network, Bravo. It was a reality show, starring five openly gay men who make-over a hapless 'straight guy' and expose him to the worlds of fine food, wine, fashion, grooming, interior design and culture. It quickly found an audience and became a surprise international hit. It also allowed for a wide audience to get to know these characters, who were more than just 'gay'. This text emerged at a time when some states in the US began to recognise civil unions between same sex couples.



FIGURE 7.50 Mitchell (Jesse Tyler Ferguson) and Cam (Eric Stonestreet) in *Modern Family*

The 2000s saw many countries around the world legalise gay marriage and allow gay couples to start their own families. *Modern Family* began airing in 2009 and soon became one of ABC America's most successful and enduring sitcoms. Audiences have followed Mitchell (Jesse Tyler Ferguson) and Cam (Eric Stonestreet), a gay couple, dads to Lily, an adopted Vietnamese girl, over the years and their relationship has reflected many of the ideological and political changes in American society. When gay marriage was legalised in California in 2013, the show reflected this in the episode, 'Suddenly, Last Summer', where Mitchell and Cam get engaged.

Analysis

1. Outline the relationship between media texts, audiences and ideologies.
2. Using three examples, explain how media texts contributed to the reshaping of ideologies within society.
3. Choose one character from what you have read about here and compare and contrast the use of codes and conventions in that character's representation to the construction of Mr Humphries in *Are You Being Served?*

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7.7 *Moonlight*

CASE STUDY 7.4

Moonlight



FIGURE 7.51 Director Barry Jenkins next to a poster for his Oscar-winning film *Moonlight* (2016)

Traditionally, the film that wins the Oscar for Best Picture is a big-budget production that has been widely praised and seen by millions of people; but in 2017, the best picture was awarded to the low-budget film, *Moonlight*, directed by Barry Jenkins. *Moonlight* is a film that follows the coming-of-age story of Chiron, a black, gay character, yet it is a film that deals with finding one's own identity, which is a universal theme. With dreamlike aesthetic qualities, this film is a narrative worthy of analysis in that it explores the ideologies surrounding homosexuality, as well as race, drug addiction and class in modern America. The conventions of films that deal with such serious and seemingly bleak themes are often characterised by the use of realism; however, *Moonlight* is a film that subverts these conventions and uses softness and colour to take the audience into the world of this character whose sexuality and race are not his only defining traits.

Independent production company and distributor of the film, A24, is a production house that is known for its edgy and boundary-pushing narratives that attract an audience who seek out these types of narratives. This audience is often referred to as 'cinephiles', who are highly selective of the films they consume and notoriously difficult to impress. Traditional channels of marketing, distribution and consumption don't work on this audience and the team behind *Moonlight* recognised this and shunned the pre-release marketing hype, opting for a simple poster, trailer and festival campaign that attracted much critical acclaim. Part of the appeal of the film was the low-key, almost secretive buzz, making the audience even more interested in seeking out the film.

As a result of the success during awards season, *Moonlight* has gone on to gross around $30 million at the US box office and drawn mainstream audience attention to the narrative, which centres around Chiron's search for identity. Through winning the Oscar for Best Picture, *Moonlight* is an example of how ideologies shift and evolve over time and how they influence the stories that audiences want to consume. It is validation that homosexuality and an ideology such as gay rights can shape media narratives and that audience responses to these texts are often indicative of the views of the society in which they are produced.



FIGURE 7.52 Juan (Mahershala Ali) holds young Chiron (Alex Hibbert) in an early scene in *Moonlight*.

This scene occurs in the first chapter of *Moonlight*, known as I, Little, and employs a range of codes and conventions to help engage the audience and portray the ideology of a young man beginning to transition into a new life through a symbolic 'baptism'. Despite being a drug dealer, Juan becomes somewhat of a mentor and father-figure to the confused and lost Chiron. In this scene, the low-angled camera is submerged in and on the surface of the water and bobs up and down with the motion of the water. This places the audience within the scene, allowing a connection, where we feel the water wash over us. Continuing to subvert the conventions of

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the genre, this scene features the classical, instrumental music that is prominent throughout. The non-diegetic soundtrack is a reflection of his inner self and how different he is to the chaotic and violent world around him.

Throughout the film, Chiron is often captured from behind, walking away from the audience or side on by the camera. This thwarts our ability to see inside Chiron's mind, and through this use of camera, Jenkins keeps us at a distance. This is also symbolic of how Chiron fails to see himself and finds it so hard to face up to his sexuality and his family life.

In this scene we see Chiron experience what it is like to be touched by someone he deeply cares about, his best friend, Kev. The lighting is the crucial code within this scene as it is lit softly and expressively to reflect the important symbol – and title of the film, moonlight. Symbolically, moonlight represents the idea that we can be true to ourselves in the moonlight; that it shines on us to reveal all the dark hidden aspects of who we are, our secret innermost selves. In Chiron's case, it is his sexuality – an aspect of himself that he has felt the need to hide, growing up in the hyper-masculine world of black Miami. The lighting in this scene is soft, shadowy and romantic and the scene – which is a significant moment in the development of Chiron and, indeed, the narrative itself – is highly memorable as a result. It reflects the genuine care and affection these two young men have for one another and in no way makes this tryst seem controversial, uncomfortable or wrong. This demonstrates just how far society's understanding about homosexuality and the representation of gay characters has developed over the decades.



FIGURE 7.53 An adolescent Chiron (Ashton Sanders) in *Moonlight*



FIGURE 7.54 An illustration of Chiron as an adult (played by Trevante Rhodes) and his best friend Kev (Jharrel Jerome) in *Moonlight*

Analysis

1. Explain how camera techniques have been used to establish the point of view from which the narrative is told.
2. The ocean is a recurring symbol that plays an important role for several characters in the narrative. Explain how this symbol has been used in conjunction with storylines to drive the narrative forward.
3. Explain how time has been structured across the text. How have media codes been used to signify a progression in the narrative?
4. In the scene with Chiron and Kev, lighting is an essential element. Describe the contribution lighting has made to the development of Chiron's character.
5. Consider the use of costume in the three distinct phases of Chiron's journey. Describe how costume has been used to establish his place first as an outsider, and then as one who attempts to reject his own identity.
6. Explain the role setting plays in *Moonlight*. How does this contribute to the narrative?
7. How does the setting also contribute to the ideology of the production period?

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7.8 *Struggle Street*



DIGITAL LINK

Visit the Interactive Textbook to access an additional narrative and ideology case study on the 2015 SBS TV series *Struggle Street*.



ACTIVITY 7.28

1. An understanding of the audience from the production period of the narrative text/s you are studying can provide valuable insights into the ideology and how it is reflected in the text/s. Investigate the year and place of production and make notes about events, issues, major news stories, social and cultural ideologies that were happening at the time.
2. Consider the ideology/ies evident in the texts you have studied. Are they implicit or explicit? Explain how this is conveyed through the codes and conventions.
3. Explain what contribution the media narratives you have studied this year have made to an ideology; for example, do they simply reflect the views of the production context of time and place, or have the narrative/s played a more significant role in the dissemination of views?

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CHAPTER REVIEW

Summing it all up

Stories are everywhere. From an innocent request for free chicken nuggets on Twitter, a global narrative of re-tweets developed one man's desire for fried chicken into a quest people across the globe were able to participate in. We love stories because they tap into our innermost desires and dreams (fried or otherwise) and help us understand the world we inhabit. However, the stories we see and those we tell ourselves are invariably shaped by the ideologies that challenge or support the ideas that shape the society with live in. Be they explicit or implicit, we use the media to engage in debate, discussion and reflection on the way representations and stories tell us not just about our past, but where we are going too.

Revision questions

1 Define all five stages of the narrative production process.
2 Explain how media forms can determine the length of each stage in the production process.
3 Explain the role of technology in the way audiences consume texts
4 Explain how different texts can communicate understanding for an audience using different techniques.
5 Using four examples, explain how media codes help communicate meaning in narrative texts.
6 Using four examples, explain how these same media codes can communicate media conventions in narrative texts.
7 Explain how ideology can be neutral, implicit or explicit.
8 Explain how ideologies can shape the construction of media representations and texts.
9 Explain how institutional contexts can determine the way in which ideologies appear in media texts.
10 Explain how ideologies can be shaped by a variety of media texts.

Practice assessment questions

Introduction:

The 2016 series *The Night Of* involves implicit ideology within the character of Naz. As a conservative son of a hard-working Pakistani American and Muslim family, his role as 'the other' within this text is worth examining. Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in America in 2001, the role of Muslims within Western society has become a topic of ideological debate. In 2016, elections and referendums were fought within the context of radical terrorism; around the globe, politicians here in Australia and abroad debated the role of immigration and radical Islam in contemporary society.

While *The Night Of* does not buy into this debate in a literal sense, the suspicion surrounding the lead character Naz and his role in the murder comes into question later in the series. His role as 'the other' within the narrative becomes more apparent as the media frenzy surrounding his case takes on a more religious

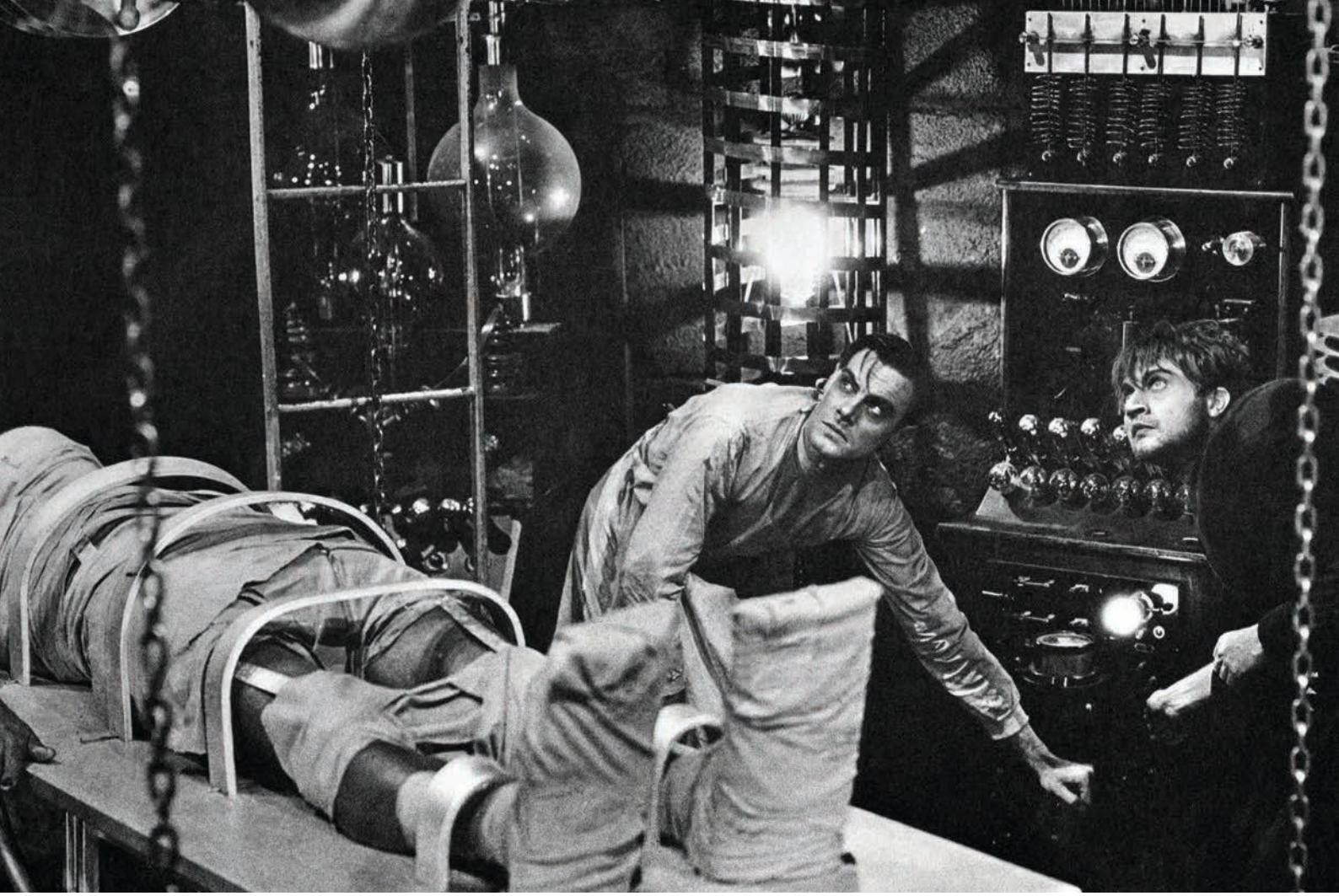
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tone and his own community is the victim of racial attacks and negative graffiti that highlights his religious origins. In one of the several scenes when Naz is in court later in the series, his violent past is linked to the racial abuse he suffered as a Muslim New Yorker after the terrorist attacks.

In light of this, it may help to revisit your dissection of *The Night Of* earlier in this chapter to prepare an approach to your assessment.

1. Define how codes and conventions have been used in the construction of Naz.
2. Define how a challenge to ideology was made implicit within his character.
3. Now explain how this ideology was supported by other scenes within the text.
4. Research the institutional context within which *The Night Of* was created. What other texts has HBO created? How could this have influenced its production?
5. Explain how the producers of this crime genre utilised this ideological debate to create an engaging narrative.

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CHAPTER 8 AREA OF STUDY 2

MEDIA PRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT

Ideas are cheap. Ideas are easy. Ideas are common. Everybody has ideas. Ideas are highly, highly overvalued. Execution is all that matters.

— Casey Neistat, vlogger

OVERVIEW

Research is a vital component to developing your own ideas. Great filmmakers have found their ideas in an investigation of their own lives, the people who surround them and in the stories that formed their own love for telling them. It's time to borrow, adapt and re-create ideas and techniques that appeal to you and reflect the ideas you want to express and communicate the most. More importantly, it's a chance to dive into that 'one thing' from your study of media that you love the most and learn everything there is to know about it.

FIGURE 8.1 (above): Colin Clive, as Dr Frankenstein, and Dwight Frye, as his assistant Fritz, prepare to bring their monster to life in a scene from the 1931 movie version of *Frankenstein*. Creating a monster is in a sense what you are about to undertake with your media production!

OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to research aspects of a media form and experiment with media technologies and media production processes to inform and document the design of a media production.

To achieve this outcome, the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- media codes and conventions, narrative, genres and styles appropriate to the selected media form
- structural and aesthetic qualities of media products that engage with and are read by audiences
- research that informs the exploration and development of ideas and skills in a selected media form
- methods for recording, documenting and evaluating research
- media equipment, technologies and processes appropriate to a selected media form and proposed product
- media language.

KEY SKILLS

- explore media codes and conventions, narratives, genres and styles appropriate to the selected media form
- analyse how audiences are engaged by structural and aesthetic qualities of media products
- analyse how audiences use structural and aesthetic qualities to read media products
- undertake research to inform the exploration and development of ideas and skills in a selected media form
- record, document and evaluate the exploration and development of ideas and skills in a selected media form
- develop skills in the use of equipment, media technologies and processes appropriate to a selected media form and proposed product
- evaluate the use of equipment, media technologies and processes of the proposed product through documentation
- use media language.

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KEY TERMS

- structural qualities
- aesthetic qualities
- reading a text
- School-assessed Task (SAT)
- production design
- documenting research

WHAT'S AHEAD

SECTION 8.1	SECTION 8.2	SECTION 8.3	SECTION 8.4	SECTION 8.5
Background	Brainstorming and gathering knowledge	Researching	Documenting and presenting your research	The exercises, presenting and reflecting

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8.1 Background

Welcome to the beginning of your last production for VCE Media! In this outcome, you will have the opportunity to experiment with applications and/or processes that you may go on to utilise in your final production. By now you've probably got a good idea about what you want to produce over the next few months, but have you thought about how you will go about completing certain processes along the way? This outcome allows you the opportunity to work out how you could make each frame or image that you shoot that much more visually stunning in order to engage your intended audience. As media producers, we are constantly referencing the art and artists that have come before us and their styles, techniques and choices for structural and aesthetic qualities. In this study you will show your understanding of how audiences can be engaged through your final production by investigating and researching a selected media form in order to inform the development of your final media product.

You'll probably be given less time to perform the tasks for this section of study, so make sure you make short and sharp timelines. In the two to three weeks you have to prepare, produce and evaluate a process or application, remember to communicate with your teacher along the way. Discussing your process will benefit your overall exploration and better your practice as a media director. It helps to define each task you want to complete so that you can manage your work well. Make sure you make each task achievable in the timeframe you have as well as document them efficiently, so that evaluating and explaining to what extent you realised your initial intentions can be explained. Finally, you should ask yourself the following question: is this a process worth utilising for my major production?

Be aware! You cannot use any of the content from these experiments for your final production. Your work in this outcome is its own criterion on the VCAA **School-assessed Task (SAT)** rubric. These tasks are aimed to help guide you in a better direction for one or two of the processes that you will perform in media production design, which you will complete in the next outcome.

School-assessed Task (SAT) the major production for VCE Media Units 3 & 4

Media production what the Units 3 & 4 student will produce for their SAT

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the requirements of your second outcome of this unit. You will conduct an investigation into the various aspects of the media form in which you intend to create your SAT. Put simply, you will examine elements of filmmaking, photography, animation, audio, print or another hybridised form to better prepare yourself for your major production.

The task comes in three parts:

1. research
2. production activities
3. a complete **Media production** development plan.

Media production development task

Your assessment for this outcome will involve a series of small tasks.

1. You will need to research and gather knowledge about your media form.
2. You will need to research a specific element of this that interests you.
3. You will need to use media equipment and technology to create a production exercise.
4. You will need to submit a reflection and analysis of these exercises.



FIGURE 8.2 Steps involved in the Media production development task

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8.2 Brainstorming and gathering knowledge

Before you even consider the experiment you intend to undertake, it's important to approach your media form from a distance to understand all the elements. Are you interested in film? Animation? Documentary? Photography? A printed series of layouts? A hybrid digital presentation? Is it the form or the idea that attracts you? You should already have started thinking of an idea on your holidays so now is the time to set the wheels in motion.

During this process, it will be important to make notes in a brainstorming document, either on a physical page or on a digital document. You'll use all of the ideas you collect here in your final Media development plan submission. So let's begin!

Throughout your study of media representations, you looked at how media codes and conventions were used to construct or suggest meaning. Look back to your notes as you begin brainstorming ideas. What other conventions will help your audience understand your ideas? Ask classmates if they can follow your ideas.



FIGURE 8.3 Dr Frankenstein faces the monster he created in *Frankenstein*

ACTIVITY 8.1

Begin the process of brainstorming and gathering knowledge. Outline your ideas in a sketch book or Word document so you can drop ideas into them when they come to you. Start one now!

Narrative

The term *diegesis* gets thrown around quite a bit by media students and teachers. Understanding your plot line, characters and their relationships are some of the most important factors in telling a great story. By creating a back story for each character that inhabits your narrative, you are in turn building the conventions of the diegetic world of your story.

One task you may set yourself in this outcome is investigating different types of characters and creating a back story for each of them so that you can better comprehend the world of your story.



FIGURE 8.4 Brainstorming ideas is an important part of the creative process.

Ideas for creating character lists:

- Use an old Teledex to make character profiles; believe it or not, they still make and sell inserts at office supplies stores.
- Most scriptwriting software, such as Celtx, has character sheets as one of its functionalities.
- Create a spreadsheet for each scene of the film and its corresponding characters.
- Make a list of props every character needs and reasons why they could not survive without them.
- Enter your findings into your brainstorming documents.

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ACTIVITY 8.2

It's your creative licence! This world that you will soon create for your story has rules and codes that you have the final say over. In your production experiments, you might want to explore the storylines of other films to help get the ball rolling.

1 Construct lists for the 'rules of the world' of your favourite films or animations. Explain how the story unfolds.
2 Explain how and what you would like to incorporate into your own production and explore in an exercise.
3 Outline your findings in your brainstorming documents.

Genre and style

sepia a reddish-brown colour associated particularly with monochrome photographs

curated media content that has been gathered and collected by users for a specific audience

An audience should understand what your genre is very quickly. As student media makers, we don't have a whole lot of time to introduce every facet of our story; some of this must be implied through props, opening *title typography* or other clues craftily **curated** in the background. *Colour correcting* your shots with a subtle green tinge tells your viewer they are in a sci-fi film, while adding **sepia** tones takes us back in time to the Western genre and beyond.

ACTIVITY 8.3

When thinking about styles appropriate to your production's narrative you can easily make a collage of other stories from the same category.

1 The big question is, how does your story stand out?
2 What makes your final product unique and authentic to your personal style?
3 Outline your findings in your brainstorming document.

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for some tips on coming up with ideas.



FIGURE 8.5 Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) and David Ayer's *Fury* (2014) both use the same washed-out stylisation to convey a war-torn European landscape.

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Structural qualities

Producers construct products so that audiences understand them. We all love being tested; however, the harder something is to figure out, the less chance we have getting our idea across to our specific and intended audience. The first screening of your piece could be its last, so working out the best way to tell your story is vital.

Choosing to shoot a sequence and then editing the shots in a variety of ways could be a fantastic experiment for those wanting to shoot a short film later in the year.

ACTIVITY 8.4

Consider ways in which you could order or reorder a sequence from your idea.

1. Regardless of the form you have chosen, create a series of storyboards, sketch out your story possibilities and identify the possible effects and meaning derived from your storyboards.
2. Outline your findings into your brainstorming documents.

In your study of narrative and ideology, you would have looked at the way a feature-length film's storyline was presented to its audience and how meaning was conveyed through specific directorial choices. What could non-linear editing do for your project that linear editing cannot? You may also experiment with the way sound is edited to convey meaning.

In former VCE Media student Dominic Allen's film production *Two Men*, the two main characters are brought closer to the audience through the use of multiple shots. The first shot is of both men in a wide shot, followed by a mid shot and, finally, a close-up shot of each character. This sequence of edits introduces each man by increasing their **screen real estate** or ownership within the frame. This can be referred to as building the visual intensity of a character.

screen real estate relating to how much space an object takes up on the screen

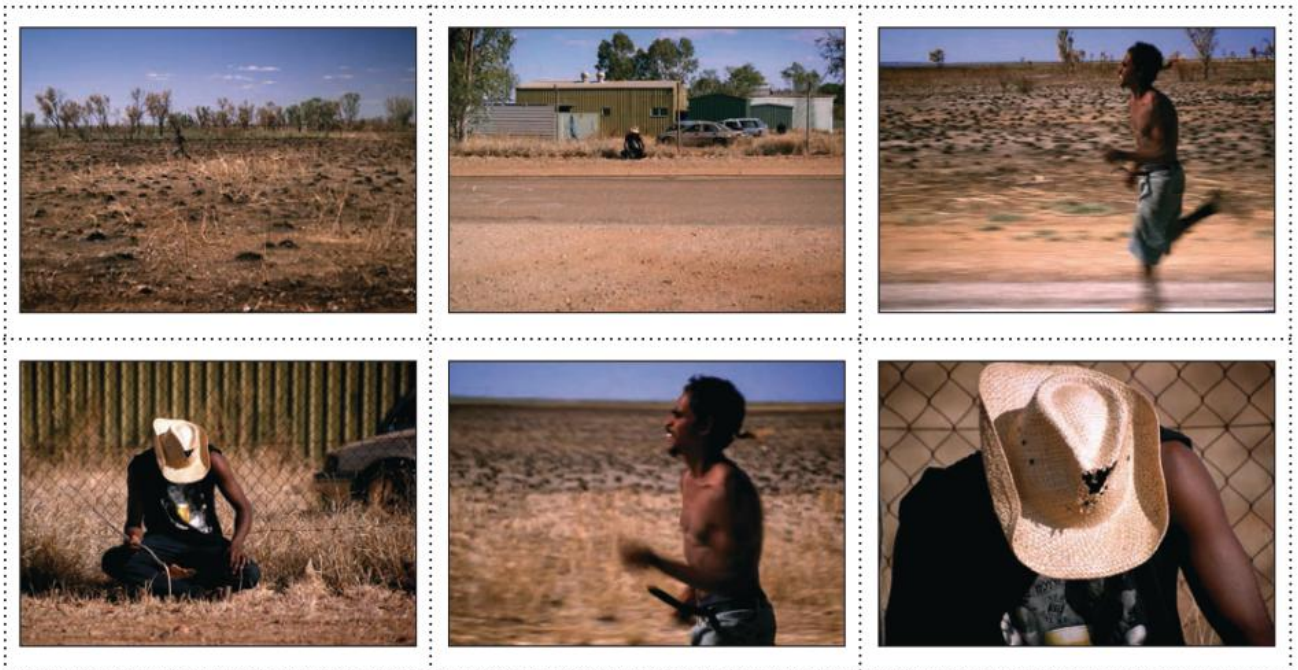


FIGURE 8.6 Stills from Dominic Allen's *Two Men* – employing a sequence of cuts from long, to mid, to close-ups on the actors increases their screen real estate, building the visual intensity of each character.

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handheld shot camera shots created without the stability of a tripod

dolly the apparatus used to move a camera during the shot

Some other varieties in structure you may find you need to flesh out before you draw up a shot list for your final production might be the use of camera movement. Will you choose to go **handheld**, will you stabilise shots with a tripod, or will you create flow with a **dolly** effect?

The mid shot of two characters within a frame can become boring pretty quickly. What other methods could you implement to make a scene dynamic? Or, do you have what it takes to break conventions entirely and shoot from uncommon angles to reach a desired effect? This is your chance to experiment to see what works for your piece.

Aesthetic qualities

Beauty rests in the eye of the beholder; however, a director makes their own decision about what they want to shoot and how they intend to shoot it. This creation of personal style is what makes art so wonderful and also so mind-boggling. The audience is left to interpret the message and thus find the beauty between the subject and the style.

Each shot you capture implies its own message to the audience. This is what makes this outcome so enjoyable as you are getting the opportunity to test and question your very own style. Nothing is set in stone, yet!

ACTIVITY 8.5

If you want to make a film or animation, look back to your filmmaking heroes and ask why they are your heroes. Take single frames from your favourite screen stories and analyse them using your knowledge of:

1. mise en scene
2. symmetry
3. colour
4. the use of line/depth/distance
5. light vs darkness in the frame.

Choosing to storyboard or location scouting for this outcome will lend itself to an expansive practice of perception and appreciation for the aesthetic, and it will present you with a multitude of possibilities for your film. The last thing you want is to limit your production.

6. Add all of your notes and findings to your brainstorming.

ACTIVITY 8.6

1. Examine this still from Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette* (2006).
2. Explain how the use of light, line and texture engages the audience.



FIGURE 8.7 Kirsten Dunst as the title character in *Marie Antoinette* (2006)

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PHOTOGRAPHER'S CORNER

Photography is a wonderful medium that allows the audience the opportunity to view your work for an infinite amount of time. Like film, there are a multitude of genres, and these genres also have hybrid genres, as well as sub-genres. Also, like film, these genres (often called styles) bring with them their own set of conventions that set them apart from other genres.

Codes and conventions, narrative, genres and styles of photography

Photography is an art with close ties to the moving image, but one that has a style and identity all of its own. Below is a list of photographic genres to help get you thinking about what and where your camera can take you. As you will see shortly, photography is diverse and the dissection of narrative, style and aesthetics can be found in multiple genres within:

- portraiture
- landscape
- nature
- commercial
- sport
- food
- architectural
- structural
- art
- conceptual
- surrealist
- abstract
- narrative
- documentary.

Portraiture

Portraiture is one of the oldest genres. We usually associate portraits with a school photo where the focus is the subject's face. If we think back to early paintings, wealthy families often had their portraits taken partly due to their status in society. The *conventions* associated with portraiture involve capturing a subject's facial features, and in turn their physical presence and, therefore, their personality. The *Mona Lisa* is one of the most famous portraits partly due to her unique facial expression that critics have argued about for many years.

Portraiture often utilises close-up camera shots to emphasise facial expressions; however, medium shots and even long shots are conventional to the genre as well. Symbolic codes associated with portraiture usually involve the type of *lighting* used and how it's used to illuminate the subject. The *mood* generated from a portrait can differ simply based on the lighting techniques used. *Glamour* photography is a sub-genre of portraiture and often involves soft lighting helped by **diffusing** the light, often with a studio **soft box**. Think of Hollywood actress headshots from the 1940s, like the example in Figure 8.8.

diffuser an accessory used to make light appear less hard or harsh

soft box a studio lighting accessory that diffuses the light and softens the shadows cast on the subject. It is a flexible box that attaches to a light stand by encasing it in a screen.

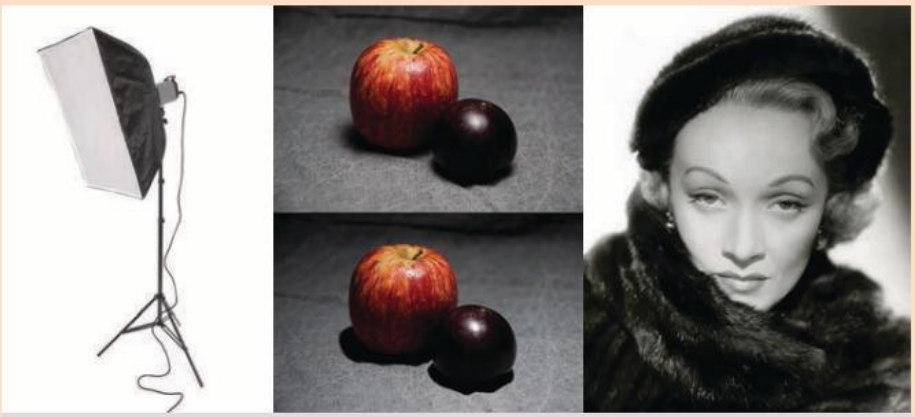


FIGURE 8.8 (Left) A lighting soft box, (centre) an example (using fruit) of how the soft box can diffuse the light on a subject, and (right) an example of glamour portraiture – Hollywood actress Marlene Dietrich often was lit in this fashion for her close-ups.

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Like other genres of photography, such as *art*, *dance* and *narrative*, the body language of the subject is another symbolic code used to generate meaning for audiences. A ballet dancer performing a jump, a model adopting an angry facial expression and a subject directly pointing to a scene are all examples of how the combination of body language, facial expression and gestures can indicate how the viewer should read the photograph.

For genres of photography where there are no people involved, this has to be done via other codes and conventions.



FIGURE 8.9 An example of portraiture

Food photography

This is an ever-growing genre due to the rise in popularity of lifestyle and cooking programs, large sales of traditional cookbooks and e-books, and the influence of food-based blogs. Lighting, props and overall mise en scene to create drama and stimulate one's taste buds are conventions of the genre. Movement and simplicity are also photographic elements used to heighten a potentially ordinary photograph of food.



FIGURE 8.10 An example of food photography

Architectural photography and landscape photography

These both rely on the beauty of human-made structures or vast scenery, such as an 18th-century cathedral or a national park. However, a wide **depth of field** to show both the foreground and background in sharp **focus** is crucial to fitting in with the genres' conventions in order to capture the design aesthetics. *Surrealist photography*, using DSLRs, relies on post-production editing programs such as Photoshop in order to achieve compositions that are of an imagined or hyper-real effect; but before digital photography, analogue photography using SLRs used techniques such as double **exposure** and montage to achieve the same effect.

depth of field refers to how much of an image is in focus and where the focus is located within the image. Depth of field can be shallow, or a small area of the image, or can be wide, or a large area of the image.

focus the area of the image that is crisp and can be seen in detail

exposure the combined settings of the aperture, shutter speed and ISO when taking a photograph



FIGURE 8.11 This image uses low angle, black and white to highlight the depth of field of the image. The highways jut out from the background to the foreground of the frame, the concrete stands out from the sky and makes for a visually interesting texture.

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What's common to all genres of photography is lighting. Lighting creates mood, and the mood creates meaning for the audience. *Sport photography* often relies on a fast shutter speed to capture a movement in motion. *Abstract photography* may rely on a slow shutter speed and available light to obscure reality. *Art photography* may rely on a low-key lighting effect to create harsh shadows on its subject, or utilise back lighting to create a halo effect on its subject.

Therefore, understanding how a camera works is the best way to get familiar and comfortable with the medium. If you don't know what **aperture** or **shutter speeds** are, ask your teacher if you could borrow a camera to experiment with. While you're in the equipment room, get familiar with all that your school has to offer. Some of you will be lucky to have your own camera and key pieces of equipment. What you need to understand is that many accessories apart from the camera can be made by yourself, borrowed from friends or rented. Taking a good photograph does not require the fanciest, most expensive equipment. Having a great idea and executing it with creativity in composition is most crucial.

aperture the amount of light let through the lens, measured in f/stops. The lower the f/stop number, the more light you are letting through the lens opening.

shutter speed the amount of time the shutter remains open to capture light and images

ACTIVITY 8.7

From the list provided, examine three different photography genres in your brainstorming. For each one, note down what you notice about the following:

1. the aesthetic qualities common to the genre
2. story conventions
3. camera techniques
4. lighting techniques.

ACTIVITY 8.8

Assess the equipment available to you at home or at school.

1. What equipment will you be able to use for your production and exercise?
2. Do these tools allow you to do this?
3. What software and editing tools do you have access to?
4. Do they have the capacity to perform the functions you have in mind?
5. Enter your findings into your brainstorming document.

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8.3 Researching

You need to begin building a Media **production design** for your research and experiment. You should use the template provided to begin structuring the 'formal' findings of your research.

If you're stuck for ideas, this book you're reading now is full of ideas, directors, films, styles and discussions of techniques that have been used to engage audiences. Revisit the narrative, style and genre, and media and change chapters to read about established and new forms of audience engagement. Everything you need to springboard your research is right here in this book!

production design set of written and visual documents that detail the stages of production of a proposed product (written in Unit 3) the student will realise in Unit 4

Find a technique or process that you like and want to pursue and learn. Begin with an investigation into the background of the process, technique, or skill. Take notes on everything, especially keeping a log of every website you research. You may intend to emulate a very specific technique.

ACTIVITY 8.9

Examine all of your brainstorming and then answer the following questions:

- What is the skill you want to explore?
- What do you already know about this skill and what are you hoping to learn or get out of the exercise?
- Who performs this skill in the real world? How did they do it?
- What technical capacity, equipment and skill are required to learn it?

The key is to keep it simple and set achievable goals. For instance, if you are competent in Adobe After Effects, then you could choose a new process within the application, but understand that you are not going to conquer the entire application that is After Effects in just three weeks.

You will meet with your teacher to discuss your goals for these experiments and how achievable they will be in the given timeframe. Your teacher will outline the boundaries of the experiment with you.

Some ideas to help you make a plan could be:

- editing transitions between characters
- using lighting to change understanding of a character
- using effects software to create realistic explosions
- using soundtracks to alter meaning
- animating the same character in three different animation styles
- creating a podcast in a variety of formats.

ACTIVITY 8.10

1 Record the following findings in your design.
2 Develop this experiment around an accomplishable goal that will inform your learning. Are you researching a specific camera technique that you would like to emulate in your final film?

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AMAZING FACT

The dolly zoom, also known as Hitchcock's '*Vertigo* effect', tests a camera operator's understanding of lens focus and camera movement.

dolly zoom aka '*Vertigo* Effect'; an in-camera effect that appears to undermine normal visual perception. The effect is achieved by using a zoom lens to adjust the angle of view (often referred to as field of view, or FOV) while the camera dollies (moves) towards or away from the subject in such a way as to keep the subject the same size in the frame throughout.



FIGURE 8.12 A shot from Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1957), starring Jimmy Stewart, suggesting the famed camera effect.

PHOTOGRAPHER'S CORNER: WHAT TO RESEARCH

As a student about to embark on photography as your medium of choice, the best advice is to start with books in your school library. You should visit your local public library, and consider a trip to a local university campus where you can sift through collections of photographic books and magazines. If your teacher already has books or magazines, consider asking for specific titles that will help you and your class.

Just to be clear, there's nothing wrong with going online to begin research, but it can be daunting if you don't know where to begin. Pinterest, for example, looks great but it can often be difficult to source the photographer of the work you 'pinned'. This is why you should start with books as they can be the launching point to find more information on specific ideas and photographers elsewhere.

If you find that a genre has really stood out to you, the next step is to immerse yourself in as much of that genre's best work from the greatest master photographers. Like any good photographer who has come before *you*, they are often inspired by someone before *them*. So, knowing the work of a number of master photographers will not only help with your own production development, but demonstrate that you know your stuff.

Here's a list of master and contemporary photographers to get you started.

Alfred Stieglitz
André Kertész
Andrew Zuckerman
Annie Leibovitz
Ansel Adams
Anton Corbijn
Arnold Newman
August Sander
Barbara Morgan
Bill Brandt
Cecil Beaton
Cindy Sherman
Cornell Capa
David LaChapelle
Deborah Pauuwe
Dennis Stock
Diane Arbus
Dorothea Lange
Edward Weston
Elliott Erwitt
Ernst Haas
Eve Arnold
Fabrizio Ferri
Harold E Edgerton
Harry Callahan
Helmut Newton
Henri Cartier-Bresson
Herb Ritts
Imogen Cunningham
Jeff Wall
Jerry Uelsmann
Lee Friedlander
Loretta Lux
Man Ray
Mario Testino
Martin Schoeller

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Maurizio Galimberti	Philippe Halsman	Vivian Maier
Max Dupain	Polly Borland	W Eugene Smith
Nadav Kander	Richard Avedon	Walker Evans
Nan Goldin	Robert Capa	Weegee
Paul Strand	Sandy Skoglund	William Eggleston
Pentti Sammallahti	Terry Richardson	William Wegman
Peter Bialobrzeski	Tim Walker	

Looking at the work of professional photographers will hopefully inspire you, provide specific knowledge and give you a path towards generating ideas.

ACTIVITY 8.11

1. Document things you liked about a photographer's work that may inspire your production. If possible, record the photographer's name and the name of the work. Concentrate on codes and conventions as well as aesthetic qualities.
2. Use your smartphone to create a Pinterest board. That way, all the things you find on your phone can be in one place that can be accessed later on. Pinterest is an app for phones and computers that is basically a digital pin board. A board is like a folder that allows you to 'pin' images to one place. The best feature is being able to edit an annotation beneath the image that can be used in your production plan later on.
3. If you don't like Pinterest, then **Google Drive** is useful as simple storage.
4. If you find you could go on and on viewing a photographer's work and need more focus, follow certain pages on social media that will continually provide inspiration and ideas. **LensCulture** is a great website that provides series of photographic work.
5. Knowing what galleries and exhibitions are running in your area can also provide the incentive to learn more about mounting and presentation of photographs and are usually free to view. **CCP** (Centre for Contemporary Photography), **Colour Factory**, **Magnet Galleries** and **local city councils** in Victoria are all helpful.
6. Choose some photographers from the list above and investigate them.

A little bit about Deborah Pauuwe

Deborah Pauuwe is based in Adelaide, Australia, with an aesthetic that can be described as delicate, innocent, with subtle provocation and themes of voyeurism and ambiguity. Pauuwe relies on the elements of mise en scene, body language and cropping to engage her audiences.

A little bit about David LaChapelle

David LaChapelle's photographic background includes advertising, editorials and film. Working with models and celebrities ensures his work is always theatrical and colourful with a hyperreal aesthetic. Mise en scene is an important element in his work and he often uses symbolic codes that can be read by his audiences, which are sometimes partially hidden. His work is very inspiring, dealing with social issues such as fame, beauty and American consumer culture, but executed in an original and often humorous way. He injects grotesque, kinky and biblical elements into his work.



FIGURE 8.13 Photographer David LaChapelle

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Analysing photographic work

Another way to research your own ideas is to track down some work from former students and critique it. Ask your teacher if there is any past student work available to view. Before you look elsewhere, use this example created by a former VCE Media student. Tayla Elsdon purposely utilised a specific editing technique in Adobe Photoshop to get her intended idea across.



FIGURE 8.14 Former VCE Media student Tayla Elsdon's photographic sequence

What you might find as photographers undertaking a series is that not everyone will understand the same message you intended to portray. What's great about photography is that everyone will interpret it slightly differently. So it's up to you to either make the message or idea very clear or to purposely be vague in the way you present your series.

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What do we see in the series?

We see landscapes of the city and rural environments presented in a spherical shape. If we look closely, we can potentially identify certain locations in the images, which maintains our engagement.

What was the artist's inspiration?

Tayla was inspired for this series by her experience of moving houses frequently during her childhood. She actually moved 12 times. We see 12 photos that represent this. A feeling of belonging is something she always looked for at the different locations she moved to, so the sense of community Tayla sought at each location, whether it was a rural or urban setting, can be found in the series. She appreciated both types of environments so she wanted the scenery she portrayed to seem infinite and merged together. She hoped the distortion of the landscape scenery into a sphere could create a sense for the audience of moving through a tunnel, viewed as one, to represent her feeling for both environments.

When analysing a photo or a series/sequence

You will realise a few things.

a You may or may not be the primary intended audience for the work.

b It's not always easy to figure out what the photographer had in mind when creating the work.

c You will have to apply this knowledge to understanding how to break down your own set of work. Write a statement as to why this student created this work and justify your answer.

Looking at the series, have you figured out what the photographer was intending?

a What genre/s of photography can it be categorised as?

b How do you know this? What typical elements make this the genre or hybrid genre you think it is?

c Are you engaged by the series in some way? What specific elements in the series have engaged you and why do you think this is?



ACTIVITY 8.12

Now examine work from a past student at your own school in the media form you have chosen and write a potential intention and audience statement.

8.4 Documenting and presenting your research

From the beginning you are recording your findings. Make it paramount in your process that you use a pen and saturate that design plan with ideas. Once experimentation is done it is time to record your findings and evaluate if this skill or process is of use to you in the coming weeks.

The School-assessed Task (SAT) is time-sensitive and time is of the essence. The questions you asked yourself at the beginning of your investigation need to be answered in a neat and tidy way.

Whether it's during Year 11 or over the summer holidays before Year 12 begins, any ideas you have for your major Media production should be recorded:

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- If you're someone who generates your ideas before bed or when you wake up from a dream, have a notebook and pen beside your bed to record any interesting ideas.
- Some students have a corkboard in their bedroom on which they can place relevant pictures or quotes when generating ideas over a period of time.
- If you're a technologically inclined person, using a memo or notepad app on your phone or tablet can be very useful for those moments when you know you'll otherwise forget the idea in a fleeting moment. Always back up the files by emailing them to yourself if the list gets longer over time.
- You could also write directly onto a brainstorming page. This way you don't lose your work and it's all in the same place.
- Use Keynote or PowerPoint presentation slides.
- Audio or video recordings – a simple vlog recording of your face and voice is easy to do, and you do not need to spend hours editing this portion of your work.



FIGURE 8.15 Recording your findings is paramount.

Once you've collated all your ideas you can begin to put your brainstorming together via a range of methods:

- A simple piece of paper with a key word or phrase in the middle can help you generate ideas. A *mind map* is a great tool for grouping ideas visually into related themes or topics. Compared to lists or notes, a mind or concept map is visual, and therefore it quickly connects ideas.
- There is digital mind mapping software available where you can choose how you'd like to present your ideas via colours and shapes, if aesthetic is what you're going for.

Once you've completed one or even a few mind maps, your idea can evolve via specific techniques to evaluate further.

A simple pros and cons list may benefit your production idea, but taking it one step further creates more directed focus and may allow you to better decide if it's worth pursuing or perhaps altering it slightly. You may even decide that it may be best suited in another medium entirely. Some other brainstorming activities are listed here:

- **PMI** stands for plus, minus, interesting
- **SWOT** stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
- **SCAMPER** stands for substitute, combine, adapt, modify, put to another use, eliminate, reverse.

To present your research, use the template below and submit it to your teacher.

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for a downloadable version of this form.

PART ONE: THE RESEARCH

1 What form are you using?

- What are your reasons for using it?
- What do you see as its greatest qualities?

2 Outline the media codes and conventions of your form

Explain the narrative conventions and story styles appropriate to the selected media form and genre you have chosen. In here you should show evidence that you understand the basic structure of stories specific to your genre and examples where elements of the technique you want to experiment with are evident.

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3 **Explain the structural and aesthetic qualities of that genre and style that engage with and are read by audiences**
Show evidence of research that examines how individual codes work alone and with others to create meaning in your chosen form. Discuss and analyse examples.

4 **What are you researching?**
- What is the skill you want to explore?
- What do you already know about this skill and what are you hoping to learn or get out of the exercise?
- Who performs this skill in the real world?

5 **Research the work of at least three individuals or works that use the technique or practice that you wish to explore**
- What is it that you like about their work?
- How do you intend to incorporate it into your own idea?

6 **Write your intention**
- Write a detailed statement of how you intend to use technical equipment to present three experiments with the codes, conventions, aesthetic qualities or genre of your chosen form.

8.5 The exercises, presenting and reflecting

The equipment and technology you use for this outcome should be your own or your school's property. You are developing a new skill by testing a process for a specific audience. Always keep the targeted audience in mind.

How will this process make your life easier in the production process later? But also ask yourself, will the type of influence you have over your audience change, for better or for worse?

You need to begin documenting your exercise. Create a new document that will constitute Part Two of this assessment. Here you will need to write your intention for this exercise. It has three elements:

1 the intention
2 an explanation of how you will use technical equipment and practices to achieve this
3 a reflection on what did and did not work in your exercise.

This is a written explanation of the intended product. It should briefly cover the initial sequence along with the ways you aim to explore and experiment with your selected element. You need to be specific as to what effect you want to create. You also need to suggest possible ways to achieve this.

Some springboard ideas to get your creative juices flowing:

- an exercise in editing; for example, a sequence of shots and/or sound to achieve a required intention for a particular audience
- recording sound using equipment you or your school have
- lighting; for example, lighting a space for a specific intention
- organising a layout of a page using typography and/or images
- using photographic software to edit images; that is, filters and correcting colour
- planning a multimedia presentation or product with reference to design plan specifications
- creating a comparison collage of a variety of filters to convey a specific intention or style
- planning, photographing or recording an activity within a set number of shot types and/or camera angles
- arranging a composition within a frame to achieve a particular style, which is filmed or photographed.

Make sure you review the rubric throughout the outcome and discuss it with your teacher before setting off on this first of three adventures.

See the following page for the full template for this section of the Media production design.

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PART TWO: THE EXERCISE

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for a downloadable version of this form.

Intention

This is a written explanation of the intended product. It should briefly cover the initial sequence along with the ways you aim to explore and experiment with your selected element. You need to be specific as to what effect you want to create. You also need to suggest possible ways to achieve this.

You also need to describe the media processes being applied to develop particular skills to present specific ideas and/or achieve particular effects. For example: How does the focus on audio/editing assist in the overall production and what skills are required/being examined?

During

This section of the task will consist of a written description outlining the techniques you are using. You should also give details of the effect you are trying to create and achieve and the information you are trying to convey to the audience.

1. Basically, you need to explain *why* you are using each effect/track.
2. Explain how the research informs your decision. What elements will you try to emulate and re-create and what elements will you attempt to adapt and improve upon?

Outcome

This needs to be *at least* one page in length. Discuss what you have discovered in undertaking the task. You need to explain how the completed exercise has realised the stated intention of the task. You will also need to outline the extent to which the intention was realised.

This means considering which editing effect/audio track/photo manipulation technique best conveys the idea you were looking to achieve. Justify your answer. What was wrong with the other ways? Explain why the original idea is better or worse than other options. What makes it more/less effective?

CHAPTER REVIEW

Summing it all up

This outcome serves you, the student, in a number of ways. In a short span of time, you will investigate, perform and evaluate a specific skill or process that you have until now not attempted. By learning something new you have one more piece in your media arsenal you have been building throughout the last two units. Your findings throughout the various experiments need to be documented using media-specific language relevant to the tasks and your study of VCE Media. Records will show an analysis that ends with a conclusion that informs the reader if you will consider utilising this skill set in your future SAT.

Perhaps the process was too time-consuming. Perhaps you did not enjoy what was achieved in respect to your chosen genre or style.

Think about your audience. Think about your personal style. Question everything and show your work within your design plan. Most importantly, enjoy this process of making media and getting to question everything you do!

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CHAPTER 9 AREA OF STUDY 3

MEDIA PRODUCTION DESIGN

It's too cerebral! We're trying to make a movie here, not a film!

— Eddie Murphy, *Bowfinger* (1999)

OVERVIEW

The 2002 documentary *Lost in La Mancha* tells a cautionary tale. Film director Terry Gilliam was attempting to make a film about the legendary Don Quixote. Everything that could have gone wrong, did. Everything that couldn't be planned for, happened. At the end, he was left with the documentary *Lost in La Mancha* that told the story of a desperate director trying save a film that seemed to be doomed from the beginning. As you are about to embark on your own challenging journey, which requires planning and facing a number of 'what ifs', a clear vision of what you want to have in your hands at the end of the journey will be essential. Rather than make the 'story about trying to make the story', use this time to plan and prepare to never find yourself in Gilliam's shoes!

FIGURE 9.1 (above): The more work you can put into development and pre-production for your SAT the better your final product will be.

OUTCOME 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to develop and document a media production design in a selected media form for a specified audience.

To achieve this outcome, the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 3.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- methods for documenting the specified audiences, narrative and intention of the proposed production
- media codes and conventions, technologies and processes relevant to the selected media form, proposed audience, narrative and production
- methods for creating written and visual representations of a proposed production
- methods for documenting details of production and post-production roles, tasks and timelines
- media language relevant to the design and production of a media product in a selected media form.

KEY SKILLS

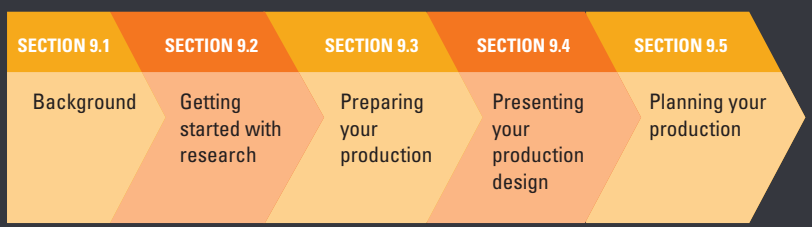
- document the specified audience, narrative and intention relevant to a selected media form and product
- apply media codes and conventions, technologies and production processes appropriate to the selected media form, proposed audience, narrative and product
- create written and visual representations of a proposed production
- document production and post-production roles, tasks and timelines
- use media language appropriate to the design and production of a media product in a selected media form.

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KEY TERMS

- creative intention
- influences
- production processes
- checklists
- time management
- screenwriting
- storyboarding
- locations
- crew

WHAT'S AHEAD



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9.1 Background

The journey you are about to go on as you undertake a media product will be complex and surprising, but ultimately rewarding … if you've planned well! Whether you intend to develop a video production, photography presentation, print production, animation, audio, interactive or hybrid, the challenges you will face are nothing compared to the ones that come with being unprepared.

The production design at the heart of this outcome is the one document that will save you! Effective and comprehensive production designs contain everything a media producer needs to realise their product according to their creative vision. Consider it your one-stop shop when it comes to understanding your creative intent, your intended audience and the overall aesthetic for your product.

But it's also your production bible. A well-executed production design documents all the practical and logistical elements you need to be mindful of as you enter production. Depending on the nature of your product, this can include the results of your production activities, a detailed treatment of the project, script, storyboards, mock-ups, casting and location notes, production schedules, permissions and consents. It is also clearly laid out and easy to follow. Fancy borders and glitter pens are not compulsory; a professional document *is*.

Think of the production design as the paper equivalent of your media product. If another student could pick up your production design and have a go at making your product, they should be able to replicate what you intend to make.

Your production schedule should be appropriate to the magnitude of your project, cast and crew should be in place, permissions organised, locations secured, and equipment identified and ready to go. If the only thing your team notices is that the person in charge is wearing a different face, your production design is ready!

9.2 Getting started with research

The story so far …

You've hit on an idea for your media product and you've pitched it to your teacher and classmates. In explaining it to your class, there are certain key pieces of information you should have communicated. The pitch explains the project in brief, introducing your class to the idea at the heart of your product and the form it will take. It demonstrates evidence that you've begun to think about your potential audience and artistic influences that can help you shape your product into a coherent whole. More importantly, you've considered the technologies and processes that will be crucial to the execution of your product, and your production activities have put them to the test.



FIGURE 9.2 Pitching your project to the class can help solidify your ideas.

There's no doubt in your mind that your media product is going to be the best the world has ever seen. But right now, despite the effort you've already put in, it's an embryo waiting to be born. It needs to be carefully shaped before it's ready for the world.

The best media products are those that are carefully planned, but they are also the ones whose creative evolution has been thought through carefully. You need to consider your overall creative intent, the story you wish to tell and exactly who your audience will or could be.

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Creative intention

Put simply, your statement of intention is the outline of your 'vision' for your media product. This is where your creative ideas should be explored without limit, before coalescing into something that is distinctly and recognisably your own.

There are as many ways to approach this opening section of your product design as there are VCE Media students. It will depend on how much you are already bringing to this stage of the process. Some of you may have a fully formed narrative floating around in your heads. Others of you might have a decent sense of your chosen media form or subject matter and little else. Even if you've got a solid vision, it's worth brainstorming anyway, because looking at the project from a fresh point of view might feed in new ideas that make your product even better.

Here are some ways you can flesh out your creative intention.

Mind map

Creating a mind map can be a terrific way of expanding on a core idea and looking at different ways it can be developed. You get a great sense of how the elements in the mind map connect, so if you need to backtrack and figure out where your ideas came from, it's all there.

Mind maps are also useful if you've already got a clear sense of what you want your product to be. Many media products are collaborative efforts in one sense or another. With a mind map at your disposal, you have an illustration of the thinking processes that went into the creation of your design. Think of it as your brain on paper.

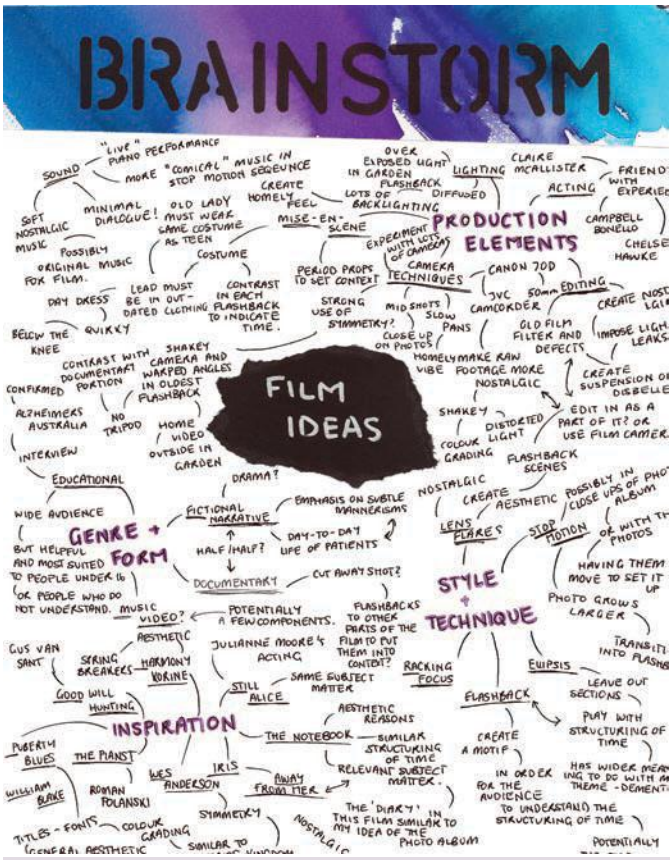


FIGURE 9.3 An example of a mind map from a PD by former VCE Media student Lucy Murphy

Convergence of influences

Complete the sentence, 'I'd like to try …' Are you influenced by particular artists? Particular styles? Constructing a map of how these influences will coalesce in your design is like making a mind map from the outside in. Your influences will hover like satellites around the core, which is where you describe the shape of your concept. They don't have to be expressed in words either. You might want to create a collage of screen grabs, photos, concept art – anything that creates an overall visual picture of your concept. Look for what's common about your influences, or the elements you think will collide favourably. Your concept is whatever meets in the middle.

Matching form to concept

Your heart might be married to a favourite media form. Each form has its unique strengths and limitations, and these can lend themselves to particular ideas. A photography folio needs to tell a story visually and thematically, without the benefit of sound. An audio product is the exact opposite, relying entirely on sound. Where you take your creative design can emerge from the possibilities your chosen form has to offer. Maybe your passion is audio and you'd like to create a product that is likewise *about* audio. A photography folio could represent stillness in particular settings.

Because you've thought through the possibilities of your media form in Media Production Development, you should have a good idea of how to turn that knowledge into creative ideas.

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Scope

Don't forget to keep your vision realistic! There are practical realities to be mindful of as you develop your ideas. You are going to face very specific timeframes, and VCAA imposes its own requirements for different media forms that must be adhered to.

Media form	Conditions
Video or film sequence	3–10 minutes, including titles/credits
Radio or audio production	8 minutes minimum, including titles/credits
Animation	10 minutes maximum, including titles/credits
Photographic presentation, sequence or series	• can be analogue or digital • minimum 10 images • shot, processed and edited by student
Print production	• can be digital or traditional print • 8 pages/layouts minimum • produced and edited by student
Digital and/or online production	Comparable complexity with the other media forms
Convergent or hybridised media production	• incorporates aspects of a range of media forms • meets the conditions of all media forms used

TABLE 9.1 Scope of your media form

Intention statement

Once you've decided on the creative path you intend to take, you need to communicate that to your stakeholders: your teacher and anyone helping you make your product. Although the creative visualisations we've already discussed are a great way to give people a sense of how your ideas have formed, it's worth expressing your vision in a clear, organised way. Which means writing it.

What you include in your intention statement will depend on your intention, but here's a checklist of common elements you want to include:

Element	✓
Form The media form you have chosen and explored in Media Production Development	
Genre The genre you wish to work in	
Theme The glue that holds your concept together artistically	
Engagement techniques Techniques you will use to engage an audience	

TABLE 9.2 Intention statement checklist

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ACTIVITY 9.1

Complete your intention statement now.

Narrative

Whatever form your product takes, it must include a narrative.

> The design incorporates a clear fictional and/or non-fictional narrative for a specified audience in a selected media form.
>
> — VCAA Study Design

This shouldn't be daunting, since by now you've studied several narrative media products across a variety of forms. You have an awareness of the ways different narratives are structured, and you know how they can be used to engage audiences.

What might be less obvious is how a narrative can be expressed through some of the media forms available. A video or film sequence is the most familiar media form when it comes to narrative. Similarly, it isn't hard to see how an animation or even a radio production can tell a story. But a print production? Or a photographic folio? Absolutely!

Print productions can include comics or graphic novels, zines or newspapers. Even a poster tells a story, a series of posters even more so.

Photographic series can be made to express narratives too. A story with a clear beginning, middle and end can emerge quite comfortably from a set of connected stills. Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962) with the soundtrack removed is a perfect example of how well this can work.

When it comes to digital productions, the narrative layers you include might become more complex and interactive, but there's plenty of room for them. A game is a perfect example of this.

A narrative doesn't have to be fictional. It could be that you know someone with a fascinating real-life story you feel deserves to be shared with the world. Documentary might be your passion; maybe you see



FIGURE 9.4 If you choose to produce a print layout narrative, you might employ a comic or graphic novel form.



FIGURE 9.5 A still from Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962) – a film that combined black and white photography instead of moving images with a proper soundtrack to tell a powerful science fiction story.

ACTIVITY 9.2

Answer the questions on the following page clearly and comprehensively, and your narrative statement is complete!

'Every film should have its own world, a logic and feel to it that expands beyond the exact image that the audience is seeing.'
— Christopher Nolan

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yourself as an archaeologist, digging around for information until a narrative emerges from the earth. You might even prefer a fiction/non-fiction hybrid, incorporating elements of docudrama.

The crucial questions to ask yourself:

- What story am I telling?
- How will it be told through the selected media form?

Audience

The worst thing you can decide if you want your media product to have legs is to think small when it comes to audience. There's a world of difference, for instance, between a short film that gets seen by family and friends and an award-winning career starter.

Too many students, when wanting to take the easy way out with their audience statement, limit themselves to the following brief statement: 'My audience is my Media teacher and my classmates.'

A common supporting reason is that the student wants to use some element they don't have copyright permission for. Which is fine: if your vision is to create a visual narrative inspired by a favourite pop song, you shouldn't let anyone stop you. But think about how to maximise your audience anyway. Maybe you want to include your work in a portfolio when you apply for industry-related work or further study. If so, say so!

Most students want their work to reach a wider audience. The challenge is in figuring out what that audience is and how an understanding of that audience can shape your product.

What are some of the audience factors that need to be considered? You can't please all the people all the time, so your media product won't have an audience of 'everyone'. Which means you need to figure out what your audience is going to look like. A certain measure of this understanding will come from your Media Production Development.

Investigate the interests of different audience groups and narrow down the list until you hit on the broadest possible audience that might be attracted to your media product. Or work the other way. Look at media products that inspire yours: what audiences did *they* have? Is there an overlap between their audiences and yours?

Whichever way you go, the effort is worth it. A media product with a clear sense of its potential audience stands a far better chance of reaching and engaging that audience.

AUDIENCE FACTORS

Some audience factors you might want to consider:

- *Demographic/social.* Is your media product more likely to appeal to a younger or older audience, or a mixture of the two? Males or females? People of a particular cultural background?
- *Interests.* If you intend to make an audio documentary about pop culture conventions, for instance, it is likely that your potential audience will be very specific. Similarly, a series of photographs depicting the life cycle of the hydrangea may not attract a mass audience.
- *Prior audience experience.* There are no truly original ideas any more, right? Any media product is going to borrow elements from what's come before. This might attract an audience to your product you hadn't planned on, if they're fans of media products with similar elements. Plunder your audience research from Area of Study 2 to get started. Having a keen sense of the overall aesthetic you intend to adopt – and knowing your influences well (see section 9.3) – will ensure this kind of 'surprise' audience comes as less of a surprise.
- *Production context.* Some people just like to see what up-and-coming media producers are up to. Your production context is that of a VCE Media product, which brings a particular audience. At the very least this will include your Media teacher and classmates, as well as friends and family. Does your school hold an annual film festival? You might also find a wider audience for your product if you are successful in being selected for Top Screen (if you've made a video or animation), Top Designs (photography and print) or Seasons of Excellence. Even if you don't see this as your primary audience, it's one you should be mindful of.

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Researching audience

You could generate a Google Form, Survey Monkey or other survey template software to ask specific questions to determine who your audience are. The surveys can include direct questioning where you will receive a written response. Written responses as opposed to tick boxes and multiple choice allow you to obtain more qualitative, reliable data. Depending on your production, sourcing statistics from certain sources may be equally effective, such as data on how many young people in Australia experience anxiety in their adolescence.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) can be helpful depending on your type of production. Ask your teacher if they can send a link of your survey/s to the school staff or students to help generate data from a broad age range.

STUDY TIP

There are also a number of comprehensive research techniques available in section 2.2 of this book.

Understanding your audience's expectations is essential too. While you should have a singular creative vision, knowing your audience lets you make conscious decisions about how accessible you make your product and what effect that will have on its audience. Revisiting some of the activities in Chapter 2, section 2.2, is a good way to start to get a better understanding of your audience.

ACTIVITY 9.3

Compile all of your audience research and accompany these findings with a written statement that clearly identifies the intended audience for your product.

9.3 Preparing your production

Now it's time to get down to the nitty-gritty of fleshing out your vision – and figuring out just how it's going to come together in a practical sense.

Influences

Once you've chosen the form and genre of your media product, you should identify examples of media products that are particularly influential and/or effective. Going for a short gangster film with a uniquely Victorian flavour? There are plenty of precedents for this sort of narrative that are worth plundering for elements that could inform your variation on the theme.

Animation, to look at another example, has many variants: flash animation, traditional hand-drawn cell work, 2D or 3D, and others. Each of these lends itself to particular styles, and you want to work within what is achievable and what is effective. Exploring the work of your predecessors is a quicker way to figure this out than making a dozen different animations and seeing which one comes out best!

Cast your net widely as you investigate influences. A gangster film set in Victoria should draw on more influences than a couple of episodes of *Underbelly*. Look at what other Australian filmmakers have done with the genre. You may even want to include elements from overseas gangster films and give them an Aussie spin.



FIGURE 9.6 You may choose to make a detective or gangster-type film and incorporate elements inspired by other media products by which you are influenced.

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Your research could even point you towards other media forms altogether. A photography series on war memorials could be informed by films or print publications or even radio texts that offer different perspectives on the theme. An animated teen rom-com will in all probability feature elements common to live action equivalents.

What remains at the heart of your research is the notion that you are plundering your influences to understand how they use the codes and conventions that will be relevant to your own media product.

ACTIVITY 9.4

Provide a written explanation of the role your influences will play in your media product.

'Nothing is original. Steal from anywhere that resonates with inspiration or fuels your imagination. Devour old films, new films, music, books, paintings, photography, poems, dreams, random conversations, architecture, bridges, street signs, trees, clouds, bodies of waters, light and shadows …. Always remember what Jean-Luc Godard said: "It's not where you take things – it's where you take them to".' – Jim Jarmusch

Codes and conventions

It's worth recapping what we mean when we talk about codes and conventions.

A *code* is a concept that is used to represent another idea in an indirect way. Media products are full of them – they have emerged over the decades as part of the 'language' of media. They operate as a shorthand between media producer and audience, communicating ideas indirectly to deepen and enrich the level of communication between media product and audience.

They come in three types: *technical codes*, *symbolic codes* and *written codes*.

- *Technical codes.* These encompass the technical language of media products. The most familiar examples are used in film or video texts, and include camera shots and angles, mise en scene, acting, lighting, editing and sound. Not that these elements are technical codes in themselves. The codes are what they *communicate* to an audience. A low camera angle communicates the idea that the figure in the frame is dominant or imposing. Low-key lighting communicates a sense of mystery.
- *Symbolic codes.* Signs, often visual, represent particular ideas not explicit in the sign itself. The colour red used as a symbolic code might represent anger, hostility or danger, or even love. A supercharged Ford Mustang being driven by a character in a narrative could be a symbol for masculinity. Symbolic codes appear most often in the mise en scene of media products.

STUDY TIP

A comprehensive list of how technical codes operate can be found in Chapter 7 'Narrative and ideology'.

AMAZING FACT

In the holocaust film *Schindler's List* (1993), director Steven Spielberg shot his film in black and white, but a few times in the film a little Jewish girl appears wearing a red coat. This bold use of colour stands out as a potent symbolic code as she represents the innocence of the Jews being slaughtered. When the protagonist sees her, he is motivated to act to save as many Jewish people as he can.

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STUDY TIP

Symbols are objects, characters, figures or colours used to represent abstract ideas or concepts. *Motifs* are recurring structures, contrasts or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

- *Written codes.* The interpretation of written text. While this can include the meaning of the words in the written text itself, analysis of written codes goes beyond that, making meaning from fonts and typefaces, text size and text placement. These codes are particularly important in the creation of print products, where the appearance of written text often communicates just as much as the words in it.



FIGURE 9.7 The girl in the red coat in *Schindler's List* (1993, dir. Steven Spielberg)

'Originality is the art of concealing your sources.' – Benjamin Franklin

Conventions

This includes standard features of media products belonging to a given genre or form. The heroine will always inexplicably walk into a darkened space in a slasher film. Comics and graphic novels will usually feature speech bubbles. Fly-on-the-wall documentaries will typically lack voice-over narration. Online games will involve some level of explicit interactivity between the media product and the audience.

DIGITAL LINK

Visit the Media Production Hub in the Interactive Textbook, and under the 'Pre-production' section, have a look at former VCE Media student William Zhu's PDP work for inspiration. Also, watch Andrew Hill's production and his reflective interview for tips and advice.

Two things are crucial as you identify codes and conventions in your research. The first is that you stick to the relevant ones. If they aren't going to be useful, don't waste precious hours figuring out how to fit them in your own product – even if they appear in every text in your list of influences.

The second is to do with appropriation of ideas. Bernard of Chartres and Sir Isaac Newton both talked about 'standing on the shoulders of giants', not stealing what the giants made and signing your name to it. As you identify relevant codes and conventions you should constantly explore how they can be *transformed* to suit your media product.

What's the best way to organise this information? The answer is going to depend on the media form you've chosen, as well as the form(s) of your influences. Visual elements are the easiest to organise. Photographic stills, drawings, concept art, posters and screen shots are easy to stick in your production design folio and annotate.

That, by the way, is the most important part of this process: *annotating*. At every step of the research process, you should identify the codes and conventions at work in the samples you select, *and* identify how they can be put to good use in your own product.

For photography, there is of course a quite specific set of codes and conventions to examine and explain.

Lighting

Each photograph annotation should include a drawing or photo of the lighting set-up; perhaps a bird's-eye view of where the subject and camera will be placed in relation to the lighting.

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FIGURE 9.8 Master director Alfred Hitchcock framing his next shot on set

Include a description of the lighting and the positive attributes it brings to the photograph, how the lighting helps your intention and how the lighting will impact on your audience. Remember to be more specific than just 'daylight': what time of day, what kind of day? Is it early morning and overcast or noon and sunny?

Sometimes, having a sunrise/sunset list of the shooting days/weeks can help determine when is the best time for each of your specific photos, if you're relying on sunlight. Otherwise, or in addition, an overview of the lighting equipment and/or accessories and their function and impact to the production's intention.

Composition and/or meaning. Describe your choices of composition within each photograph; that is, camera angle, shot type, positioning of elements within the frame. Why have you chosen to shoot it this way? How does it help your intention? How will it impact on your audience? The meaning behind each photograph written as a statement can assist. Consider placing this explanation as close to your mock-ups as possible. You could even incorporate it on the same double page.

Mock-ups

Just like a storyboard for film, mock-ups are visualisations of what each shot in your series, sequence or presentation will look like. The mock-up can be hand-drawn, photographed, collaged with photos and drawings, as long as it resembles the end-product. Written details should be provided along with the visualisation such as shot size, camera angle, subject/s, location, props, costume, hair and make-up information. Even objects required for the photograph that will not appear in the shot will be helpful, such as a hair straightener and hair spray for the model whose hair becomes frizzy on rainy days. Specialist equipment may also be necessary to list down for each specific photo, such as a lens, lighting gels and reflector.

'If it's a good movie, the sound could go off and the audience would still have a perfectly clear idea of what was going on.'
– Alfred Hitchcock

Method of presentation and exhibition

This relates to the physical mounting of your work, the sequence with which it will be presented; for example, in a grid pattern on a wall of a gallery. Questions to consider: How will you be presenting your completed photos? Why are you presenting them in this way? How will this presentation help your intention? How will this presentation influence your audience?

ACTIVITY 9.5

Provide a comprehensive explanation of the codes and conventions you will employ in your intention and product, and how they will appeal to your intended audience.

Production technologies

Exactly how is this thing going to get made, then? It's time to get yourself a clear understanding of the technologies and media processes needed to make it all happen.

This is an area you've already started thinking about – and working on. One or more of your production activities (see Chapter 8) were an exploration of some of the technological aspects you needed to refine before powering ahead with the main production process. But that was a taster of what's to come. Now you need to consider *all* the technology essential to the execution of your media product.

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Choose a scale of production appropriate to your creative vision and the available resources. This is the first time you have to think about the nuts and bolts of your product – production activities aside. Tread carefully, auditing and assessing what you've got and how you plan to make use of it.

Imagine your vision is to tell the emotionally raw story of a British army sergeant bunkered in the forests of World War II France. Your story deserves no less than a full re-creation of battle, with a suitably atmospheric location, actors in authentic period uniform, genuine World War II-era rifles and an on-camera skirmish the likes of which Steven Spielberg would be proud. Believe it or not, this is achievable: if you have access to re-enactors, an armourer, suitable weaponry and a store of costumes. For Ben Head, a VCE Media student in 2016, it was. His video product *Quiet* appeared as part of *Top Screen* in 2017.



FIGURE 9.9 A still from former VCE Media student Ben Head's film *Quiet* (2016)

On a considerably smaller scale but no less effective was the same year's *[Insert Child's Name Here]*, a video product by Tessa Himpoo with a cast of three and a contemporary suburban setting … which was shot and sound-recorded entirely on Tessa's mobile phone and edited with available editing software.

As far as VCAA are concerned, it's a level playing field. You may only have access to the equipment in the Media department of your school, and that might not be much more than a basic camera and microphone. Your teacher is going to assess your work against a number of criteria, *none* of which have to do with budget or access to resources. The only question is: what have you done with what you *have* got?



FIGURE 9.10 A still from former VCE Media student Tessa Himpoo's film *[Insert Child's Name Here]* (2016)

TECHNOLOGY CHECKLISTS

To organise your technology, create a checklist of the technologies typical of your chosen media form and available to you. Narrow it down to the ones you might use. Then make notes next to any you're planning on using in unusual ways.

Here is an example of a checklist for a video product. The list sticks to fairly broad categories. This means that, for instance, there is a listing for *External microphone* but not for the bits and pieces that might go with it, such as cables, boom poles, wind socks, etc.

Technology	✓	Notes
Camera	✓	DSLR borrowed from Media dept.
Recording media	✓	3 x 64GB SD cards
External microphone		None available. Re-record all 'dirty' dialogue as wild tracks
Sound recording device		N/A
Lights	✓	Practical lighting + workshop light bought at Bunnings
Green screen		N/A
Editing software	✓	Adobe Premiere on laptop

TABLE 9.3 Technology checklist

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Another way of documenting the technologies you intend to use is by annotating photos of the equipment.

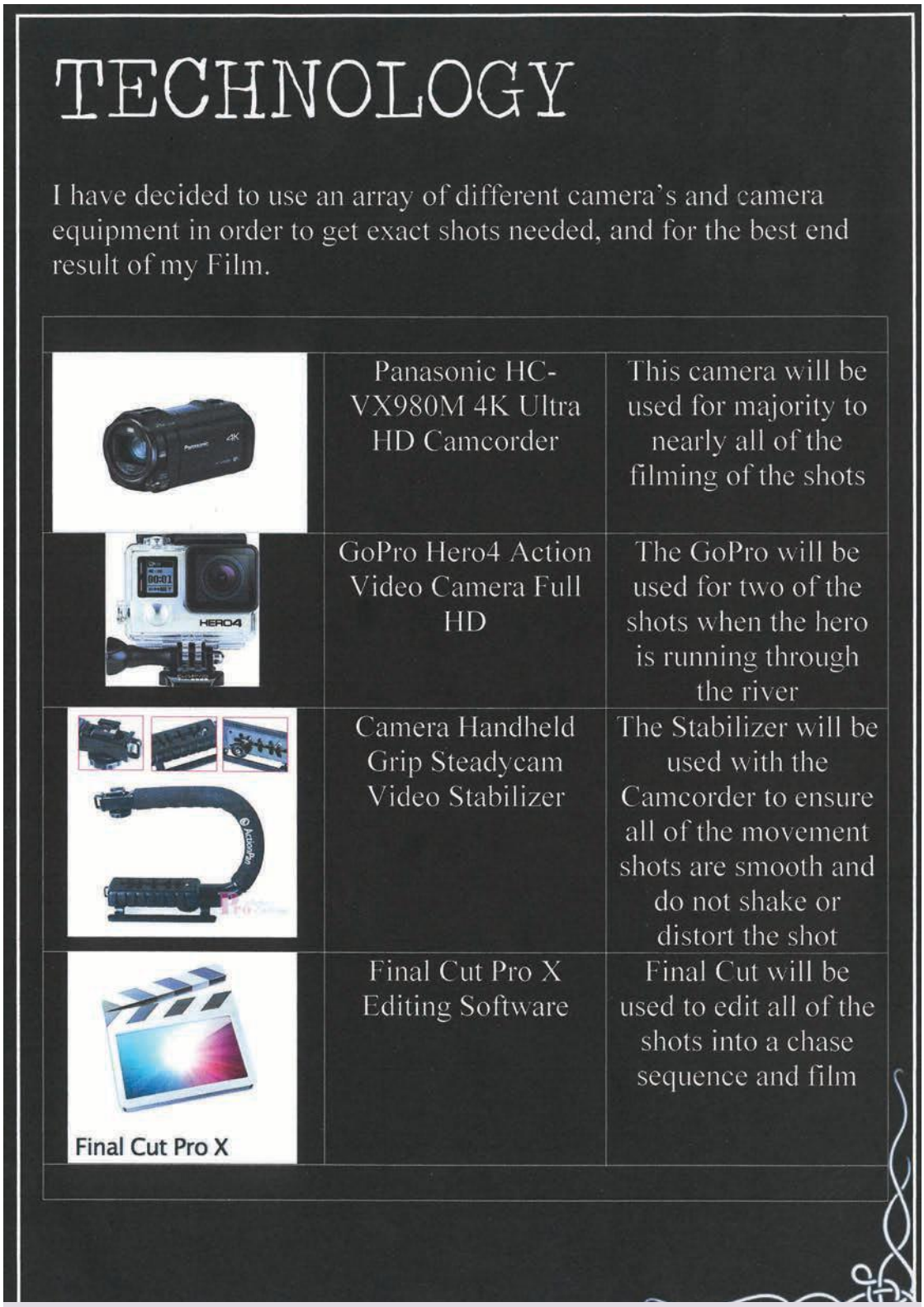


FIGURE 9.11 An example from former VCE Media student Lauren Ould's PD of an annotated presentation of the media technologies she planned to use

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ACTIVITY 9.6

Complete an available technology checklist and place this in your production design.

Production processes

Just like production technologies, this is something you've already started as part of your production activities (see Chapter 8). Now it's time to think about *all* the processes you'll need.

Some of your production processes are going to have unfamiliar parts. The work you've done as part of your production activities is the beginning of this journey into the unknown. Some processes are familiar enough that you can pick up the nuances of anything new just by stretching yourself a little.

Other processes could need significantly more preparation. The lighting set-ups on all your previous videos have been fairly practical, but now you've chosen photography as a form and one of your goals is to use lighting more carefully. Experimentation might only get you so far. How will you go the distance? Will you need additional self-training? How will you achieve it? Will you need to call on additional learning resources? If so, what resources are available?

machinima an animated film created using an old or obsolete video game engine

DIGITAL LINK

Visit the Media Production Hub in the Interactive Textbook, and watch Shanon McKenzie's animated film *Monday* and her reflective interview for tips and advice on working with animation.

The internet is a terrific place when it comes to situations like this. Sites like YouTube are full of good-quality tutorials that can teach you how to master some very specialised processes. Nevertheless, there are limits to what you can find, and if you have a *really* specialised effect you want to achieve, you may find yourself having to adapt an existing process and teach yourself a few new tricks as you go.

Choose processes that don't take you *too* far outside your comfort zone. That isn't to say you should produce something with similar complexity to everything you've ever made. You want this one to stand above the rest. The fact that you've experimented with technologies and processes through your production activities means you're ready to try something new. But if you've never dabbled in animation before, now may not be the time to attempt that 10-minute **machinima** using Blender and motion capture!



FIGURE 9.12 A still from former VCE Media student Shanon McKenzie's animated film *Monday* (2016)

Like your production design, your final product is an assessable outcome with a very real deadline. While VCE Media students have a history of pushing this deadline almost to breaking point, it's the sort of immovable object that can end up breaking any student running at it headlong. Add to the mix your other studies, family commitments, social obligations and other intrusions. All of a sudden, making sure you've chosen the right production processes becomes very important!

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PROCESS CHECKLISTS

To organise your production processes, create a checklist of the ones typical of your chosen media form. Narrow them down to the ones you might use. Then make notes next to any you're planning on using in unusual ways.

Here is an example of a checklist for a fiction narrative video product. Some of the notes focus on workflow considerations while others specify additional self-training that will be needed.

Process	Notes
Lighting	Noir lighting. Study online tutorial videos for best set-ups
Practical effects	Gunshot wounds and blood. Develop processes for quick application on set
Editing	Multi-camera workflow for major action scene
Visual effects	After effects for muzzle flares. Study online tutorial videos
Sound design	Record elements → Apply effects → Mix stereo track

TABLE 9.4 Process checklist

ACTIVITY 9.7

Complete a process checklist and add this to your design.

9.4 Presenting your production design

Alfred Hitchcock used to claim that the dullest part of making a film was, for him, the actual shoot. His reason? He'd worked so thoroughly with his production team on the screenplay, the production design and the storyboards that he'd already visualised the finished product before a frame of film was exposed.

While this story might be a bit of fluff to impress his audience, Hitchcock revealed one grain of truth: it's possible to have a strong indication of the overall shape of a media product from written and visual representations.

Some representations run through all media forms. Any narrative (or non-narrative) text can be summarised in a detailed *treatment*. Visual representations like *storyboards* or *mock-ups* offer indications of the visual qualities of a media product.

The focus in this section will be on written and visual representations of a *video/film* product, with some space given over to alternatives more relevant to *audio* and *photography* products.



FIGURE 9.13 Hitchcock found the actual process of shooting a film to be the least interesting stage of production.

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Treatment

Every media product can be represented as a treatment. The exact structure will vary from media form to media form, but they all provide a detailed summary of the product's *narrative* and *presentation*.

The treatment for a fictional narrative should be straightforward to put together. The focus of this kind of treatment is a *detailed summary*, from start to finish, leaving out nothing important. (A good way to make sure you've covered everything is to break your treatment down by scenes.) Someone reading your treatment will understand what happens in your narrative and to whom it will happen. This kind of treatment also benefits from indications of intended *style* where appropriate.

While a non-fiction narrative (such as a documentary) means you can't predict exactly how your finished product will tell its story, you need to have a clear sense of the overall story you *expect* to tell. There are ways you can control the shape of the narrative, by breaking the narrative flow into sections and by knowing what topics you want your real-life participants to talk about. The treatment you write should give a detailed indication of the narrative you intend to tell, as well as descriptions of any techniques that will help you control its direction.

A photography treatment should provide detailed descriptions of each still in the presentation. The saying goes that 'a picture tells a thousand words'. While you don't have to go that far, your description of each photograph should give a sense (in words) of subject, framing, lighting and depth of field – with reasons for your choices.

Print products depend on type. A graphic novel treatment should be approached the same as a fiction narrative, but broken down by page or double-page spread. A magazine treatment needs to describe content while giving a sense of layout. An online product does too.



DIGITAL LINK

Visit the Media Production Hub in the Interactive Textbook, and watch former VCE Media student Steven Gerekelis' reflective interview for tips and advice.

Script

Some media forms need one; others don't. If you're producing a magazine or a photography series or anything else that doesn't obviously need a script … Move along, there's nothing to see here.

However … sometimes the need for a script isn't obvious. A documentary, for example, might have a narration script, pre-interview and interview questions, and full scripts for re-enactments or dramatised segments.

Video/film script – fiction narrative

Whichever option you choose, you'll notice scripts sometimes have their scenes numbered, but sometimes they don't. A script won't have scene numbers during the writing and development phase. When it's ready to go into production, the scenes are numbered. This is for ease of workflow, so everyone involved can refer to a given scene by its number.



FIGURE 9.14 The script could be the blueprint to your success.

Refer back to Chapter 5, section 5.4, for more information about setting out a film script.



DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for 10 quick tips on writing a fictional screenplay.

Your script is a document that needs to be written clearly following the standard format demonstrated back in Figure 5.18. Everyone needs to be clear about their roles – the actors, camera person, and especially you, the director.

As discussed previously, free scriptwriting technology exists to help you out. Celtx and WriterDuet are two such programs available to you.

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Audio script – fiction narrative

While there is no one standard format for an audio or radio narrative script, the variants that exist tend to have certain features in common. Like a video/film script, these serve a couple of key purposes. Dialogue and other sounds are visibly separate, and scene changes are easy to identify at a glance. Unlike a video/film script, the one-page-per-minute rule does not usually apply.

AUDIO PLAY

Scene: 1

OUTDOOR AMBIENCE: BIRDSONG, SLIGHT BREEZE THROUGH FOLIAGE, ETC.

VOICE: INDISTINCT MURMURS AND CONVERSATION

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS (X1) ACROSS PAVERS

THE VOICES DIE DOWN TO SILENCE

MATTHEW:
I'm glad you could all attend this gathering today. I know things have been tough for all of us lately, which is why we're meeting like this.

POPPY:
Are we supposed to be impressed by your candour? Is that what you expect?

VOICE: DISGRUNTLED MURMURS

MATTHEW:
Please, please... Can we all just settle for a moment, do you think? I'd like to be heard out if I may.

SOUND: AN ALMIGHTY EXPLOSION

VOICE: SCREAMS AND SHRIEKS

MUSIC: DRAMATIC ACTION MUSIC, VERY UP-TEMPO, VERY INTENSE

FIGURE 9.15 An example of script formatting for an audio production

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Because of the nature of dialogue recording for an audio product, when an audio script enters production, individual *lines* are often numbered. This can make retakes easier for the editor to find.

ACTIVITY 9.8

Once complete, include your script in your production design.

Storyboards and shot lists

Storyboards are the real reason Hitchcock used to claim the film shoot was boring. He always worked thoroughly and closely with his storyboard artists to ensure they really were a visual equivalent of his films on paper.

Revisit Chapter 5, section 5.4, for a crash course in putting together a set of storyboards. Any media product with a moving visual element – video, film, animation and some digital products – can only be improved by having those visuals carefully laid out in the form of storyboards. They give you an at-a-glance sense of how your product is going to look as a completed piece, and they're an excellent visual shorthand for communicating ideas to your crew.

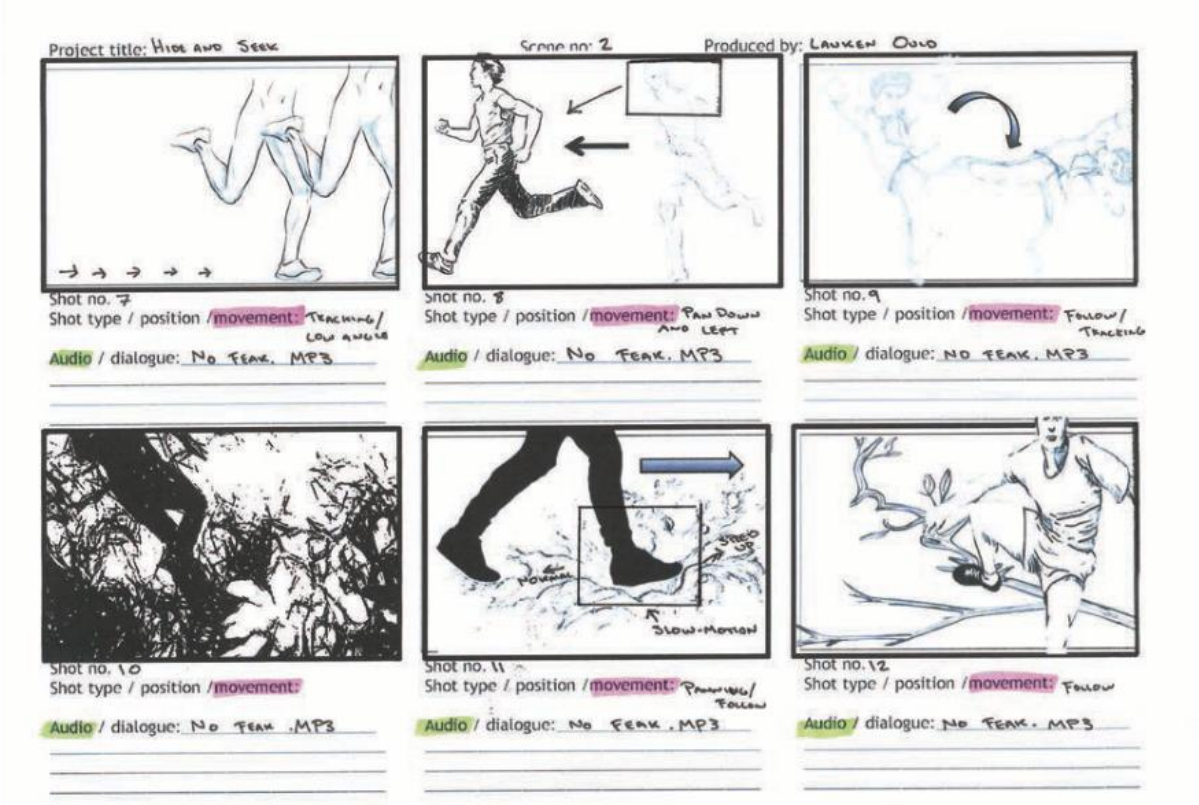


FIGURE 9.16 An example of partial hand-drawn storyboards with notes from former VCE Media student Lauren Ould

One piece of advice given in that chapter is just as valid now: some of the best filmmakers are also some of the worst artists when it comes to pen and paper. Luckily, technology can come to your rescue! *Photographic storyboards* are becoming more popular with filmmakers. They use photos instead of hand-drawn storyboards. Just go out to your locations – or near equivalents if you can't access the real thing

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for a storyboard template.

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yet – with your actors or some stand-ins and take stills of all the shots you need. You can print these or put them in an electronic document, ready to be annotated.

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for a shot list template.

'That's great,' you say, 'but I want to use shot lists instead of storyboards.' There's one catch: they serve a very different purpose!

But … shot lists are incredibly useful for continuity purposes. On location, you or another member of your crew needs to keep track of whether you have all the shots you need. Shot lists let you check these off as you go. You can also jumble them into shooting order to give you a running sheet for each day's work.

HIDE AND SEEK

Shot List

Production Title Hide and Seek Sheet Number 1

Director Lauren Ould Date 2/7/2016

Location/s Bximbank Park and My Backyard

Shot#	Shot Type	Movement	Notes
1	Establishing Wide Angle	Panning Left → Right	Woods
2	Establishing Wide Angle	Still	River
3	Establishing Wide Angle	Panning Right → Left	Woods (branches)
4	Establishing Wide Angle	Still	Bird in tree
5	Establishing Wide Angle	Still	Deer/Animal
6	Tittle	Panning Down→Up	"Hide and Seek" Graphic appears
7	Mid shot	Tracking	Feet running
8	Close Up →	Panning	Face to Full shot
9	Full Length	Follow	Hero Falling to ground
10	Close Up→ Mid→ Full	Follow	Getting up from the ground
11	Extreme Close Up→ Close Up	Slight Panning to the Right	Slow motion of foot in the water
12	Mid Shot	Follow/Tracking	Jumping over branch
13	Mid Shot	Still	Villain rising
14	Extreme close up	Still	War make up
15	Close Up	Still	Tying shoe lace
16	Mid → Full	Zoom out	Villain
17	Full → Close up	Zoom in	Villain starting

FIGURE 9.17 An example of a partial shot list for a video product from former VCE Media student Lauren Ould

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ACTIVITY 9.9

Once complete, include your mock-ups and/or storyboard in your design.

'For me, film making combines everything. That's the reason I've made cinema my life's work. In films, painting and literature, theatre and music come together.'
– Akira Kurosawa

9.5 Planning your production

Up to this point you've been transforming outpourings of creativity into various elements you will use during production.

Now it's paperwork time.

A media product is no small undertaking, and every successful project on any sort of scale is well planned and well documented. Start thinking about your collaborators. Will you fly solo, or will a carefully selected team support you along your journey? What roles will they take? How do you know you have the right person for each role? Above all, how will you make sure your team is helping you turn your vision into a reality?

The talent

Different media forms have different takes on the notion of 'The Talent'. What it boils down to is the people you'll need in front of the camera (or microphone, for an audio product). For a fictional narrative, these will be actors. Non-fiction narratives still tend to be about particular people, so the subject(s) will be the talent. Photography, print and online products may require models. Even an animation might call on people taking on a performing role, whether voice actors or physical models on which to base your animation.

Getting hold of people can be challenging for the uninitiated. Here are some suggestions:

- *Ask friends and family.* If the performance demands of the roles aren't too challenging or specialised, you may be able to direct 'amateurs' to give suitable performances.
- *Ask drama students.* Does your school offer Drama as a subject? If the answer is 'yes', you've got a ready supply of experience-hungry actors right on your doorstep!
- *Hold auditions.* Acting work has its ups and downs, and there are plenty of professional actors who might be 'between jobs' who are interested in gaining as much on-camera experience as they can, even if it's unpaid. You wouldn't be the first VCE Media student to make use of this pool of talent, so don't be afraid to go where others have gone before.

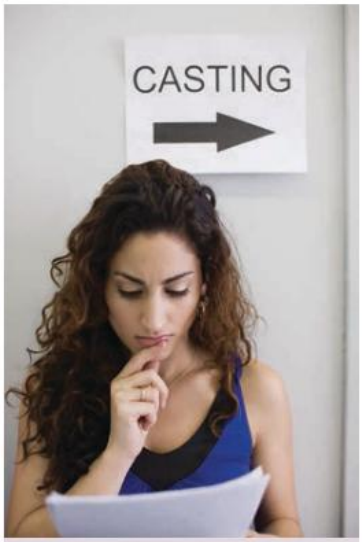


FIGURE 9.18 Hold an audition when casting your production if you can.

DIGITAL LINK

Visit the Media Production Hub in the Interactive Textbook, and watch former VCE Media student Rachel Ivell's reflective interview for tips and advice.

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DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for an example of an actor profile from former VCE Media student Lauren Ould's production design.

Putting out a casting call is easy thanks to the internet and social media. There are plenty of websites and Facebook groups designed to link actors with directors. Just make it clear that you're looking for talent for a VCE Media production, and that you can only offer a credit and experience.

How much of the casting process you document in your production design depends on how comprehensive you want your design to be. One option is to include actor profiles, but this is optional.

ACTIVITY 9.10

Confirm your talent and use the release forms to check their availability. Add these to your production design.

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for a downloadable release form for your talent giving permission to appear on camera in your production.

Assigning crew roles

When selecting a crew and assigning roles to different people, it is important that you remain the key creative at the heart of the product.

> The production of the media product should be undertaken individually and communicate the student's ideas and concepts.
>
> — Administration information for School-based Assessment, VCAA

While this doesn't mean you have to do everything yourself, you need to be the creative glue holding everything together. Members of cast and crew can make creative suggestions, of course – and they probably will. But all creative decisions have to end with you, and there has to be enough of your input, both artistically and logistically, that your teacher can award marks to you and not to someone else on your team!



FIGURE 9.19 Try to 'cast' crew roles according to areas of strength.

Try to 'cast' crew roles according to areas of strength. While you aren't looking to hire experts in every field who can carry the creative load for you, offer roles to people with some prior skills in the area in which you want to involve them. You wouldn't bring someone on as your camera operator if the only time they've ever used a camera is to Snapchat their friends on their phone.

Complex productions benefit from having lots of runners handy. Called gofers in Hollywood, these are people who 'go fer' stuff when you need them to. Odds are you're going to be very busy just about the whole time, and so are your principal crew. Which means any time you suddenly realise you need some tape to hold a stray cable down, or the key prop for the scene got left in someone's car, your runners will be your best friends!

Keep a comprehensive crew list with contact details so you know at a glance who is doing what and how they can be contacted. Also note any resources they might be expected to bring.

ACTIVITY 9.11

Construct a list of required and available crew. Add this to your production design.

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Locations

Locations should be chosen based on suitability, availability and convenience.

Select locations that provide all the features you need – if you can. Trouble is, there are two ways reality can intrude:

1. The real world isn't always so kind, and you might have to compromise.
2. Even if you *do* find all your ideal locations, you may not be able to access them all in the production window.

Unless your concept absolutely demands a set of very specific locations, seek out locations within a reasonable distance of each other. You want to make the most out of each production day, and time spent travelling between locations is time *not* spent actually producing anything.

Document details of the locations you intend to use. Identify which parts of your product you need each one for. In the case of a video product, this might be a list of scenes to be shot at each location. Also include particulars about the location: street address, parking and transport options for your team, and which part of the location is being used.

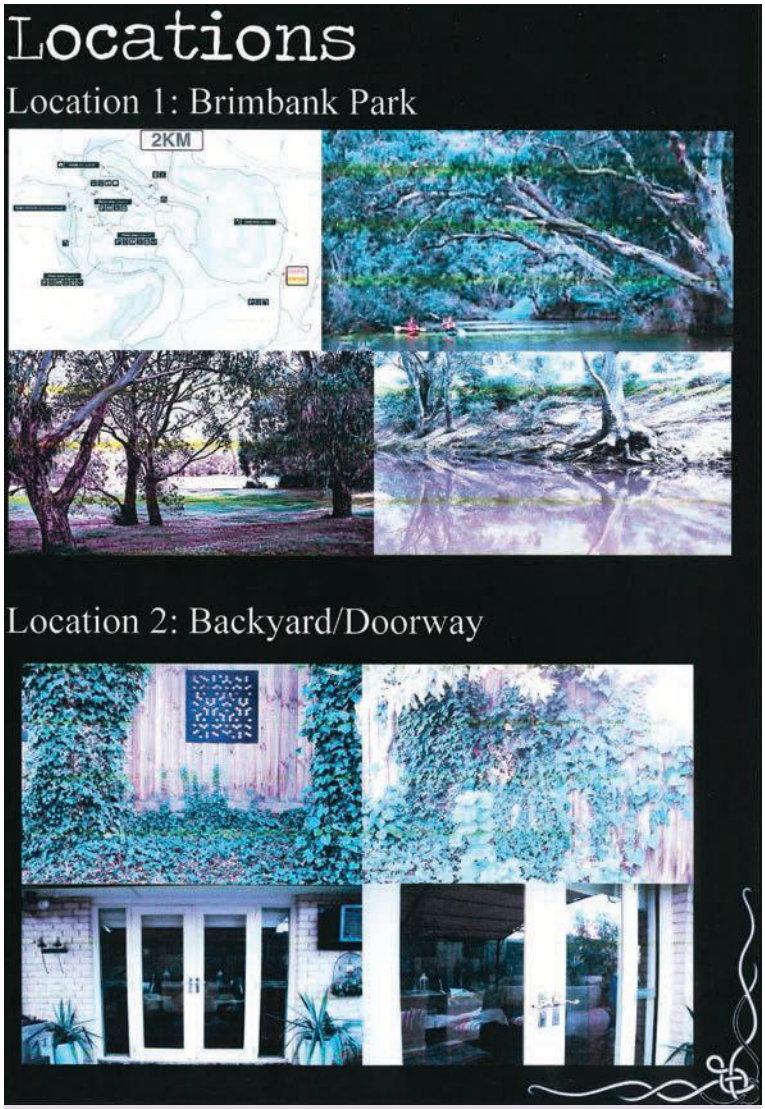


FIGURE 9.20 An example of how you might document location information in your production design, including location stills and a map of the area, by former VCE Media student Lauren Ould

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ACTIVITY 9.12

1 Visit your locations to determine their suitability to shoot your product.
2 When you do, take a number of images that might replicate how you intend to use them in your production.
3 Include these images in your production design with annotations that relate to elements of each location that may require you to change or alter elements of it.

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for a downloadable location release form.

The legal stuff

Permissions

Every element of your production that does not creatively originate with you can only be used by you if you have written proof of consent.

Any people involved in your production – actors, models, crew – need to give consent that you can use their efforts as part of your product. This includes anyone featured prominently in front of the camera. Any impromptu footage or b-roll for a documentary needs to be carefully vetted for who turns up in it.

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for a downloadable permission form to clear any copyrighted material that might appear in your production with the appropriate copyright holder/s.

At minimum, get a simple written, signed and dated declaration that the contributor's intellectual copyright may be used at no cost for the purposes of the specified media product for dissemination to any audience.

Media products produced solely for an audience of your Media teacher, friends and family might use copyrighted elements without the permission of the copyright holders. If this applies to you, be very clear that your product's shelf life legally consists of being a Unit 4 assessment piece *and no more*.

Just in case you think you might like it to have a life beyond that, even if you don't feel that way right now, look into open source and royalty-free materials. Freesound.org is a popular outlet for open source sound effects and music, provided you credit the creator in your product. The Creative Commons website goes even further, serving as a storehouse for royalty-free images, text, music or audiovisual resources. Search online and you will undoubtedly find more!



FIGURE 9.21 An example of how you can attribute the creators of royalty-free content in your film's credits. Still from Shanon McKenzie's animation *Monday*.

You still have to document the elements you use, even if they're open source. Clearly identify the source of any royalty-free elements you find online.

OH&S and legal behaviour

Occupational health and safety is just as important as copyright when it comes to the legal stuff.

OpenChannel's website provides a safety checklist for film and television productions, and it can be used for any media production with physical

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locations. Familiarise yourself with any points in this checklist that apply to your production. Include a version of the checklist relevant to your production in your production design.

VCAA and your Media teacher will expect all behaviour during your production to be 100% legal. This includes restricting what participants under the age of 18 are permitted to do; for example, smoking on screen. You will be guided by your school's expectations as well, so much of this shouldn't apply, but if it does, be very aware of what is and isn't legal.

This applies to drone use too. There are very strict regulations surrounding the use of drones, so be sure not to break them!

Production schedule

During the early stages of your planning, your production calendar is going to look fairly empty. You'll have all your due dates noted, and you should have blocked out when production and post-production are scheduled to take place.

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for guidelines on the use of drone cameras in Australia.

If your production involves anything on the legal borderline, carefully document how you intend to proceed so you have written evidence that you've done everything in your power to keep it legal.



FIGURE 9.22 An example of production time blocked out during the early stages of preparation

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The closer you come to production, the more detailed your schedule will be. How you schedule your production is going to depend on location choices, cast and crew availability, maximising shooting time, and other factors particular to your product and chosen media form.

By the end of the pre-production process the schedule might look something like Table 9.5.

Production timetable

Date	Time	Actors	Crew	Location	Scene #	Scene details	Notes
27-6-2018	-	-	-	-	-	-	Prepare all equipment, props and costumes. Check in with actors
3-7-2018	1pm to 3.30pm	- Hero - Villain	- Director - Actors - Gofer	Clifftop	22	As many possible shots from final confrontation	All props required. Costume and make-up completed before arrival at clifftop scene
4-7-2018	1pm to tbc	- Hero - Villain	- Director - Actors - Gofer	Alleyway	18	Remainder of the chase scene	All props required. Costume and make-up completed before arrival
6-7-2018	-	-	-	-	-	-	Log footage and review against shot list
7 -7-2018	12pm – 5pm	Child 1 Child 2 Mother	- Director - Actors - Parents - Gofer	The park playground	23	The final scene	All props required. Costume and make-up completed before arrival. Area cleared of debris
8-7-2018	-	-	-	-	-	-	Log of footage and prepare list for any potential reshoots. Otherwise begin editing

TABLE 9.5 A production timetable broken down by shooting day

Include contingency time in your schedule. Things can go wrong, or you might find later on that you're unhappy with some of your material. Allow extra time to guard against the unexpected. If everything works out perfectly, you can give this spare time to post-production.

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for a downloadable production timetable template.

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Your key collaborators need to be aware of your schedule and have access to updated versions as it evolves. Maintain an online calendar and give your team members access to it.

ACTIVITY 9.13

Construct and complete your production timetable and include it in your production design.

Post-production schedule

Instead of focusing on the logistical needs of each individual day, your post-production schedule might be blocked out in chunks. Giving several weeks over to a phase called 'Editing' makes sense even as you get stuck into it.

Other post-production collaborators need their work factored into the schedule. This way, you know when to expect various elements to arrive. A composer needs to deliver their music at a point in your timeline that works best for you. The two of you might hold a spotting session to identify the music that's needed, then they put the music together while you refine your edit or work on post-production effects.

Animation – especially computer animation – is unusual in that its post-production time tends to suck up production as well, all of it becoming an amorphous whole. Shanon McKenzie, whose animation *Monday* was selected for Top Screen 2017, has acknowledged that post-production started for her when production started for everyone else. The animation, editing and sound design all occurred together.



FIGURE 9.23 Former VCE Media student Shanon McKenzie, whose animated production *Monday* was selected for Top Screen in 2017

DIGITAL LINK

Visit the Media Production Hub in the Interactive Textbook to watch Shanon McKenzie's animated film *Monday* and her interview.

Organising all the information in the form of a detailed calendar is, as with your production schedule, very much the best way to go.

ACTIVITY 9.14

Complete your post-production timetable and include it in your production plan.

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CHAPTER REVIEW

Summing it all up

Production can be a frenzied time. You'll face much tighter deadlines than in pre-production, and if you have a team around you, their needs will become your needs. Keeping a clear head under this pressure – while your studies for other VCE subjects continue too – can sometimes seem impossible. Making major creative or technical decisions from scratch in the thick of it can be worse: it can just seem plain nuts!

Which means that even though a production design is an expansive, labour-intensive beast to put together, it's a really helpful one. It assembles all the planning and preparation for your product, ahead of production, in a clear and organised way. This is the document that goes with you on your journey as your media product comes together. It guides every step of the process, informing you with decisions you already made when your head was clearer and your time demands were less severe.

Through this document you will be able to communicate to all your collaborators precisely what your vision is, how it has been formed, what it is going to look like at the end of the day and how you are going to achieve it. Depending on the form your product takes, a good design will make available at a glance your script, storyboards, mock-ups, visual references, technical evaluations, role descriptions and schedules. Any question you might be presented with on your production journey should have its answer somewhere in your production design. This leaves you time to focus on actually getting things made without turning yourself into a gibbering mess.

Even though your production design needs to be the most effective working document it can, don't forget that it has to be balanced with the rest of your studies, home life and other commitments. It's too easy to allow something of this magnitude to take you over. Go down that dark path and forever will it dominate your destiny! Hopefully you can enjoy the creative process. As Akira Kurosawa once said – 'it is wonderful to create!'

DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for a downloadable version of this checklist.

Production design plan checklist

Stage	Task	Notes	Complete
Researching	Decide on the media form you wish to use		
	Decide on your overall creative intention		
	Written intention statement – form – genre – theme – engagement techniques		
	Narrative and audience – Can you identify them?		
	Codes and conventions – Can you identify those that you will use?		

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Stage	Task	Notes	Complete
	Available technology – What will you use?		
	Technical processes required – What do you need to learn?		
Presenting	Written script – Is it properly formatted?		
	Storyboards – Could anyone use them?		
	Shot lists – Is every possible shot accounted for?		
Planning	Talent – Who are you using and when? – Have they signed clearance forms?		
	Additional crew – Who will be around to help and when?		
	Locations – Images need to be included for planning – Clearance needs to be documented		
	Production schedule – Calendar of rehearsal and production dates		
	Post-production schedule – Has adequate time been provided to complete these?		

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PART 4 UNIT 4
Media production and issues in the media

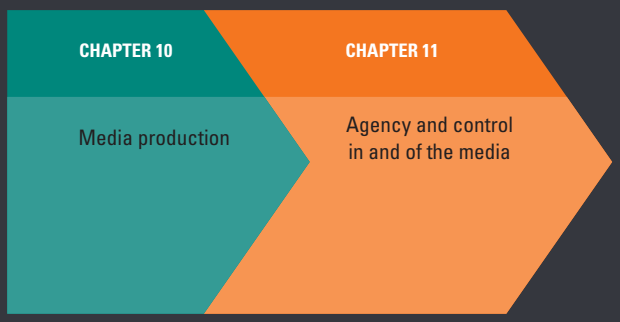
Don't hate the media, become the media.

— Jello Biafra, The Dead Kennedys

OVERVIEW

In this unit your aim is to determine how traditional forms of narrative are constructed and read by audiences, then create your own media production. You will need to consider how the audience demands can be met within a modern context of technological, legal and financial constraints. You have more tools at your disposal than students five, 10 or 15 years ago could have possibly imagined; however, as you will find out, you will need to find a balance between what has come before, what stands in your way and what lies beyond. You will also investigate the very nature of media communications, and attempt to determine who really holds the power – the creator of the media product or the audience that consumes it? Good luck!

WHAT'S AHEAD



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CHAPTER 10 AREA OF STUDY 1

MEDIA PRODUCTION

There are no rules in filmmaking. Only sins. And the cardinal sin is dullness.

— Frank Capra

OVERVIEW

Is the battery charged? Does this script make sense? Have I booked the dark room? Where is the SD card? Which font should I use? Does this fake blood look real? These are the questions that will dominate your waking – and sleeping – thoughts as you edge closer towards the submission date for your major production. A clear head and an even clearer plan will be essential over these weeks and months as you embark upon your final practical task in VCE Media. Each week will present new challenges and unexpected hurdles that, if you are prepared to face them, will ensure you reach the finish line with the realisation of a long-held dream to be a fully-fledged media creator!

FIGURE 10.1 (above): Director Steven Spielberg and camera crew on the set of *Jaws* in 1975 in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts

OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to produce, refine and resolve a media product designed in Unit 3.

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

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- production and post-production processes used to realise a media production design
- the operation of equipment, materials and technologies used in the creation of media products
- media codes and conventions relevant to the selected form, product and audience
- reflection and feedback processes to refine and resolve media products
- methods for documenting development, refinement and realisation of media products
- media language appropriate to the construction and evaluation of media representations.

KEY SKILLS

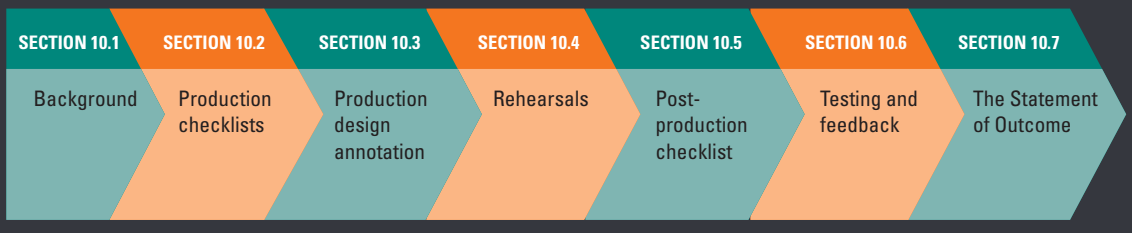
- realise a media production design through production and post-production processes
- operate equipment, materials and technologies in the production of a media product
- apply media codes and conventions relevant to the selected media form, product and audience
- use reflection and feedback to refine and resolve a media product
- document the development, refinement and resolution of a media product
- use media language relevant to the construction and evaluation of media representations.

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KEY TERMS

- production activities
- production checklists
- annotation
- media equipment
- rehearsals
- film shoot
- logging footage
- reflection and feedback
- Statement of Outcome

WHAT'S AHEAD



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10.1 Background

As an example, let's say you have chosen to produce a short film for your School-assessed Task (SAT). Picture the scene … It's the week before you shoot the biggest film of your young career. Literally months of work have gone into the preparations that have brought you to this moment. Initial spark of inspiration? Check. A story to tell? Check. Comprehensive overview of the style, genre, codes and conventions that form the aesthetic and artistic backbone of *your* telling of *this* story? Check, check, check and check!

Have you built on the creative core of your idea through a treatment, a script, storyboards? Of course you have. What about a clear sense of the technical considerations that will turn your vision into concrete reality? No doubt you've conducted at least two thoughtfully planned and carefully scrutinised production activities that have given you a clearer understanding of some of the key media technologies and processes you'll need to make this production happen.

By now, you've documented all this in loving detail in your production design – along with casting notes, shot lists, location data, production schedules, clearances, release forms and anything else that's going to make the actual making of this *magnum opus* a practical reality.

So … do you really have everything ready to go?

What you need is going to be different depending on the form your product will take. A traditional cell animation with no dialogue, for instance, is going to have a production history as complex as determining how often you can get yourself in front of your light box with pen and ink so you can get drawing. An online product might need nothing more than a Media student sitting with a laptop at regular intervals until it's done.

Even in these situations, which are probably about as stripped down as the making of a Media product is likely to be, two things are crucial: organisation and equipment. These are messed with at your peril!

10.2 Production checklists

Let's stick with a video product as our example – but please note that many of the processes and checks mentioned will apply to you whichever medium you have chosen to work in. Here are some of the things you can't afford to forget before you go on location that first fateful day.

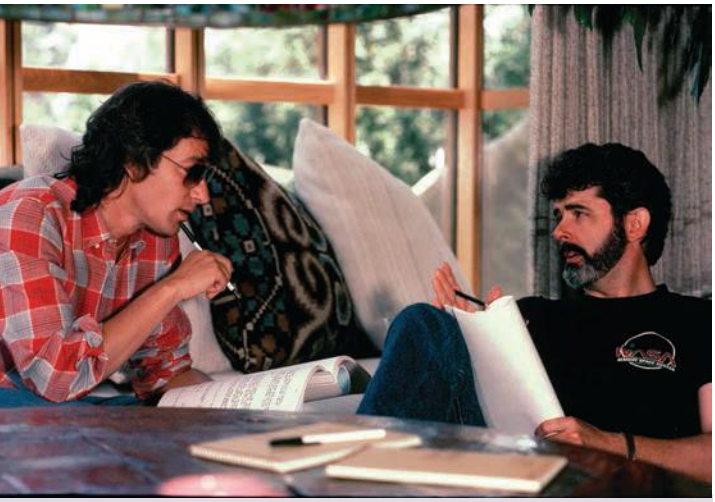


FIGURE 10.2 Steven Spielberg and George Lucas discussing a film script in the mid 1980s.

Get your shooting script finalised. In the last chapter we talked about the need to number all your scenes when the script becomes a production draft. This is the locked-down, let's-hope-there-are-no-more-revisions version you're taking on set. It's the one everyone is familiar with. The one you need to be happy with because it's what you're filming. This doesn't mean you can't make minor changes on the day, or that your actors all need to be word perfect, but it's substantially the work that will appear on screen.

Once it's in the shape you want it to be when it goes out to cast and crew, get it out to cast and crew. As much as this sounds like a no-brainer, it's only fair on your team – as well as your production – that they receive a copy of the final script in a timely manner. Actors need to learn lines, crew need to be familiar with the demands of each scene, and key personnel (such as the art director or your special effects supervisor) will need to make preparations early based on

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FIGURE 10.3 Have you prepared all the equipment you will require for the shoot?

what the script calls for. Extensive pre-production discussions cover a lot of this latter ground, but there's nothing like having the words in front of you to know you're providing the *exact* effect the story needs.

Are your locations locked down? Don't turn up on the day without being 100% sure you're allowed to be there. Have all the relevant permits printed and filed in duplicate. One copy should be in your production design, present and easily available on location. The other can sit in a drawer at home, safe and sound in case anything happens to the one you've taken with you.

Equipment checklist

Are your batteries charged? This is actually a more general call to ensure all your equipment is in full working order. Fully charged batteries are a life saver if you're nowhere near a wall plug. (And even if you are, having your camera tethered to the nearest wall is going to restrict your flexibility of movement more than you can possibly imagine!) If you have an external microphone that runs on its own batteries rather than phantom power, make sure they're good too. Bring fully charged spares if you can. Using non-practical lighting? Make sure the globes light up, and bring spares if you can. Recording to SD card? How much data will it hold? Is it the correct speed and class for your camera? Have you brought extras?

Your equipment needs to be in a fit state to use, too. Clean all your lenses thoroughly, and pack a portable lens cleaning kit in case they get grubby on location. Don't forget any lenses you intend to use, especially if you and your camera operator need a particular lens for a particular effect.

On the subject of cameras, bring something that can act as a reflector and cutter, just in case 'lighting by God' needs a few tweaks. Portable is best, especially an object that can do both jobs. You need reflective on one side to boost the light on your subject, and non-reflective on the other to cut unwanted light. A white A2 cardboard sheet with the back painted black has saved many a production.

Props and costumes: Has all the glue and paint dried before Day One? Is each prop or costume piece labelled for its corresponding scene? You don't have the Hollywood luxury of turning over one or two scenes a day, so a clearly labelled inventory is going to give your art department (such as it is) and runners a fighting chance at getting the right piece to the right person at the right time.

And another thing … Have you camera tested all your costumes and props? The camera may lie, but it hasn't kissed the Blarney Stone. Tweaks are sometimes necessary to make your no-budget efforts shine, be it by adjusting the piece itself or figuring out the most sympathetic way to light it. Which brings us to the most important question of all for all you aspiring Tarantinos: does your fake blood *actually* look real?

Scheduling checklist

Time management: One of the suggestions made in the last chapter when it came to drawing up a production schedule was to factor in some 'wiggle room' for pick-ups, reshoots and just generally to cover yourself for unforeseen unmitigated disasters. Scheduled wiggle room is only going to be of any use if you can stick to your schedule. Disasters do happen, like that summer beach scene being marred by a hail storm, but don't fall behind schedule just because you decide everyone's having too good a time to actually get on to the next scene. Hollywood this isn't – and even some Hollywood filmmakers have been undone by tight budgets and even tighter schedules. Don't believe me? Go watch *Lost in La Mancha* and try not to look Terry Gilliam in the eye.

When you're on set, there are plenty of ways to keep the shoot moving along at an appropriate pace and avoid delays.

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10.3 Production design annotation

DIGITAL LINK

Visit the Media Production Hub in the Interactive Textbook, and watch former VCE Media student Beau Arnfield's reflective interview for tips and advice.

Is your production design in (or near) your hands at all times? It's the creative lifeblood of your media product, so don't be without it!

Are you remembering to annotate any changes you make on the fly? One thing that is true of virtually every media production is that something, for some reason, gets changed along the way. Little tweaks are completely understandable – and acceptable – and documenting them immediately means you won't forget them down the road. It also means your editor won't refuse to speak to you when the raw footage unexpectedly doesn't match the script! Post-it notes are a good way to document changes, stuck in your production design next to whatever has been changed.

(A word of warning: stay true to the representations and style decided on in the development phase of your product. Major changes without an incredibly good reason are frowned upon by VCAA and will likewise be thought of unfavourably by your Media teacher.)

10.4 Rehearsals

Spend a little time with your cast as they run lines for each scene. Little adjustments to the dialogue might come up during this process. Your media product is your baby, but they're only making a few fashion suggestions for onesies. Be open to ideas, and never be an artistic dictator. Remember, they're your mates!

Run through the camera movements for a scene without the camera, just watching the actors from where you intend the camera to be. Then bring the camera in for a run-through *before* you roll. Take #1 will be a lot smoother for it, and might be the one you end up going for a lot of the time.

When you do your camera run, check it's in focus! Any tricky focus changes during a shot should be carefully rehearsed too. Check your lighting: is it falling where it needs to? Is it appropriate to the mood of the scene and the genre of the overall product? Then, when it's perfect, do one more take anyway, for safety. All too often the 'perfect' take has something wrong with it you didn't notice at the time.

Period pieces and science fiction bring extra complications. Are there any cars in the background of your Western? Is the sky in your post-apocalyptic war film full of commercial aeroplanes or their contrails?

How much battery have you wasted standing around between set-ups? Is the back-up battery charging nearby, or did you leave it at home? Have you checked the audio equipment lately to make sure it's actually recorded any sound all day? When's Mum bringing lunch for everyone – it's nearly noon!

10.5 Post-production checklist

When you get home after Day One, log your footage and check it on the computer you'll be using for editing. Does it look and sound OK? Will the editing software accept the file format and codec? (If you can do this on location after the first scene – or even the first set-up – all the better.) Tears of frustration will inevitably be shed if you find you have to remount your entire first day, but it's nothing compared to the anguish that comes with realising you have to scrap the entire shoot.

Another thing you should do when you get home at the end of each day is to assess how things went. Are there any issues that need to be sorted out before the next shooting day? Make a list of these issues – and a list of the things that went right that you will do even better tomorrow! Then check your **dailies** and make detailed notes of anything you think

dailies the raw footage shot each day during production

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you might need to reshoot. This could be because of technical issues or because, on looking at the footage, you realise you need slightly different coverage to make it edit better.

Just in case you're ready to pack it all in before you even start, there's a massively crucial question you need to ask yourself at least 50 times a day during production: 'Am I having fun?' This is, after all, what you have been planning for months. It should be a *celebration* of your hard work, not slow torture. *Re-enact* your favourite scene out of the *Saw* franchise (if it suits your production!), don't *live* it.



DIGITAL LINK

Visit the Media Production Hub in the Interactive Textbook, and watch former VCE Media student Liam Ridolfi's reflective interview for tips and advice.

10.6 Testing and feedback

Once you've got a rough cut together, you need to start thinking about your audience for the first time since those early days of assembling your production design. Consider screening it to test audiences for honest feedback.

Let them know in advance that it's in a rough and ready form and they'll be forgiving of that aspect – but they might spot some crucial issues that have whooshed right past your eyes simply because you're so close to the project.

You don't even need to organise a group screening. Why not upload the rough cut to a private Vimeo page and get everyone to answer some set questions on Survey Monkey?

The feedback you get from this process must be documented. Keep a record of comments, statistics from the surveys and advice from your teacher. All of it can be then used in your Statement of Outcome.



DIGITAL LINK

See the Interactive Textbook for a downloadable Statement of Outcome form.

10.7 The Statement of Outcome

When it's all done and dusted, there's one thing you should remember: it isn't all done and dusted. Even after your work is edited, credited, mixed and polished, that final cut deserves one more thing. Your honest reflection. Write or record an evaluation after production, but also after post-production. A vlog is a really cool way to record your thoughts, and it's super easy to add to throughout the process. It doesn't have to be colour-corrected or have fancy typography, but it should serve as a record of your processes and achievement through the three-phase production journey.

This can be as short or as long as you want it to be, but the more in-depth you go, the more you will learn for the next production. And there *will* be a next one, because you've got a taste for it now. It's under your skin, the pride and passion and all the rest. The knowledge that your art is something to be absolutely proud of. You've made it look easy, and you've made it look good.

Why wouldn't you want to do it again?

Submitting the outcome

It's the due date. What do you need to give your teacher?

1. Your production design with all annotations made during production.
2. Your SAT – be it in physical or digital form, your teacher must have your SAT in the intended format.
3. Your Statement of Outcome.

Well done! You did it!

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CHAPTER 11 AREA OF STUDY 2

AGENCY AND CONTROL IN AND OF THE MEDIA

There are too many leaders anointed because they have a public voice – television, radio, or record, or whatever. That even includes myself. 'Don't anoint me when you can anoint yourself.'

— Chuck D, Public Enemy

OVERVIEW

The 'Bobo Doll' experiment is one of the best known studies used in an attempt to explain the way the media could influence audiences. The study, conducted by Canadian psychologist Albert Bandura in 1961 and 1963, claimed that children who were shown violent behaviour towards an inflatable 'Bobo Doll' – a children's toy designed to be knocked over – would act accordingly. It has been used to draw links between violent imagery in the media and violent behaviour in the real world. Today, this study is not quite redundant, but it certainly struggles to factor in the vast reality of modern media. In short, the modern media has long since moved

FIGURE 11.1 (above): In China today, strong restrictions on social media and internet use are in place for the population as a way for the state to exert control over its people.

beyond a simple model of communicator and message. Today, those hyperactive children punching Bandura's doll would, in all reality, lose interest in the doll and play games on their phones before Bandura could reach a conclusion. Today, the agency is in the power of the audience.

OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss issues of agency and control in the relationship between the media and its audience.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the dynamic and changing relationship between the media and its audience
- the influence of both the media and audience
- the way media is used by globalised media institutions, governments and the individual
- the rationale for regulating the relationships between the media and its audience in Australia
- the issues and challenges relating to regulation and control of the media
- ethical and legal issues in the production, distribution, consumption and reception of media products
- media language.

KEY SKILLS

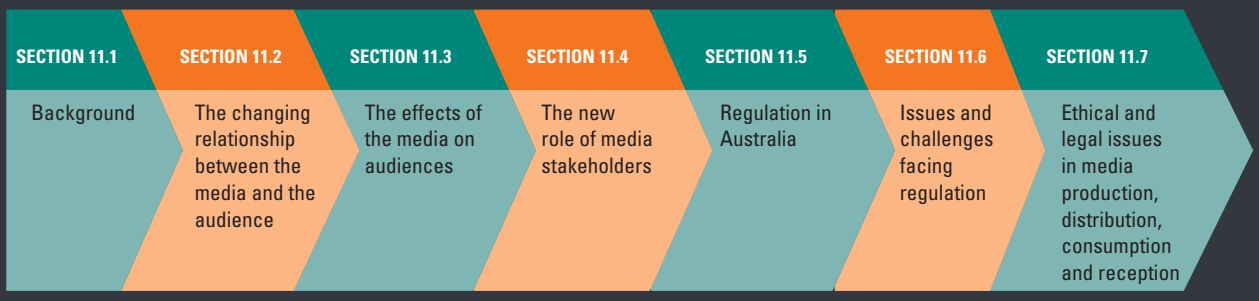
- discuss the dynamic and changing relationship between the media and its audience
- discuss the extent of the influence of the media and media audience
- analyse the regulation of relationships between the media and its audience in Australia
- analyse issues and challenges relating to regulation and control of the media
- evaluate ethical and legal issues in the media
- use media language.

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KEY TERMS

- agency
- control
- mass media
- feedback loop
- stakeholders
- media institutions
- media regulation
- web 2.0 technology
- media effects theories

WHAT'S AHEAD



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11.1 Background

agency the capacity to act and exert power over media messages/products

control whether the media has the power to influence audiences

There has never been a greater time to study the media. With the production, distribution and interaction with the media in a constant state of flux, the line between the media and the audience is now more blurred than ever. The notion of who has **agency** – the capacity to interact with media messages and make free choices – and who has **control** – media that has the power to influence – is not so easy to determine any more. What you must examine are the ways in which the power and influence can potentially be exerted by those with the capacity to make media products.



FIGURE 11.2 Modern media audiences have the power to both consume and produce content.

In days past, students of media theory would wonder at the potential for control the few and powerful had over what was, at times, considered to be vulnerable and defenceless audiences. Now that those with power can include that very group once considered at the mercy of mass media institutions, it is a question of who controls who.

Traditional media institutions relied heavily on the revenue created by audiences and, as such, would work to serve these needs. At times, the media has been used for more than commercial purposes and the need for political, social or economic control over populations led to the media playing a role in guiding the thoughts and actions of individuals. In Australia, like other developed nations, the descendants of those individuals now have the capacity to create, record, upload and distribute content that can challenge these institutions.



FIGURE 11.3 Today, people like DJ Khaled can tell the world their thoughts via social media, like Snapchat.

Issues arise from this new world, which demand your attention. If those who have the power use tools provided by global media institutions, what power does the individual or even the government have in controlling the privacy, use and regulation of this content? In short, you can tell the world your thoughts via Instagram or Twitter, but who owns it and who controls what is and is not acceptable content? What power and agency do you really have?

In this chapter you will examine the history of studies, trends and ideas that examined the capacity of the media to influence audience actions and beliefs. You will gather your knowledge of the modern media landscape, and particularly your understanding of using media technologies to guide audiences, to consider the new landscape and decide how and where old understandings of new media apply to the world you face today.

This study needs a careful and considered approach. While it may seem different to everything else you have studied before, you will be surprised how much you can bring to your understanding of what, from the outside, seems a very challenging study. First, you are a media user who uses and disposes of technology trends faster than any age group in history. You are at the cutting edge and the globalised media institutions you will be examining are the ones trying to keep up with the trends and behaviours you and your peers gravitate towards. The very trends you will discuss, concern you specifically. Second, you have charted the change in media technologies in Chapter 6, 'Media and change', and will have closely examined the way

FOCUS QUESTION

What does 'agency and control of the media' refer to?

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governments and institutions have tried to push, challenge or subvert ideologies since the history of mass media. Finally, your life as a media user has developed a digital literacy that surpasses those who came before you and thus your critical eye will help you determine a path through the murky world of media influence. Good luck!

11.2 The changing relationship between the media and the audience

The relationship between the media and audiences has changed radically. Prior to the availability of media technologies like smartphones, mobile networks and high-speed internet, there was a clear distinction between those who created the media and the audience that received its messages.

Traditional studies of media and communication explained this relationship very simply.

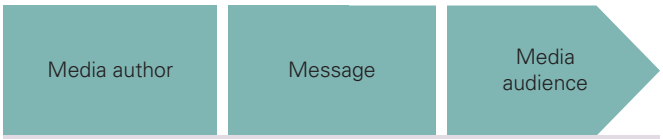


FIGURE 11.4 Traditional linear view of the relationship between the media and communication



FIGURE 11.5 A recruitment poster from the US government encouraging women into the workforce. Through the use of posters like this in World War II, the US government was able to broadcast the dominant ideology of the time – that young women and men should commit their lives to serving their country in a time of war.

As rudimentary as this sounds, it says a lot for a number of early studies into the media and the audience. The term mass media emerged in the 1920s when the dominant form of communication was the printed newspaper. As printing a newspaper with a large circulation to a big audience like Sydney or Melbourne was expensive, there were generally few individuals with the money and capacity to do so. The companies or **institutions** that owned these newspapers were structured much like governments, and had one or a handful of individuals at the top of the organisation's pyramid. As these newspapers began to reach more and more people, the capacity for this small group of influential people to spread a dominant message or ideology through their reporting of news became very possible.



FIGURE 11.6 A 'newspaper boy' selling the daily paper in the US in the 1940s

As radio, film and television emerged over the next few decades, experts began to investigate the relationship between these increasingly dominant media forms and the potential each had for influencing and controlling the actions

institutions commercial and not-for-profit organisations that produce, sell and provide media messages and services to large audiences

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feedback loop the process of a message being sent out to an audience and the influences upon the feedback that is sent back to the media creator

of the audience. In the early days of mass communication, the power of print, radio and advertising to reach, control and reinforce dominant ideologies was studied further. Evidence existed from World Wars I and II that governments and news media that perpetuated an idea about enemies and friends meant that people would sign up their lives to war or work towards its success. As the moving image of film and television developed, the audience were given even greater and more captivating access to the ideas of those who created the content for them.

What must also be understood in these early days of mass communication was the relationship between the media and the audience. As a student of media today, you would have little concept of the time and delay between the media, audience and the **feedback loop** that occurred before the internet became mainstream. Traditional media institutions like television and radio stations, newspapers or film studios only had a few means of gaining feedback from their audience on the success or otherwise of their media products, and it took time.

A feedback loop refers to the process that a media message takes on its way to an audience, and back again to the creator. For example, the size of the modern media feedback loop is relatively small. If Kanye West releases a new song and asks for your feedback at that moment on social media, you can tell him exactly what you think of it in that instant. In the past, the size of this loop was much larger, in the sense that it took a lot longer for that feedback to return to the creator of the media message. Newspapers gained feedback via their daily sales figures and letters to the editor that commented on their treatment of specific stories. Film studios relied on figures from the 'box office' – ticket sales – to judge the popularity and success of a film. Television stations relied (and surprisingly some still do) on a complex and limited process of judging the 'ratings' or viewership of certain programs. This process could take days, weeks or months. The ability for the audience to influence the makers of media messages was limited. While they could and still do vote with the remote or their wallets, the agency that these audiences wielded was limited.

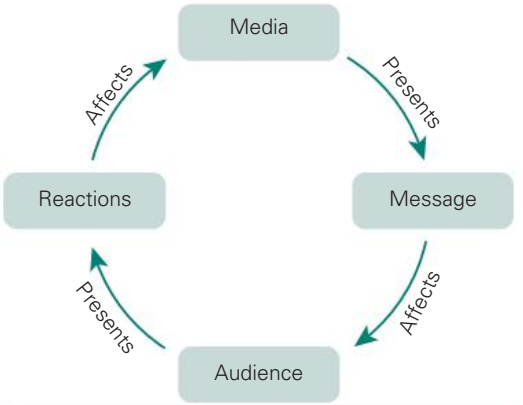


FIGURE 11.7 The feedback loop of the media and society

Within this context, it is important to establish the roles of three important **stakeholders** and how each one behaved in a time in media history known as the 'broadcast era', which will guide the remainder of your investigation. These groups all played a role in the creation and consumption of media messages and their capacity to wield agency and exert control shifted over time.

stakeholders people, organisations and governments involved in the media

Stakeholders in the broadcast era

The broadcast era refers to a period in the 20th century where audiences were somewhat reliant on the news and information broadcast to them via radio, television and print. Due to the limitations of technology at the time, audiences relied on these messages to connect with the outside world. Many studies and theories of media influence and control observed the relationship between the groups involved in the media process as one of 'cause and effect'.

- **Governments:** Democratic or otherwise, governments used the media to share ideas of dominant ideology. For example, Australian government politicians would use the media to spread messages of government decisions that affected the population. One of their primary roles was and is to protect and serve the citizens of the nation and, as such, the media was a powerful tool to tell as many of those citizens as possible about decisions that affected their lives. Coincidentally, the decades in which media technology and the size of the audience it could reach began to increase coincided with World Wars I and II,

FOCUS QUESTION

Define the term 'broadcast era' in your own words.

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where the government needed young men and the general population to commit their lives to conflict. As you saw in the 'Media and change' chapter, the publication of Ashmead Bartlett's coverage, detailing the landing of Australian soldiers at Anzac Cove, took two weeks to reach the covers of Australian newspapers. Once printed, a surge of volunteers for the war followed. To leverage the enthusiasm for a war that consumed the lives of a generation of young men, the Australian government embarked on an extensive campaign of propaganda that would aim to convince even more young men to sign up and 'serve their nation'.

- **Institutions:** In this period, agency and control was limited to a small number of news and entertainment media producers. In Hollywood, the studio system of the 'Big Five' film companies controlled the film industry and the messages it promoted to its audience. These studios controlled the stories that were told, the stars that appeared in them, the directors who crafted the story, all the way down to the way in which it was distributed and shown in cinemas. Regardless of the ideological or commercial concerns of the owners of these studios, the agency and control of American cinema in a defining period of the American identity (1920s–1960s) was left in the hands of relatively few, wealthy and powerful individuals. When you consider films that have made an impact on your life, be it *Shawshank Redemption* (1994, dir. Frank Darabont) or *Freaky Friday* (2003, dir. Mark Waters), you must seriously consider the impact these individuals had on a large and rapidly evolving population in that period. Up until recently, the Australian newspaper and television landscape was limited to the control of a few. Before the introduction of digital television in Australia in the 21st century, there were only five available television stations. That's right, five. Of those five, two were government funded and their production was at the mercy of a tight set of regulations and guidelines. The remaining three commercial stations, channels Seven, Nine and Ten, were owned at various stages by a range of billionaire families and powerful interest groups that had commercial and political ties to the government. The ability for Australian audiences to exert any agency in this environment was limited. Control was in the hands of those who could afford it.

ACTIVITY 11.1

1 Explain the codes and conventions used in this poster:
   - technical
   - symbolic
   - written.
2 Explain how selection and omission has developed meaning within the poster.
3 Explain how this poster would attempt to send a specific message to its audience.



FIGURE 11.8 Propaganda poster from Australia during World War II

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ACTIVITY 11.2

1 How and where do you watch free-to-air television programs?
2 What dictates the decisions you make on what to watch and when?
3 What does this mean for the potential for free-to-air television to have control over your viewing habits?

- **The individual:** In the broadcast era of the media, when the few had the power to communicate to the many, it meant that the audience had little agency to interact and respond to media messages. While their leaders would consistently encourage those who lived in democracies to voice their anger with their vote, those who lived under dictatorships experienced more difficult circumstances. In the 1930s, citizens in Nazi Germany were at the mercy of a government that exerted total control. When any citizen voiced or published opposition to the Nazi regime, they invariably faced arrest, violence and persecution. For those who found their voice and attempt at agency within the media at the far end of Nazi hatred, it usually ended in death. In a regime that also controlled the newspapers, radio and film industry, it is easy to see an extreme example of an audience with little or no power to contribute to the message of its society. As you will see in the remainder of this chapter, the role of the audience has recently undergone a significant and radical change that has seen the holders of control in institutions and government scramble to determine the role they play in a new landscape.

FOCUS QUESTION

Who were the traditional stakeholders in the broadcast era?

ACTIVITY 11.3

Nazi propaganda

1 Explain the codes and conventions used in this poster:
   - technical
   - symbolic
   - written.
2 Explain how selection and omission has developed meaning within the poster.
3 What does this mean for audience agency when there is no other message?

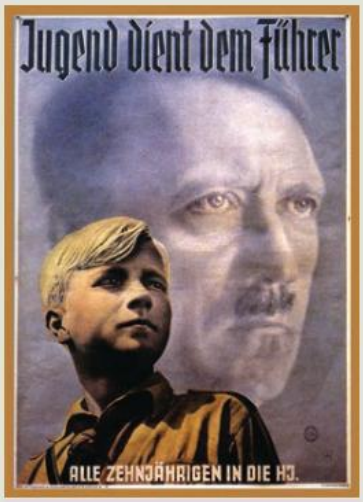


FIGURE 11.9 The text means 'Hitler Youth Serves The Leader'. These posters were common in towns and schools after the Nazi Party took control of Germany in 1933.

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The media, then and now

The limited ownership of mass communication institutions meant that a number of small groups grew large and powerful due to the desire of advertisers looking to sell products to their audiences. Any study of commerce and marketing will tell you that the media is useful to create a demand for the product you're attempting to supply to a customer base. As newspapers grew in significance, advertising including classified ads allowed the advertisers to sell businesses, services and products to the readership. It was a simple transaction between the paper and the advertiser. The more enticing the headline, the more exclusive the scoop, the more likely the paper was to sell copies of its daily newspaper to build a readership and customers for the advertisers.

The arrival of radio and television continued this tradition. Radio provided a reputable voice to recommend a product to the audience and television did this and more. As soon as audiences could *see* the product in action, it created a seemingly bottomless pit of revenue for the owners of television networks. Yes, they created programs that educated and entertained, but these were, and still are, a vehicle to entice viewers to buy the products of advertisers.

These institutions considered themselves the gatekeepers of public information. As there was a great volume of information available to be told, these institutions decided what was, and what was not, news, thus making them gatekeepers of information.



ACTIVITY 11.4

Think about the relationship between the financial models that drove these institutions and their assumed role as 'gatekeepers'. What problems can you see with this?

So when did all this change?

This relationship between the audience and the older model of broadcast media, where there existed a relationship of control and limited agency, has diminshed since the arrival of web 2.0 technologies in 2005. In your reading, this is often referred to as the *post-broadcast era*.

As a native of web 2.0 technologies, you may not be aware of the impact they have had upon the media landscape. When faster broadband speeds allowed internet users to have a direct relationship that not only interacted with the internet, but helped create it, the once-static relationship between the audience and the media shifted dramatically. The opportunity for great agency suddenly distorted the distinction between who was and was not the media.

With the advent of websites and services that relied exclusively on content created by the user, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Wikipedia have become the world's dominant sources of information, entertainment and interaction. What does this then mean for the media institutions that once held significant control over media messages?

Impact of web 2.0 technology

The impact of the internet cannot be understated. It could be easily argued that the major companies of the broadcast era simply lost out to larger web-based institutions like Google, Facebook and Amazon. However, with some exceptions, these institutions rely on user participation with the media to exist. Where would Facebook be without the insatiable human need for interaction? Where would YouTube be without the hours of hilarious prank videos or Instagram without the obsession with selfies? These media institutions grew specifically from a closer relationship with the audience, which in turn makes more media creators from the audience every day. There has never been more agency in the hands of the media user.

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ACTIVITY 11.5

Complete the following table to examine the reach of each service. Using the most up-to-date data you can find, fill in this table and answer the questions below:

Service	Nature of the media content and services available	Total daily visits	Total users
YouTube			
Facebook			
Twitter			
Wikipedia			
Instagram			
eBay			
Amazon			

1 Examine the table and determine the service that has the most users each day.
2 Determine which site has the greatest number of users.
3 Which service offers the widest range of services to its audience?
4 For each service, consider and list which broadcast-era media services it directly challenges.

FOCUS QUESTION

Who are the gatekeepers of the post-broadcast era?

The ability for the audience to reach beyond their immediate geographic location has enabled the audience member to be more active in their media use, as they are able to actively voice opinion and ideas that impact the direction of some media products. They can be selective in what they interact with but, at the same time, be more adventurous with content and media products that simply could not exist under the older financial models of broadcast-era institutions. More importantly, the nature of these new media technologies has met the basic user needs to ensure that an elderly grandmother can stream the *Inspector Morse Mysteries* to her heart's content! Accessible media technologies have made the march of web 2.0 media open to all users with an internet connection.

Consider the changes this has made to news media. Traditionally, the 6 pm television news was the eagerly awaited program that detailed the news of the day and the weather for tomorrow. Today, as news stories break they are streamed live as though the user has a personal correspondent on the other end of the phone! Not only this, but as seen in some of the terror attacks in Europe in 2016 and 2017, audience-generated content has become the cornerstone of this immediate interaction. Internet trends have made the 6 pm television news broadcast and 5 am newspaper analysis edge closer to redundancy as news is available from an infinite number of sources that tailor content to the user. The weather and its predictions are a standard feature on almost any smartphone.



FIGURE 11.10 Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg

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CASE STUDY 11.1

Celebrity and the economic power of social media



FIGURE 11.11 LeBron James

In 2010, basketballer LeBron James announced his decision to change teams from Cleveland to Miami on a televised special in the USA. It reached an audience of 10 million on the American sports cable TV network ESPN. The announcement was, at the time, one of the most momentous in the long history of the game. However, the audience was comparatively limited as only those who had live access to the event in the USA could watch it live. With a global audience for the National Basketball Association now numbering in the hundreds of millions, the same event, broadcast via a live social media feed would potentially reach those hundreds of millions. LeBron's team, the league he plays in, not to mention his shoe and clothing sponsors, would be able to reach an audience 10, 20 or 30 times the size of the audience on an American television channel. For free.

In 2017, Argentinian footballer Lionel Messi had over 70 million followers on his Instagram page alone. One photo of a new pair of boots from his sponsor suddenly had reach that even the biggest sporting manufacturers could only dream of. Not only does it reach the personal Instagram feed of each of these users, the image of the product they are attempting to sell now sits mere centimetres from the face of their potential customer!

Here's the important part: in this process the audience have the capacity to comment, tag, repost and interact with the media message instantaneously and, as such, the feedback loop has shrunk.

There has been a changing dynamic between the audience and institutions looking to leverage their newfound agency within the media to reassert control.

FOCUS QUESTION

What has happened to the feedback loop?

ACTIVITY 11.6

In the table below, explain how new media institutions have contributed to each consequence of web 2.0 technology.

Consequences of web 2.0	Institutions and their contribution
The size of the media feedback loop has decreased.	
The number of media products available to audiences has increased dramatically.	
The size and scale of the audience has increased.	

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CASE STUDY 11.2

Politics in the media

The relationship between democratic governments and the media has always been one of begrudging acceptance of the other. The media need politicians to report back the events of the day and politicians need the media to communicate their message to their populations. For both, it's a case of 'can't live with them, can't live without them'. Contemporary political parties have whole divisions within their offices that deal specifically with the media and the messages they attempt to create, control and manage. Conversely, major news institutions hire teams of journalists and researchers to track and monitor the actions of political leaders. How each one has used the other has often determined the outcome of elections. It is common practice for major newspapers like the *Herald Sun* and *The Age* in Melbourne to make public declarations that inform their readers who the institution believes they should vote for.

On the other hand, the careful management of political parties and their relationship with the media has led to victory in the polls. In 1997, British politician Tony Blair was able to snatch an unlikely victory for the British Labour Party by striking up a friendship with Rupert Murdoch, media mogul and owner of the vast majority of British newspapers at that time. Murdoch instructed his papers to put their support behind Blair and he won by a huge margin.

The audience uses the media in the same context to make their own decisions. Voting is the responsibility of every eligible citizen and, as such, is something that has always been treated with great seriousness in democratic societies. In one of the most memorable incidents in Australian political media history, one politician single-handedly used the media to derail his own political campaign. Politicians are notorious for their choreographed moments in front of television cameras. From elaborate and awkward handshakes to signing big pieces of paper with even bigger pens, political leaders have often sought to use the news media to influence the audience.

In the final days of the 2004 Australian federal election, the incumbent Prime Minister John Howard held a slim lead over his Labor rival, Mark Latham. As is often the tradition, the two candidates had successive interviews with a radio talk show host to plead their case. Latham went first and left the studio to an audience of news cameras. As Howard approached the door for his own interview, Latham attempted to use his larger frame and physical presence to stand over the smaller Howard and aggressively shook his hand. The moment implied an attempt by Latham to physically intimidate Howard. Latham lost the election by a far greater margin than was anticipated by experts.



FIGURE 11.12 Former Labor leader Mark Latham aggressively shakes the hand of Liberal leader John Howard during the 2004 federal election campaign

The study of governments and their attempts to control messages can be terrifying and hilarious all at once. From seemingly democratic leaders arresting journalists to control media messages to those politicians who seem to freeze under the pressure of a camera and the audience, political parties and governments use the media for a specific purpose: to spread their message. Election campaigns serve as the best window into the attempts of governments to exert control over audiences. The more people one political party can convince, the more likely the audience will exercise their agency and vote for them. This can be a simple process of two potential messages:

1 'We are the group that will make your life better.'
2 'The other party will make your life worse.'

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In the broadcast era, political groups learned, often the hard way, that a carefully choreographed performance in front of the media would lead to positive results. As you have already read, the audience in this period had little agency beyond their vote. As such, political leaders learned to use imagery, messages and rehearsed performances to present a positive and lasting image in an attempt to assert control over audiences.

Nixon vs JFK – the broadcast era

The relationship between Australian and American history in the 1960s has a direct link to the rise of television as the dominant media form. A keen study of the major events of that era, be it the Vietnam War or the moon landing, will find a direct link to the televised image that helped guide public debate and action towards them. One of the first American politicians to properly use television to their advantage was a presidential candidate known as John F Kennedy. Prior to the introduction of television, politicians like JFK would use radio and print to sell their message and sway public opinion; however, both forms limited the ability of a candidate to appear as anything more than slogans. Television humanised politics as the form allowed media audiences to see and hear their leaders talk in real time. In 1960, 87% of American homes, more than 46 million, were equipped with a television, compared to 25% in 1956. Television was the dominant media form.

JFK was a young, handsome and well-spoken politician. While these qualities could also be communicated through print and radio, it was his personality and charm that television could communicate. In the lead-up to the election, JFK appeared on television in multiple forms, notably on the *Jack Paar Tonight Show*, which allowed him to showcase a relaxed and casual side to his personality. JFK and his political party were attempting to exercise control through the media form of television by cultivating a positive image.

In the lead-up to the 1960 American election, JFK debated his opponent, the older and more experienced Richard Nixon. In August of 1960, when the first debate appeared on television, Nixon had been unwell and refused to wear make-up on screen. His physical appearance was that of an older, unwell man who lacked strength and confidence. By contrast, the young Kennedy had just finished campaigning in sunny California and was the picture of good health.

The August 1960 *Presidential Debate* was broadcast on television and radio. Research after the event recorded that those who listened to the debate on the radio found the debate and ideas of Nixon made him the winner. However, the television audience of over 70 million focused on the physical appearance of the two and declared Kennedy the winner. Here we can observe a clear distinction between the power of certain media forms to influence an audience. Not only this, it was a deliberate attempt by a media-savvy individual aspiring to control and sway public opinion with the dominant media form of the day.



FIGURE 11.13 Richard Nixon and JFK during one of their televised debates in 1960



FIGURE 11.14 A family watches JFK on television

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JFK went on to win the election where more than half of all voters reported that the televised debates played a role in their decision, and 6% of those surveyed stated that the debates were the specific reason they voted for JFK. However, the results of the surveys have been disputed and the role of the TV debates in the election result is viewed by some as a media myth.

Analysis

Carefully consider this case study and answer the following questions. NOTE: you will need to hang on to them as they will form the basis of a research task later on.

1 To what extent did JFK exert control in this event?
2 How would you define the extent of agency the audience was able to wield? Define the nature of television and radio as media forms in your response.
3 Consider how the audience was surveyed in 1960. Voters were asked their opinion via phone, mail or door-to-door surveys. How would the nature of the feedback loop affect the ability of those two political leaders to act upon their own message?

Clinton vs Trump – the post-broadcast era

Fast forward to 2016 and America was asked to vote for the election of their 45th president. Since 1960, the televised election debate has become a fundamental element of democracies the world over. It is one of the key means by which audiences can see their leaders interact and put forward their case for election. They are still heavily choreographed events that each candidate prepares for to manage body language, handshakes and facial expressions.

What has changed is the technology available to the audience and the feedback loop of these messages. On 26 September 2016 as the two presidential candidates, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, met on stage for the first political debate of the campaign, they began a ceremony that had been set in the American political tradition since Nixon and JFK. Meeting together on stage and using a nationwide television broadcast to attempt to sway voters in their direction, each candidate was faced with a vastly different media landscape. As the debate began, a number of media forms began participating:

- **Television** – using the traditional debate format, allowing each candidate time to respond to each question, the broadcasts were watched live by millions.
- **Twitter** – an incalculable number of journalists, commentators, politicians and ordinary citizens posted their thoughts, retweeted those of others and provided a vast platform for live political debate among the audience in real time. During the debate there were almost 6 million tweets that mentioned and tagged either candidate.
- **YouTube** – played three live streams from Bloomberg TV, the *Washington Post*, the Spanish-language channel Telemundo and independent streaming which allowed for public commentary.
- **Online news** – live commentary from journalists across a range of news platforms.
- **Facebook** – live streams allowed for open comment and political debate between supporters of both candidates.
- **Memes** – text on images were created and shared live in response to each candidate's statement.
- **Print media** – journalists and analysts recorded the debate to make extended commentary in the following day's paper.



FIGURE 11.15 Donald Trump during one of the televised political debates in the 2016 US presidential election

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The role of media platforms

Throughout the campaign, social media took a very prominent role in the public debate around the election. In the Nixon and JFK era, the audience would debate with friends and co-workers in an open dialogue that used the opinions of journalists who, for the most part, were free and independent enough to cast judgement on either candidate. It was expected that each voter would consider all of their options carefully and cast their vote accordingly.



FIGURE 11.16 Trump famously took advantage of his presence on Twitter during the election campaign.

In the 2016 campaign, the nature of the audience's involvement completely altered the way in which the candidates *and* their supporters attempted to sway the opinion of voters. Most elections are hotly contested; however, the sheer volume of media available to voters meant that a bottomless pit of views, opinions, videos, posts and blogs were available to those willing to search. On Facebook, the ferocity of the debate reached such a level that many users began 'unfriending' and hiding the opinions that they disagreed with. Clinton supporters only saw news and posts by other Clinton supporters, Trump supporters only saw what they wanted to see. People were trapped in their own echo chambers that meant they only heard or saw posts sympathetic to their own beliefs, reinforcing what they already believed. When two opposing supporters would meet on a post made by an institutional news source like the *Washington Post*, the political debate would often descend into name calling and the kind of immature responses that in no way reflected the informed political debate of the 1960s.

On Twitter, the opportunity for the audience to share informed opinion was not helped by the behaviour of both Clinton and Trump who used the platform to belittle and 'troll' each other. In response to one of Trump's frequent missives about his opponent, Clinton responded with a common trolling retort of 'delete your account'. While the platform was open to millions to tag and share their views, the limitation of 280 characters (increased from 140 in 2017) on the micro-blogging platform meant that the possibility of well-informed and calm political debate was rare. In addition to this, an Oxford University study examined the source of tweets about the campaign. It found that at least a fifth of the tweets that supported Clinton and at least a third of the tweets that supported Trump came from automated Twitter accounts known as 'bots'. These accounts are not owned or operated by unique individuals, but by software programs that generate tweets with the intention of getting some hashtags to trend and dominate discussion on the platform. As such, the value and place of Twitter within this media event must be carefully scrutinised.

FOCUS QUESTION

What is a 'Twitter bot'?

With this in mind, it is interesting to examine the dominance Twitter has in developing news for television, radio and print media forms. The behaviour of the two candidates was not limited to one incident; in fact, it played out over the entire campaign where one candidate's tweets would be rebuffed by another, more outlandish claim. The tweet then became headline news that directed the nature of the post, the time it was tweeted and the responses and 'retweets' it gathered – the nature of the social media post was seemingly as important as the content of the message itself. Twitter was the news! One particular exchange, earlier in the campaign, saw Clinton debate another potential presidential rival Jeb Bush, who posted tweets of an 'info graphic' of political slogans and statistics. What followed was a series of imitations and memes from each camp that attempted to belittle the other using the common language of memes.

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FIGURE 11.17 The Twitter 'debate' between Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Jeb Bush

A relatively recent phenomenon in the 2016 election, internet memes were closely examined for their influence over political debate. Used sparingly by political leaders like Clinton, they were overwhelmingly a tool used by ordinary citizens to exert some agency within the political process. Just like tweets, Facebook posts, Snapchats and Instagram photos, the political memes of the 2016 campaign were a direct example of agency exerted from the 'bottom up'. Usually little more than an extremely simple message in text that either supports or derides the image it appears over, memes played an interesting role in changing or reinforcing political opinions during the campaign. The power of a meme lies in its simplicity. They thrive on a lack of information and speed. There are no gatekeepers for memes and, as such, the simpler the message is, the faster it can be spread.

Analysis

Research some current political memes online and choose three to examine closely.

1. Define the message being communicated.
2. Define the bias of the text. Is it supportive or critical of the image?
3. Explain how text has been used. How does it support the bias of the message?
4. Define, if you can, the relationship between the commentary and the stated facts behind the issue being discussed.
5. How would the speed and accessibility of this message potentially influence understanding and discussion of the issue in comparison to other mediums?

Online and 24-hour television news was scrambling to make sense of this information overload. Both mediums had long since adopted the policy of reporting as the events happened and establishing fact and truth later. This, however, raises an interesting challenge for the once dominant 24-hour news feeds of the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, CNN and Fox News.

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Analysis

Work in groups of three to complete the following task:

On two blank pieces of paper, re-create the diagram seen here. One for the Nixon vs JFK debate and one for Clinton vs Trump.

1 One person, using red pen, should chart the role all media forms played in the Nixon and JFK election campaign, noting down how and where each form participated. Your goal in the second circle is to explain how the feedback loop would have operated in the 1960s.

2 On the second piece of paper use a blue pen to create *one* circle to chart the role traditional news media played in the Clinton and Trump debate.

3 A third must create the second circle for Clinton and Trump, but using a green pen, that focuses specifically on the role social media technologies played in the same process.

4 Once complete, you need to carefully examine the results:

- **a** How have social and online media contributed to the flow of information?
- **b** How do you define the difference between those who have control in each instance?
- **c** How can you explain the difference in agency within the audience?

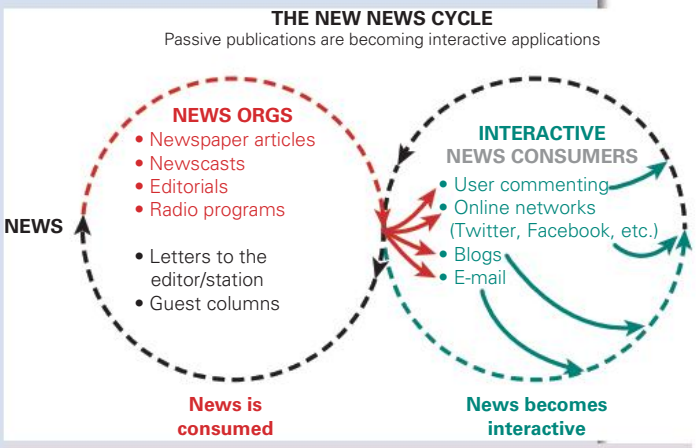


FIGURE 11.18 Diagram of the modern 24-hour news cycle

For mobile media creators, the size of the potential audience has exploded. For media institutions like Disney Pictures (that had a short-lived multimillion dollar relationship with mega vlogger PewDiePie), which still look to reach the broadest audience possible, these technologies present an opportunity to expand audience numbers that were almost impossible during the broadcast era.

Social media and control

The influence of social media on this debate cannot be underestimated. Social media has been used by the government and commercial institutions that have attempted to assert some sort of control over audiences through legal and economic endeavours like justice, news media and advertising.

In 2016, an ABC news report found that comments made on social media had the power to interfere with the course of justice. Democratic societies like Australia and others rely on a justice system that is free from corruption. However, both the people on trial and those determining their fate have used social media outside the court to disrupt the natural course of justice. In normal circumstances, a jury member is not allowed to discuss the case with anyone until it is completed. In a highly sensitive case of sexual abuse in England, a juror could not decide her verdict, so she put it to an online poll on Facebook. In the same year, a defendant in a case had made disparaging remarks about the judge overseeing his trial and, once found out, saw his sentence increased. While each example clearly demonstrates that those who use the agency of social media do not always do so with intelligence, it does highlight the power the media platform has to interfere with crucial elements of society.

Fake news is another phenomenon created by the rise of social media in the last decade. With increased access to user-friendly media technologies came the spread of news media, memes and posts that purported to represent the truth. It is relatively simple to re-create the banner headline of a major news organisation on a webpage and fill it with

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FOCUS QUESTION

Define the term 'fake news'.

false information. Why do this? Those who have a vested interest in seeing one candidate or idea succeed over another can plant the seed of these ideas online and share them with as many like-minded souls as possible. During the 2016 American election, the perfect storm of a divided population, poorly behaved candidates and the dominance of social media as the aggregator of political news and debate allowed fake news to flourish. On several occasions, major news outlets were found to be reporting the facts spread by fake news stories online. While savvy internet users can usually tell the real news from the fake, not all users have the same luxury and in an era where most social media users populate their feeds with ideas that reinforce their own beliefs, it is easy to see how the real and the fake become so mixed and muddled that users may have trouble determining the truth! This has major implications for the trust audiences may have once have had in news media as a source of unbiased commentary.



FIGURE 11.19 Fake news dogged the 2016 US presidential election, such as stories about voter fraud.

Advertising has underwritten the existence of media institutions since the idea of mass media was realised. Commercial institutions have used the assumed influence of radio, television, print and even product placement in films to have genuine and measurable results in influencing audiences to buy whatever it was they were selling. In this chapter you will debate what control the media has to genuinely influence audiences; and some research will argue that it has none. However, if this was the case, why would commercial institutions like Coca-Cola bother to advertise? The reality is, advertising has measurable effects and these have traditionally been through the use of broadcast-era technologies. A back cover of a major magazine like *Cosmopolitan* or *Time* was coveted advertising space, as that magazine could be left face down on coffee tables and doctor's waiting rooms all over the globe. Prime-time television advertising space, like a 30-second spot during the AFL Grand Final or the American Super Bowl, still command millions of dollars as the potential to reach an audience in the millions or billions is a very real possibility. However, what must be considered is the actual influence and control these mediums exert in a modern context.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What milestone was reached by advertising on social media in 2016?
2. What does this suggest about broadcast-era institutions like TV?

Accounting institution Deloitte conducted a 2016 survey into the power of various platforms for effective advertising. The study found that recommendations on social media overtook television advertising for influence for the first time, with 58% of respondents stating that the opinions and recommendations of friends via social media were more influential in purchasing decisions than any other medium. Covering a wide range of audience media consumption patterns, Deloitte determined media audiences were gravitating towards streaming television services that did not contain advertising and were increasingly reluctant to pay for online news with one in five preferring social media as their main source of news.

So where does all this fit? How can we explain it all? Can we at all? As you begin your journey through the rewarding world of agency and control it is important to understand how media theorists and experts attempted to explain the nature and extent of the power each stakeholder can and could possess. Many have proposed theories and conducted research that attempted to isolate the way in which media could potentially influence audiences, or demonstrate that if it can, it is limited to particular conditions. At the end of this chapter, you need to determine how much of this still holds true in a modern and evolving media landscape.

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ACTIVITY 11.7

Before you go forward, it is important to equip yourself with the knowledge you see here and the most up-to-date information at hand. As you have seen here, the frenetic nature of digital technology and social media has blurred all established notions of media and control. Who is losing power and who is gaining more power is beginning to become clear. By the time you read this chapter, even more developments could influence your own understanding of agency and control.

Make a quick 'state of play' report for your notes by answering the following questions.

1. Make a timeline of the impact of social media from 2006 to today. It may help to examine the impact it has had on broadcast-era media forms like TV, film, radio and print.
2. Research the current trends on the power of social media to influence:
   - **a** elections
   - **b** purchasing decisions
   - **c** media form choice
   - **d** news sources.
3. Explain at the bottom of the timeline what impact social media has had on those who attempted to control media messages *and* the impact of the audience on those same messages.

11.3 The effects of the media on audiences

When it comes to determining the nature of agency and control, it is important to avoid generalisations. There are no definitive answers to any of the questions this study poses. Before the media was met with the tidal wave of technological change, theorists and thinkers attempted to explain the relationship between the media and its audience. To properly understand the future of agency and control in the media, it is essential to examine the work that preceded your study. You must start by proposing two questions that will guide the next part of your study:

1. How was the relationship between media creators and the audience once explained?
2. In a new media landscape, which elements of their work are still relevant today?

Studying media influence – the media effects case

We live in the age of information communication technology. It is an age when audiences have unprecedented access to a broad expanse of social and information media. In studying the media we naturally ask the question, 'How do we use the media?' The relationship between audiences and the media in the 21st century is defined by audiences' agency and control over the media.

In the early 20th century this relationship was defined instead by the question, 'How does the media use us?' Audiences were first seen as passive subjects acted upon by the powerful force of the new mass media, broadcast radio. The question of the media's agency and control over audiences had focused on this new form of mass media because of the disastrous consequences of World War II, when governments had used radio for spreading propaganda.

The American President Franklin Roosevelt used radio in the 1930s to convince the American people to accept his radical solutions to the Great Depression. His so-called 'fireside chats' capitalised on the great qualities of the new broadcast medium – its immediacy and its intimacy. It felt to Americans like having the president in their own living rooms. Naturally, people were curious about how audiences could be so affected.

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FOCUS QUESTION

How important was the medium of radio to politicians during the early years of the broadcast era?



FIGURE 11.20 President Franklin Roosevelt delivering one of his 'fireside chats' using the new medium of wireless radio broadcasting directly into the homes of the American people

In the same decade, Hitler's Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels exploited radio to spread Nazi ideology. What followed was a decade of mass destruction. World war in the age of radio meant the question of agency and control had become urgent. Could radio really convince a whole nation to believe in racist supremacy? Could the mass media persuade people to go to war against their will? What could audiences do to resist? What did the future hold? Television was just around the corner and these questions needed answers.

What are media effects?

Anything audiences do in response to the media can be deemed a 'media effect'. Enjoyment is an effect, as is fandom, discussion and debate of your favourite programs and screaming at a horror movie. Normal use of the media, like posting a selfie on social media, can be cited as a media effect, albeit a trivial one. What we consider normal and sociable behaviour, however, does not usually cause concern for researchers, even though they may wish to study our media interaction in order to understand the 'norms'. Media effects research is most concerned about aberrant and anti-social behaviour, or more generally any deviation from the norm. Issues such as those listed below are obviously still relevant today, which explains why media effects research is still relevant.

POTENTIAL MEDIA EFFECTS

- violence disinhibition (media may legitimise the use of violence in society)
- violence imitation ('copy-cat' violence)
- desensitisation (loss of empathy from violence as entertainment)
- political persuasion
- disinformation (fake news)
- media bias
- right-or-wrong dilemma (moral questions confused by multiple opinions)
- lowering of attention span
- poor self-image (due to unrealistic stereotypes)
- racial stereotyping
- dumbing-down of society
- blind imitation (of celebrities)
- wrong message (misconstruing media messages)
- mean and scary world syndrome (fear that what we see on the news is 'normal')
- negativity (similar to mean world effect)
- fact-fantasy confusion (inability to distinguish between mediated and real events)
- sexualisation of children (repeated exposure to sexualised images)
- erosion of decency (failure of censorship to maintain social standards)
- trivialising relationships (pornography confused with sexual intimacy)

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- unhealthy lifestyle (diets influenced by advertising)
- information overload
- media addiction



ACTIVITY 11.8

Choose one of the potential effects from the potential media effects list for discussion in class.

Questions could include:

- What are the media forms that are most often associated with the potential effect? (Social media, TV advertisement, magazine, etc.)
- Identify specific media products that are said to cause the effect.
- What other influences, besides the media, could explain the effect?
- To what extent does the media influence the potential effect?



ACTIVITY 11.9

Design your own survey that could be used as media research into one of the potential media effects.

Strong/weak effects

The debate about media influence can be simplified as having two opposing viewpoints. On the *strong effects* side of the argument our media institutions are seen as very powerful and causing strong effects in audiences. Those holding the *weak effects* viewpoint say audiences are not affected and that the media simply do not hold power over us. It may be as simple as having a pessimistic versus an optimistic outlook.

The first of the strong effects theories, the Bullet Theory, was devised by European analysts amid the post-war gloom under the shadow of totalitarianism, mass destruction and economic depression. There was renewed fear and paranoia about the ideological battle for state control and the rise of Communism. Pessimism could hardly be avoided.



FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 To whom does the term 'media zombie' refer to here?

2 From the 1940s onwards, theorists have questioned what effect the media has on an audience. Briefly summarise the difference between the *strong effects* and *weak effects* views.

Across the Atlantic, America had embarked on a post-war recovery effort of unprecedented magnitude. Its newly emerging wealth through construction and commerce was reflected in science and education. The USA was the pre-eminent capitalist economy. Given its self-confidence, it could not conceive of itself as a nation of media zombies. The idea that the media were more powerful than 'we the people' was less than optimistic. From here the first *weak effects* theories were formed.

The search for proof for or against media control continues today. It will not be proof alone, however, that 'wins' the debate. Like the climate debate, the media debate needs more than the weight of evidence to be convincing. It

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moral panic the feeling and expression of fear among a large number of people

has to overcome bias. The notion of '**moral panic**', that a society's fears are more relevant than the facts, has to be addressed before society can be convinced by rational argument.

Media effects categories

Media influence is a debate that is shifting all the time, and indeed continues today. The 20th century provided new and effective research tools and defined the parameters of media research with increasing sophistication. It would be a mistake to think that the strong/weak effects nexus defines the media influence debate today. The box shows how some current researchers have divided media effects research into new categories.

THE SIX-STAGE MODEL OF MEDIA EFFECTS THEORY

I Persuasion or Bullet Theories 1944–63

(Simple attitude change and behavioural modelling)

Audiences do not evaluate media messages. Observed audience behaviour shows direct effects of media messages.

1 Voting research (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1944; Campbell et al., 1960)
2 Shannon linear model (Shannon & Weaver, 1948)
3 Lasswell linear model (Lasswell, 1948)
4 Persuasion/attitude change (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953; McGuire, 1969)
5 Social learning (Bandura & Walters, 1963)

II Active Audience Theories 1944–86

(Motivated attention)

Focus on the psychology and motivations of audiences that empowers them to actively evaluate media messages.

6 Attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967)
7 Uses and gratifications (Herzog, 1944; Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974)
8 Parasocial theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956)
9 Cognitive dissonance/social identity (Festinger, 1957; Tajfel, 1982)
10 Minimal effects (Klapper, 1960)
11 Selective exposure (Sears & Freedman, 1967)
12 Disposition theory (Zillmann & Cantor, 1976)
13 Media dependency (Ball-Rokeach & De Fleur, 1976)
14 Elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986)

III Social Context Theories 1955–83

(Interpersonal context of communication)

Examines social contexts and how audiences rely on a range of social and personal interactions to evaluate media messages.

15 Two-step flow (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955)
16 Diffusion theory (Rogers, 1962)
17 Knowledge gap theory (Tichenor, Donohue & Olien, 1970)
18 Social networks/social capital (Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 1995)
19 Spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1974)
20 Third person theory (Davison, 1983)

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IV Societal and Media Theories 1933–78

(Long-term accumulation of effects)

Used correlation studies to examine accumulative audience effects measured over long periods of time.

21 Media hegemony/public sphere (Gramsci, 1933; Habermas, [1962] 1989)

22 Channel effects (McLuhan, 1964)

23 Social construction of reality (Berger & Luckman, 1966)

24 Differential media exposure (Clarke & Fredin, 1978)

25 Cultivation theory (Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox & Signorielli, 1978)

V Interpretive Effects Theories 1972–87

(Beyond attitude change – salience, accessibility and structure of attitudes)

Looked at media messages in the context of audiences' ways of thinking, and how they might influence interpretations of information and opinions.

26 Agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972)

27 Priming (Iyengar et al., 1982)

28 Framing theory (Iyengar et al., 1987)

VI New Media Theories 1996–

(Expanded two-way communication, networking, expanded content choice)

Concerned with computer-mediated communication, these are a late development of the 20th century. Media students of today will need to continue research into New Media Theories.

29 Computer-mediated communication (Walther, 1996)

Source: W Russell Neuman & Lauren Guggenheim, 'The Evolution of Media Effects Theory: A Six-Stage Model of Cumulative Research', *Communication Theory Journal*, Vol 21:2, May 2011, pp. 175–6

Active/passive audiences

The very earliest conceptions of audiences saw them as weak, as audiences were considered to be vulnerable to media messages. They were not the principal or active agents in the media relationship – it was thought audiences lacked the agency we speak of today. The *passive audience*, as it came to be known, accepted without resistance the messages that media sent it. Naturally the more passive an audience is, the more likely it is to be affected by the media.

An audience that has awareness, which listens, thinks, considers, chooses and *acts*, is less likely to be affected by media messages. It is the opposite of the passive audience and was recognised in early research that rejected the idea of audience vulnerability. The *active audience* has agency. It can be an active participant in its relationship with the media. It uses the media, not the other way round. Media organisations might be powerful, but the active audience is not vulnerable to its messages.

The two types of audience represent each end of a spectrum. Media research has identified many audiences in between. Children, for example, are still considered a vulnerable audience. They may not be completely passive, but their lack of insight and awareness means media messages can have a greater effect on them than on an adult audience.



FIGURE 11.21 Children have long been considered a vulnerable audience.

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ACTIVITY 11.10

1 In your own words, define an active audience.
2 In your own words, define a passive audience.
3 Why would children be considered a vulnerable audience?
4 Consider your own experience with the media growing up. What content was hidden from you by your elders 'for your own good'? What reasons motivated those people?

Audience characteristics

As soon as audiences were examined more closely it became obvious that they were not a '**mass media audience**'. That is, every audience member has individual characteristics, which can be similar or different to the demographics of a group identified as a media audience (see Table 11.1). This is an issue for 21st-century media research. Audiences for new media in this century are '**atomised**' or so individualised that sometimes all they have in common is the media they use. Their shared characteristics are difficult to identify.

mass media audience a large audience that is considered the same and homogeneous

atomised a way to describe how audiences are defined as specific individuals, in opposition to the idea that they could be considered a 'mass media audience'

Personal identity	Demographics
Personality (personal psychology)	Age
Ideals, beliefs and morals	Gender
Preferences, likes and dislikes	Religion
Patterns of consumption	Socioeconomic status (SES)
Behavioural traits	Education
	Employment status
	Marital status
	Family status

TABLE 11.1 Typical characteristics used to identify audiences

ACTIVITY 11.11

Think of one of your own favourite media products (any will do). Using yourself as an example as a member of the audience of this text, describe the audience's characteristics using the lists in Table 11.1 as a guide.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 What does 'homogeneous' mean?
2 Define the term 'mass media audience' in your own words.
3 Why did early 'media effects' researchers evaluate audiences as a single group?

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Problems of media effects research

Media effects research is a branch of social science. In the 20th century it encountered the same problems of all research methodology during that era. These problems persist today.

quantitative research research methods that emphasise objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires and surveys

qualitative research research that aims to find out people's opinions and feelings rather than information that can easily be shown in numbers

Quantitative vs qualitative research

Quantitative research uses simple data and statistics. Media researchers (especially advertisers) rely on closed questions and quantitative analysis, such as viewing patterns, visitor counters and tick box questionnaires to reveal patterns of audience behaviour. The problem with this type of research is that it shows *what* audiences are doing, but it doesn't explain *why* they are doing it. Statistical analysis is too simplistic and doesn't delve very deeply into social issues. Quantitative research is of limited use in researching the media effects identified above.

Qualitative research asks more complex questions and gathers detailed views and opinions. Surveys and focus groups take time to drill down into audiences' beliefs, attitudes and feelings. The results and conclusions gained through qualitative analysis are detailed and complex. This is at the same time one of the problems with qualitative analysis. It is slow and cumbersome. Its conclusions do not always provide clear answers because of the level of complexity involved. Focus groups only represent a small cross-section of the audience. Small samples have to be extrapolated to answer for a large mass. Measuring large group opinions is an inexact science.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research for measuring the effects of the media on an audience?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative research for measuring the effects of the media on an audience?



FIGURE 11.22 Media effects researchers turned to laboratory experiments to determine the power of the media over audiences.

Laboratory experiments

In order to deal with the problems of deep research and the accuracy of conclusions, researchers have sometimes undertaken laboratory experiments to discover media effects. There are a great number of ethical issues in working with real people, including informed consent (sometimes scientists don't want their experimental subjects to know what is about to happen). There is, though, a clear advantage of working in the lab – scientists have control over variables.

FOCUS QUESTION

What are the strengths and weaknesses of laboratory research for measuring the effects of the media on an audience?

Clinical control, though, might be one of the disadvantages of using laboratories in social (and media) science. The variables that scientists wish to manage include the random and unpredictable events outside the lab that audiences would experience in the real world. The question then is, 'How applicable are the results from a lab to the real world that we want to understand?' Experimental data and conclusions are a bit like audiences' experiences of the media, but they are not the same as their real-world experience.

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Designers of laboratory experiments may too easily accept clinical results as conclusive proof of their **hypotheses**. Scientists can fall into the trap best summed up by the Latin phrase *'post hoc, ergo propter hoc' – after this, therefore because of this*, which is a warning against the fallacy (mistake) of jumping to conclusions. Bandura's 1961 Bobo Doll experiment, often cited as evidence in support of the Bullet Theory, may suffer from this fallacy.

hypotheses ideas or explanations for something that are based on known facts but have not yet been proved

ACTIVITY 11.12

Investigate the 1961 *Bobo Doll experiment* by Bandura, Ross and Ross.

1. What did the researchers conclude about the influence of film-mediated aggressive models in children?
2. Could their conclusions apply to other audiences?
3. What are the limitations of the experiment and its conclusions when applied to other audiences?

Media effects theories in detail

The following are short summaries of some of the key media effects theories. As you read, the main thing to keep in mind is the issue of agency and control. With each theory, consider who held the power, media creators or their audiences? Also keep in mind whether you think any of these theories are applicable to today's media landscape.

Bullet Theory (also Magic Bullet Theory; Hypodermic Needle Model)

FOCUS QUESTION

Why was the publication of the Bullet Theory important for the overall study of media?

The Bullet Theory proposes that the media communicates influential messages directly into passive audiences who are powerless to resist their force of persuasion, hence the bullet or needle analogy. It was not based on empirical research but on deductions made from observations about behaviour, such as the previously mentioned rise of Nazism and Orson Welles' 'Panic Broadcast' of 1938. It was also influenced by a popular political view that governments and corporations could misuse the media to control populations.

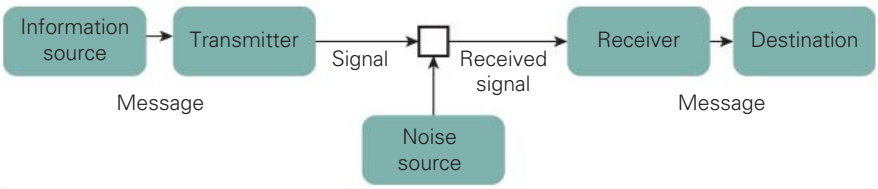


FIGURE 11.23 The 1948 Shannon Weaver conceptual model of media influence

The Bullet Theory eventually adopted the 1948 Shannon Weaver conceptual model to explain media influence. This simplistic graphic device was developed to explain radio and telephone communication. It was a good fit with the Bullet Theory.

The Bullet Theory did succeed in initiating media theory as a field of study. It attempted to explain something that had previously not been understood – audiences' relationship with the media – in a simple, easily understood way. It seemed to make sense in a mechanical world with its model of the powerful message travelling like a bullet and hitting its immobile target.

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The one-way **linear model** is the Bullet Theory's fatal flaw. Since the information source (media) has the primary position and the receiver (audience) is secondary it assumed the receiver is less powerful. Theorists did not use **empirical evidence** and did not take into account audience characteristics or responses through surveys or data. They made assumptions based on audience behaviour. There was no notion of active agency in users of media; an idea that was still to be developed. The audience was considered passive and vulnerable.

With Harold Lasswell's famous 1948 analogy, *Who, Says What, to Whom, with What Effect* came a framework for deeper questioning that had been missing from the early debate about media power. Lasswell's model was still linear, and still privileged the *'Who'* or the media, over the *'Whom'* of audiences, but unlike the Shannon Weaver model, Lasswell's helped to understand the whole media–audience context, inclusive of the *'Effect'*. The *'Says What'* part of the question instigated **content analysis** of messages. This was the true beginning of media effects research.

linear model meaning a direct or clear relationship between cause and effect

empirical evidence data based on what is experienced or seen rather than on theory

content analysis research technique that systematically evaluates large amounts of textual content, with the goal of turning qualitative into quantitative data



FIGURE 11.24 US Republican Senator Orrin Hatch holding a copy of *Doom II* in 1999 and basically endorsing the Bullet Theory

AMAZING FACT

Perhaps without consciously knowing it, the Bullet Theory of media communication has often been popular with conservative politicians and media commentators. In a Fox TV debate in 1999 about violence in American society, US Republican Senator Orrin Hatch presented a copy of the violent video game *Doom II* – arguing that media like the game made players act violently in the real world.

Two-Step Flow

In 1944, US researchers began looking for empirical evidence of the media's direct influence on voting intentions. *The People's Choice* study focused on the process of decision making during a presidential election campaign. The key findings, that only a tiny fraction of voters actually changed their vote intentions during an election campaign, surprised them.

The Two-Step Flow Theory (Figure 11.25) explained this finding. Media messages that audiences received were discussed among 'opinion leaders'. It was the opinion leaders, whose mediation of information flowed to others in the audience, who were seen as influential. The theory explained why political and advertising media campaigns sometimes failed to affect audience attitudes or behaviour.

In this theory the media is powerful when *some* of the audience, made up of opinion leaders, is *active*. Opinion leaders passed on their own interpretations in addition to those in the media. Audiences relied on social interaction and personal conversations to understand media messages. It was greatly favoured by advertisers (including political campaigners), who saw an immediate advantage in identifying audiences of specified characteristics to influence others. Gaining word-of-mouth

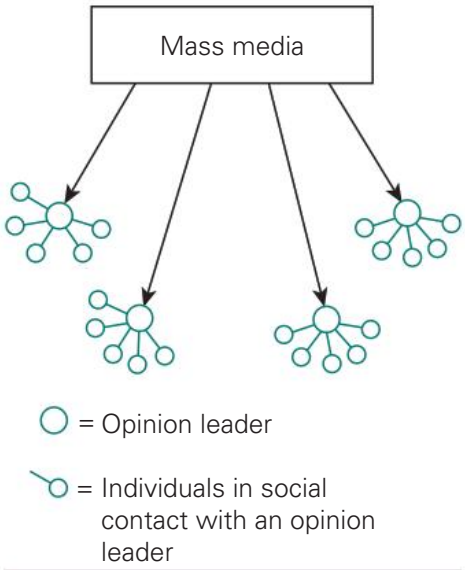


FIGURE 11.25 A diagram of how the Two-Step Flow Theory operated

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FOCUS QUESTION

What is an opinion leader?

recommendations from opinion leaders became a marketing strategy, which you will later investigate as modern media 'influencers'.

While the *People' Choice* survey had provided data about audience behaviour the hypothesis drawn from it was not fully supported by deeper analysis. The hypothesis did not sufficiently describe the passage of specific influence from leaders to 'others'. It also still characterised these others as a weak and vulnerable *passive audience* (or worse, a stupid one). There was also contradictory evidence showing that mass media information did flow directly to audiences on the whole and was not mediated by the so-called opinion leaders.

Reinforcement Theory

Reinforcement Theory overcame the deficiencies of Two-Step Flow by removing the opinion leaders from the equation. In this model the media communicates directly with audiences, but the only effect it can have is to reinforce their existing opinions and views, not to change them. If audiences encounter media products that are opposed to their views they reject them. You might have experienced this yourself if you have ever shouted at something you consider ridiculous on TV.

status quo an existing state of affairs

The media simply does not have the power to disrupt society or motivate social change according to Reinforcement Theory. Media effects are weak. The media can only help maintain the **status quo**, by reinforcing already held beliefs. These come from family, education, peer, religious and social groups, as well as personal psychological factors.

The theory could not explain how new concepts became opinions without the media information if other influencers like family or schools couldn't provide it. How else could audiences develop their ideas? It could not explain the adoption of new opinions, but it did explain exceptions for media influence under 'extraordinary circumstances'.

For example, audiences might have once held favourable beliefs about immigration but these have changed in the decades since the rise of terrorism. Strong media opinion could outweigh other voices we normally value. Another issue is the diminishing influence traditional institutions have in our lives. Do we still have strong faith in religion, family or school, or is social media more influential?



FIGURE 11.26 Cultivation theory particularly concerned itself with the effects of watching television, especially for children.

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation Theory was a response to the overwhelming audience adoption of television as its favoured medium from the 1950s on. In a few decades the dominance of this powerful medium was causing concern much like radio had before it. By the 1970s, questions were being asked about TV's influence on alcohol and tobacco consumption, its portrayals of violence and its links to changing sexual morality. TV's potential effects on children were of primary concern.

Cultivation Theory concluded that audiences could develop false notions of reality, depending on their level of exposure to television. **Correlation studies** compared the viewing habits of audiences over long periods of time, some taking up to 20 years. These unique studies showed that audiences who were exposed to a particular type of TV product were vulnerable to influence. For example, an audience with a preference for violent TV was likely to exhibit some form of violent tendencies in time. The conclusion was that constant exposure to the media *cultivated*, in the long term, distorted values and beliefs in

correlation studies used in research to look for relationships between variables

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some audiences. It was a *strong effect* over a *weak audience* theory stretched over a longer period of time.

The theory did address concerns about rising violence and lowering moral standards in society. There was a concern, however, that Cultivation Theory was given too much weight by governments who were under pressure from religious and other sectional interest groups to censor the media. It was also thought its definitions of media violence were too broad. Could cartoon violence, for example, be compared to real violence? It seemed improbable that the comical rivalry of *Tom and Jerry* (the 1940s prototypes for *The Simpsons*' Itchy and Scratchy) could have serious long-term effects. This looked like *moral panic*.

There was also the question of why different audience members with the same demographic profile reacted differently to media influence. The notion of 'difference' was a continuing focus of philosophy and social theory, which in turn influenced media theory and ideas about the *active audience*. Cultivation Theory, with its focus on demographics and broad definitions of effects, could not account for individual interpretations of media messages and the multitude of audience responses to them.

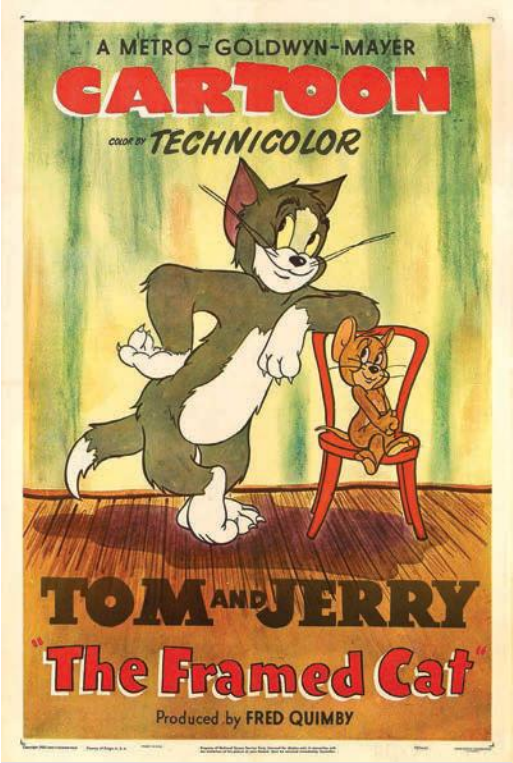


FIGURE 11.27 At one point, media theorists thought that long-term exposure to the comic cartoon *Tom and Jerry* was potentially harmful for audiences.

Agenda Setting Theory

In the 1970s, after several decades of television, researchers had become expert at understanding the codes and conventions used in the structure of media messages. The way TV news structured information was a key area of interest. News programs use a hierarchy of importance to determine the order of their stories and the emphasis given to them. Researchers looked for the *prevalence* of specific topics over a given period of time. When this data was compared with changes in public policy they discovered a pattern.

Agenda Setting Theory concluded that the media could not influence audiences regarding *what* to think, but it could influence *what* to think *about*. The media set the agenda on all matters of *public discourse*, or what people considered important. Audiences could discuss and debate issues, providing their own opinions, but topics were limited to issues portrayed in the media. They were not *passive audiences* but were limited as *active audiences* by what was given to them for consideration. The media had a *powerful effect* by limiting the number and type of issues presented to audiences, and of amplifying the *salience* (importance of) issues it did present.

For example, the visual media, in particular television news, needs images for stories. Audiences watch TV news, then share and discuss stories with others. But if there are no pictures available, a story is unlikely to make the news and will not be discussed. This is not an issue of persuasion, but of limited information. While agenda setting is not necessarily deliberate censorship, there is a concern that powerful media organisations can 'self-censor' or 'self-regulate' and only report issues that they consider important. Such accusations have been made against media moguls such as Rupert Murdoch, and especially his Fox News channel.

Agenda Setting Theory studies had difficulty, however, proving cause and effect. They could not show conclusively that the media sets the agenda for audiences *first*. It was conceivable that audiences could set the agenda for the media. The media doesn't exist in a bubble; it is as much a part of society as audiences are. The media communicates what it considers as important, which is most likely what everybody thinks is important anyway. Today we call this the 'media cycle'.

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FOCUS QUESTION

What is public discourse?

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

Uses and Gratifications Theory was a concept that turned the media–audience relationship on its head. According to this theory the media was just another component of the demand and supply chain. Audiences were seen to make choices on the basis of their personal needs; they use the media like any other product. It asked, 'What do people do with the media?', not the other way round. The media was assumed to fulfil a functional purpose in the life of the audience. Uses and Gratifications Theory is a *weak effects* and an *active audience* theory.



FIGURE 11.28 According to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, audiences hold the power of choice over the media they consume.

Audiences can be seen, in fact, to have powerful effects on the media. Ratings surveys determine which TV shows get made. When audiences adopt new media forms, download an app, use new social media, or when they stop using old media, the fortunes of developers and media companies can be made or lost. VHS outlasted Betamax and was in turn made redundant by DVDs. File downloads and streaming replaced discs. Old media become historical curios, like pianola rolls, and black and white TVs.

Uses and Gratifications researchers gathered a great deal of data about media usage. Marketing research measured consumer-led choice and the effectiveness of advertising. Its methods complemented those of media research. This might be one of its shortcomings.

FOCUS QUESTION

What does 'made redundant' mean?

UGT might over-emphasise audience selectivity in the media–audience relationship. Sometimes audiences consume media without much thought. How often have you checked for updates out of pure habit? The theory has nothing to say about unintended effects, either. An audience might well choose what media messages it consumes but it might not be fully informed about its choices. Eating junk food is a matter of choice, not good sense. You choose to use social media but has it changed you without you knowing it?

New Audience Research and Reception Theory

New Audience Research of the 1980s surveyed the responses of carefully selected and specific audiences to the same media messages. What emerged was a rich and varied picture of audiences having a complex array of preferences that had been overlooked in previous research. Information was gathered about individuals' cultural and ethnic backgrounds, family relationships and political views.

These highly differentiated audiences were asked for detailed feedback on their own experience of the media products, such as TV current affairs and 'soap operas'. The result was a new way of understanding the media–audience relationship. By surveying groups such as business managers, trade unionists, university arts students and black college students, researchers found that different audiences structured *their own understanding* of television programs. They reinterpreted meaning according to their own beliefs and influences.

Reception Theories such as Encoding Decoding (E/D) explained New Audience Research discoveries. Audiences 'read' media product messages and 'decoded' them differently. It divided audiences' readings of media products into three main categories:

- *Dominant reading*: the audience shares a media product's values, attitudes, beliefs or meanings (its 'code'). This is the producer's 'preferred reading'.

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- *Negotiated reading*: the audience partly shares the media product's code but modifies the preferred reading to reflect their own opinions and preferences.
- *Oppositional reading*: the audience does not share the media product's code and rejects the preferred reading, and reinterprets its meaning to agree with their own ideas and opinions.

The fact that New Audience Research used long and highly detailed surveys meant that it could not be verified using quantitative methods. Its conclusions were of great interest but there were doubts about its usefulness, especially to the media industry. Media producers were also critical of the E/D concept that media products had no objective meaning. If media products are in essence 'unknowable', what is the point in making them?

The idea of the 'open text' is, however, seen as valuable and empowering to interest groups other than media producers. Specialist academics and social and political advocates have used open text theory to reinterpret texts. For example, feminists have re-evaluated the film *Thelma and Louise* to challenge conventional views.

FOCUS QUESTION

What does 'highly differentiated audience' mean?

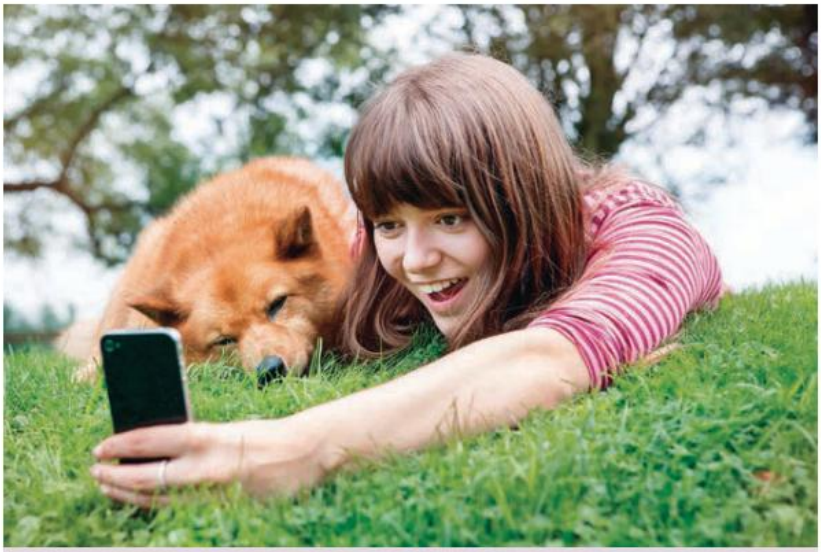


FIGURE 11.29 According to CMC research, 'selective self-representation' explains why no one deliberately posts an ugly selfie.

New Media Theories

'New Media Theories' were new in the 1990s. Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) research first examined text-based electronic communication, emails and early internet use. Its findings can be applied to today's use of social media. A characteristic of CMC is 'selective self-presentation'. Every social media user knows this by experience. No one deliberately posts an ugly selfie. We present ourselves in the best light by selecting what to share with our audience. This is 'hyperpersonal' communication, in which we take advantage of social media to construct highly mediated, and favourable, representations of ourselves.

Research suggests that CMC users could consequently experience a loss of identity and true emotion, and that hyperpersonal communication could be preferred over face-to-face communication. For example, the dinner table was traditionally a place for sharing stories and building family bonds. How many people now use social media during this time? What does this 'new' way of communicating mean for 'the family', arguably the most important social relationship of all? Table 11.2 comparing media effect theories follows on the next two pages, and discussion of the theories continues after that.

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Theory	1 Bullet Theory	2 Two-Step Flow Theory	3 Rein force-ment Theory	4 Agenda Set-ting Theory	5 Uses and Grat-ifications	6 Cultivation Theory	7 Semiotic Constructivism	8 Encoding/ Decoding	9 New Audience Research	10 New Media Research
Other name	Hypodermic Needle, Magic Bullet	Limited Effects	Selective Exposure	Agenda Setting Function	U & G, UGT	N/A	Open Text, Postmodern	E/D Reception Theory	Ethnographic/ Cultural Theories	Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)
Model type	Linear – direct transmission	Multi-linear – indirect	Linear – direct transmission	Linear – direct transmission	Linear – two-way transmission	Linear – direct transmission	Semiotic/ Constructivist	Semiotic/ Constructivist	Semiotic/ Constructivist	Semiotic/ Constructivist
Media power	Powerful – immediate	Powerful	Weak	Powerful	Weak	Powerful – long latency	Uncertain	Weak	Weak	Weak
Audience type	Passive	Active (opinion leaders)/ Passive (followers)	Active	Active	Active	Passive	Active	Active	Active	Active
Texts	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Open	Open	Open	Open
History	1930s and 40s	1944	1960s	1960s and 70s	1960s and 70s	1960s and 70s	1960s on	1970s	1980s	1990s
Theorists	Adorno, Horkheimer (*Frankfurt School*) Motion Picture Research Council (USA)	Lazarsfeld, Berelson, Gaudet, Katz	Klapper	McCombs, Shaw	Blumler, Katz	Gerbner	Derrida, Lyotard, Eco	Hall	Morley	Walther, Tanis
Research & evidence	*'Payne Fund'* studies, 1932. Surveys, quantitative research. *'Bobo Doll Experiment'* Bandura, Laboratory experiment 1961.	*'The People's Choice'* Election Study 1944. Audience interviews, content analysis, qualitative research.	*'The Effects of Mass Communication'* 1960. Empirical studies, surveys.	'*The Agenda – Setting Function of Mass Media'*, 1972. Audience surveys, audiences, content analysis of media texts, qualitative research.	*'The Uses of Mass Communications'*. Quantitative methods (e.g. ratings) and qualitative measures (e.g. market research, focus groups).	'*Cultural Indicators'* research project, 1968. Correlation studies comparing media content analysis with audience surveys measured over time.	*'Of Grammatology'*, 1967. *'The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge'*, 1973. '*A Theory of Semiotics*', 1975. Theoretical studies.	*'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse'*, 1973. Content analysis. Surveys and focus groups, including audience and producers.	'*Nationwide Audiences Study'* Ethnographic Studies. Intimate focus groups. Interviewers declare bias/ cultural influence for control.	*Interpersonal Effects in Computer-Mediated Interaction*, 1999. *Cues to identity in CMC*, 2003. Social experiments and theoretical studies.

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Theory	1 Bullet Theory	2 Two-Step Flow Theory	3 Rein force-ment Theory	4 Agenda Set-ting Theory	5 Uses and Grat-ifications	6 Cultivation Theory	7 Semiotic Constructivism	8 Encoding/ Decoding	9 New Audience Research	10 New Media Research
Strengths	Strong public support addressing 'community concerns'	Extended understanding of media theory. Contradicted the Bullet Theory.	Put media into context with other social forces in society	Establishes links between news and social engagement	Humanistic – sees audiences as having free will and power in relationship to media	Long-term studies show results, address 'community concerns'	Takes into account huge number of variables. Sees audience as individuals.	Empower audiences who construct individual meaning from texts. New categories of interpretation.	Reports are detailed and in social/cultural context. True audience voice considered.	Users are seen to have agency in their social use of the technology. Predicts positive social effects.
Weak nesses	Flawed methodology responding to 'moral panic'	Flawed methodology could not identify nature of influence by 'opinion leaders'. Multi-flow Theory and Diffusion of Innovations added more and more steps. Difficult to measure.	Difficulty putting new ideas into context. Diminishing influence of institutions.	Nature of links uncertain. Theory limited to news/ information genres. Media more broad and diverse now.	Interview subjects unreliable source of information. Too individualistic. Tends to ignore the sociocultural context to concentrate on marketing analysis.	Interview subjects unreliable source of information. Relatively small effects shown.	Complex and philosophical	Texts that have no 'objective meaning' could be rendered meaningless. Difficult to quantify.	Irrelevant to mainstream. Too personalised by researchers. Limited to entertainment genres.	Studies not representative of new mass communication (social media). Studies focus on communication in organisational settings.

TABLE 11.2 Media effects theories comparison chart

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The future

The level of complexity in media research as it approached the 21st century took a sharp rise. Media theory was converging with social theory, cultural studies and a branch of language theory called '**semiotic constructivism**'. Media effects research was no longer simply about the media's weak or powerful effects on active or passive audiences. The way audiences of every manner and type processed language, including visual language, was in focus. This complexity combined with a massive surge in new media technologies, including CMC, and the atomisation of audience means a new approach to media effects research is needed.

semiotic constructivism language theory that considers the role signs play in mass media. The theory looks at signs as the 'denotation' and the meaning we attach to those signs as the 'connotation'.

Summing it all up: media effects theories

Are past theories still relevant? Does 'fake news' have serious political consequences? Do online games encourage violence and stereotyping of women? The questions about media effects are the same today as they were nearly a hundred years ago. Will the answers be very different because the media and audiences are different? Hasn't the media just become more powerful? How much have audiences evolved? Are they much more sophisticated than their ancestors? What further research needs to be done? In many ways we are faced with the same paradigm as early media researchers: 'Who is saying what to whom with what effects, now and in the future?'

STUDY TIP

Recall the discussion about signs in the construction and understanding of media representations back at the start of Chapter 1. For example, the *denotation* of a sign on a toilet door of a male or female person icon implies the *connotation* (meaning) of gender.

ACTIVITY 11.13

1 Using the internet, investigate Lt Col Dave Grossman's observation linking shooting deaths in the US to first person shooter games.
2 Explain which of the theories above support Grossman's conclusions.

ACTIVITY 11.14

Examine your reading, notes and Table 11.2.

1 Which theories suggest that the media has control?
2 Which theories suggest that the audience exercises its own agency?
3 Which studies rely on the text being closed to determine its role?
4 Which studies rely on the audience being passive?
5 How does research reflect the reliability of each study?

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CASE STUDY 11.3

Media effects theories

There are numerous examples to study the relevance of media effects theories. Many you may encounter from the broadcast era refer specifically to a time when the relationship between media producers and the audience was limited by a large feedback loop. However, the following case studies will allow you to think about the nature of media, control and agency in the new media environment.

The Kylie and Angelina effect

Musician Kylie Minogue and actor Angelina Jolie can both be credited with having some influence over audiences. In 2005, on the very cusp of web 2.0 technologies, Australian singer Kylie Minogue announced via television, print and online news media that she had been diagnosed with breast cancer.

In the weeks that followed her announcement, the media covered the issue extensively and researchers found a 101% increase in bookings for women for breast cancer screens, of which 69% had not been screened before.

In 2013, American actress Angelina Jolie announced (in the same fashion as Kylie) that she had undergone a double mastectomy to prevent a potentially terminal form of breast cancer. As a result, the Cancer Council of Australia reported an 866% increase in calls from women who wanted to get tested for breast cancer.

Both cases suggest a relationship between the media reporting of celebrity illness and audience behaviour.

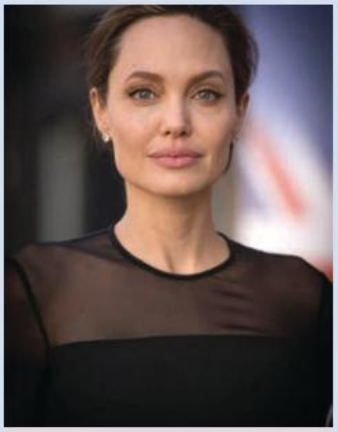


FIGURE 11.30 Angelina Jolie's 2013 announcement had the positive effect of increasing breast cancer screenings in Australia.

Kony 2012

An online video created in 2012 by the charity Invisible Children used high production value techniques to draw attention to the pursuit of Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony. The popularity of the video grew largely from a range of celebrity tweets with hashtags that encouraged others to watch the video. In the first five days, the video had 120 million views. In the process of the viral sensation, Invisible Children raised $32 million dollars.

The case suggests a relationship between celebrity and social media influence over the actions of the audience.



FIGURE 11.31 The Kony 2012 viral video proved the power of celebrity and social media.

Grand Theft Auto and the 'Moomba riots'

In 2016 a brawl between groups of violent youths in Melbourne's Federation Square during the Moomba festival was blamed on the video game *Grand Theft Auto*. The Victorian Police Commissioner of the time, Graham Ashton, stated that a rise in theft by 22% and weapons and explosive offences by 17% suggest a link between what he and other police commissioners called 'The Grand Theft Auto Generation'.

The case highlights the relationship between those in positions of control attempting to illustrate a relationship between media consumption and behaviour.

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The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge

In 2016, an online campaign began to raise awareness and attract donations for research into amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), which involved users tipping buckets of ice over their heads and then nominating friends via social media. Ellen DeGeneres, Barack Obama, LeBron James, Chris Pratt and Amy Schumer all participated, as did millions of ordinary social media users. Seventeen million videos of the Ice Bucket Challenge raised over $80 million for ALS research.

The case suggests not only a relationship between celebrity influence, but also the influence of a highly agile audience exercising its agency.



FIGURE 11.32 In 2016 people all over the world took the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge – here we see mass participation in the Philippines.

Analysis

1. Explain the role of research in each method – how does it impact the reliability of supposed media influence in each case study?
2. Explain how media effects theories could be used to explain the potential influence of the media in each case.
3. Suggest other media effects theories that could challenge the suggestion that the audience's response has been influenced by media messages.
4. What role do you think the media form plays in the ability for the case study to influence audiences and take advantage of agency?

Media control in the new world

As you read this, the application of theories of audience, influence and control will have shifted with the tide of technological change. As a tech-savvy audience bounces from one new technology to another, the role of major media institutions has changed to accommodate the ways in which modern audiences engage with the media and are either potentially controlled by it or direct it with their own agency. Much of your study so far has concentrated on the relationship between old and new media technologies, so the question will be obvious to you. What relevance do these studies into the control of media messages still have in a modern media environment? How could the media possibly still wield any control when new technologies have advanced the agency of the audience far beyond the comprehension of the small band of film studio owners in the early 20th century?

It's time to revisit some key ideas. Return to the heading 'Stakeholders in the broadcast era' on page 350 and examine how institutions, governments and individuals balanced agency and control in the broadcast era. A simplistic view would suggest that it was, at times, a relationship between powerful media institutions and passive audiences that had little agency when responding and interacting with media products. The studies of Agenda Setting Function Theory and the Cultivation Theory suggest as much. However, other theories of audience and media reception suggest either more simplistic or complex views on the topic on a sliding scale.

Over the latter half of the 20th century, academics who studied this relationship began to believe that the audience played a role in how it interpreted media products and that many factors were capable of determining how media products are read. The audience was active. However, few of these theorists and thinkers could have predicted exactly how active they would become.

In an era where the audience has the agency to create and produce content that reaches audiences that major media institutions can only dream of, we must now examine who has power and control and how the boundaries of this debate have been redrawn forever.

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11.4 The new role of media stakeholders

Institutions

Sometimes things change, sometimes they stay the same. In the 'golden era' of Hollywood cinema, there were five major film studios that produced all of the content played in cinemas. They were so powerful that they owned the entire production and distribution process from the script to the cinema screen. Today, a handful of major institutions control the access and distribution of some of the most dominant and prevalent media messages. The key difference between these institutions and those of the 1920s is that they transcend borders and can reach almost any corner of the globe.

Apple

The multinational technology giant sells phones, music, watches, laptops and tablets around the globe and routinely features in the top 10 largest companies in the world. While they are surrounded by competitors in almost every product category, their dominance as a media institution was cemented with the invention of the iPhone. Utilising a range of converged technologies, the iPhone was in 2018 the smartphone that billions of users around the world had in their back pockets at the gym, in class, on public transport, in meetings and at family gatherings. The size and scale of the device's popularity meant that countless media forms needed to conform to its format. Not only had it provided a multitude of converged technologies in one place, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat and other applications and functions simply had to design their services to conform to the iPhone format, giving the company unimaginable power and influence. The device was so successful that it facilitated the rapid rise in social media use and audience agency. The technology to create a feature film was suddenly in the palm of the ordinary user's hand.

Power of this scale is never far from controversy. The iPhone was difficult for government agencies to hack into to examine the data inside. In 2016 when the FBI demanded that Apple allow them a 'backdoor' into the data stored in the phone owned by a perpetrator of a terrorist attack in San Bernardino, California, Apple refused. Its defence was that if it allowed the FBI into the phone of one user, then it could potentially allow the FBI in every iPhone in America. What is most fascinating is that it won the argument. In 2017, financial magazine *Forbes* predicted that Apple would be the first company to reach a market share of $1 trillion. Apple is simply too big for any national government to realistically tackle in court. It employs too many people and contributes so much to most nations' economies that governments are scared to offend it! Apple still owns the technology that stores and uses all of the data of its audience.



ACTIVITY 11.15

One only needs to sign up to Apple's streaming music service to find the company trawling your music collection to not only make playlists based on your favourite songs, but to predict what you might be interested in and make a 'mixtape' of songs you might like! What is the extent of the power Apple wields over its audience? Use media effects theories to support your view.



FIGURE 11.33 Multinational tech giant Apple's iPhone

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YouTube

Behind Google, YouTube is the second-most popular search engine in the world. Which is interesting given it was not built for that purpose. Designed as a video streaming service that was built from user generated content (UGC), YouTube has become one of the globe's most dominant media platforms in its own right. For users of your generation, it has simply replaced the power of television to inform, entertain and engage audiences. Users have the ability to search videos on an infinite number of topics, create and post their own and comment on others' and engage in seemingly endless debate over any topic.

YouTube is unique. It is a media giant with audiences all over the globe that participate in a single platform. However, it is for the most part built entirely by its users. It does not bear the same costs and risks of a film studio, television station or music video director. It relies completely on the sheer volume of data that is uploaded to its platform, and the way users share its content invariably leads to the best content rising to the top. YouTube has a viable alternative to almost every facet of the media industry. If you like film, whole movies are streamed with endless parodies, commentaries and spoof versions to suit your tastes. Music streaming services still struggle to compete with the hours of video mixes curated by users on YouTube.

content guidelines rules by which media content is selected for appropriate audiences

Interestingly, YouTube does not subscribe to any one national set of **content guidelines**. It makes its own. As you will investigate later, governments are often deeply interested in the content their populations are able to access via the media, for social and political reasons. However, as a global institution that reaches across borders all over the world, YouTube has its own set of guidelines including requirements for acceptable content as well as content that may attract advertising.

This is content that's appropriate for all audiences. It has little to no inappropriate or 'adult' content in the video stream, thumbnail or metadata (such as in the video title). If the video does contain inappropriate content, the context is usually newsworthy or comedic and the creator's intent is to inform or entertain (not offend or shock).

Content that is considered 'not advertiser-friendly' includes, but is not limited to:

- sexually suggestive content, including partial nudity and sexual humour
- violence, including display of serious injury and events related to violent extremism
- inappropriate language, including harassment, profanity and vulgar language
- promotion of drugs and regulated substances, including selling, use and abuse of such items
- controversial or sensitive subjects and events, including subjects related to war, political conflicts, natural disasters and tragedies, even if graphic imagery is not shown.

The guidelines for uploading content to attract advertising aim to reassure advertisers that the videos will not offend the customers they are trying to influence. However, for all those who wish to post videos that are not intended for revenue raising, the lines of what is and is not acceptable are a little muddied. YouTube's 'Community Guidelines' do not include restrictions on political or ideological content. For example, extremist political groups have little interest in advertising revenue; their purpose is to indoctrinate followers to their political ideologies. As such, YouTube has run into problems and disputes with some of its biggest advertisers. If a video that aims to recruit teenagers to a terrorist organisation gains traction on YouTube, the age group of its viewers, time and frequency of views will dictate what advertisements will be placed at its beginning. The content of the video is rarely considered. As such, major companies were somewhat angered when their ads were playing in front of violent and aggressive terrorist recruitment videos.

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ACTIVITY 11.16

The reach and control of YouTube is unparalleled by any other media platform, but its own regulation must be closely examined as the potential for violent and explicit content (the concerns about which you have already learned) to be seen by vulnerable audiences is almost impossible to control. What responsibility does YouTube have to its users? Use media effects theories to support your view.

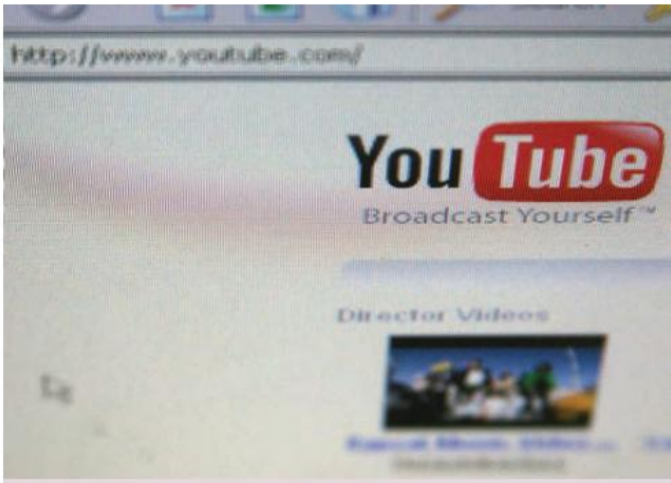


FIGURE 11.34 In early 2017, brands around the world pulled their advertising from YouTube due to their name being associated with disreputable content, such as extremist videos.

Facebook

There is not much that can be said about the power of Facebook that has not been said before. In 2017, there were almost 2 billion Facebook users, which means just over one-quarter of the world's population uses the platform. It has become the global focal point for news, social interaction, advice and connections between old flames, friends and foes. It has surpassed advertising for influence over customers and has in turn become the place where governments and institutions try to reach you. It is the place where the likes, dislikes, interests and innermost thoughts of its users are shared daily. For a commercial company looking to target an audience with a product like Meat Juice or Durian Deodorant, what better place than to search and trawl the comments, likes and posts on Facebook?

Naturally, Facebook found a way to monetise its popularity. In 2012, Facebook decided to introduce advertising to its user's news feeds, but not only that, use your own data to advertise to you! By analysing your likes, dislikes and the pages and videos you have visited, advertisers could speak directly to their client base. In the broadcast era of print and television, commercial companies like Nike or Adidas would create television and print advertisements that they hoped would reach their target audience. With the algorithm designed by Facebook, these brands could now appear in the palm of the smartphone hand of their target market. The potential for influence is almost unlimited and raises a key question.

ACTIVITY 11.17

The size and scope of Facebook's knowledge of its users is extensive. For some of us, our whole lives, since we were old enough to have an account, are stored on there. On Facebook's 'sister company' Instagram, parents share every moment of their children's lives from birth onwards on the photo streaming service. There is the potential for a user's entire life to be documented on the data server of a private company so wealthy, few could challenge it in a court of law. Therefore, the question is obvious: What agency do Facebook users have over their own privacy? Use media effects theories to support your view.

Twitter

The microblogging platform is divisive. It has the capacity to unite users around the globe within a hashtag and 280 characters in a single discussion. At the same time, it has been responsible for visceral and brutal harassment of individuals. Twitter is a platform that promotes freedom of speech, discussion and association. Users can speak

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FIGURE 11.35 Twitter is a powerful microblogging tool that can be a positive or negative experience for users.

their minds, promote their ideas and comment on society at large; however, they are often open to commentary from any number of anonymous users.

Twitter was used in a number of efforts around the globe to unite populations against oppressive governments or against radical ideologies. The hashtag has played an immeasurable role in bringing users together to share ideas, content and commentary in a hybridised format. It has allowed for users of any status in life to interact on the same playing field. Football fans are able to tag their favourite players in posts that could potentially be seen by that player and enter into a conversation with stars and celebrities who were once so far removed from ordinary media consumers that they appeared beyond being able to approach.

Twitter opens the door for the complex debate of freedom of speech. The levels of conflict and harassment have been linked to cases of mental health issues, as bullying and harassment among users is common. A 2017 study by the University of Sheffield in England found that audiences aged 14–24 who used Twitter and Facebook reported increased levels of anxiety and feelings of inadequacy as a result of being a regular user. As a result, nations around the world have begun to legislate against the comments made on the platform. In 2017, the German government was considering not only making 'hate speech' like racism an illegal act on platforms like Twitter, but also imposing heavy fines on Twitter itself.

ACTIVITY 11.18

The question then must examine the rights of the user and the platform itself. Given its popularity, Twitter is used as a tool of unity, division and boring thoughts across the globe. What responsibility does Twitter have to protect the agency of its users? Use media effects theories to support your view.

Google

Is a verb. The act of searching online is referred to with one word: Googling. There is no other company that symbolises the transition from old to new media like Google. While not necessarily a media company as such (although it owns YouTube), Google has the capacity to read all of your data and determine the direction of your search. Google's success is based on the complexity of its search algorithm. When you type 'new music' into the Google search bar, it uses the data collected from your previous searches, likes and interests from pages you have visited and the data from billions of other users to *predict* what you are looking for before you have even finished typing. Its accuracy can be both frightening and hilarious. As Google is the primary entry point for most media users online, its role must be considered in the whole debate of agency and control. The user data collected by Google leaves that of Facebook, YouTube and Twitter in its wake. The vast majority of what is spoken and typed into the Google search bar is recorded and used to your advantage in your next search and then sold to governments and institutions, who are desperate to gather the private conversations all internet users have with their keyboard!



FIGURE 11.36 Google is such a globally prominent search engine that the term itself has become a verb.

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ACTIVITY 11.19

The debate must centre on the control Google wields over its audience. Like Twitter, do media audiences have any right to privacy and agency when using Google?

Microsoft and Sony

Both companies have vast media empires that can be traced back to the broadcast era. However, both are giants in the gaming industry with Xbox and PlayStation consoles, respectively. In an industry that has often dwarfed the revenues of some of the top-grossing films, the top-grossing video games must be created to fit either of these two platforms. Both are unique in the sense that, to date, they are mostly immune to internet piracy. Unlike social media services that accept and reproduce content in a variety of formats, video game producers must bend to the demands of both Xbox and PlayStation to reach their target audience. What that means is the line between the media producers, the medium and their audience is *linear* and the potential to generate money from the media product (on these two platforms) is nearly guaranteed. In the first three days of its release in 2014, *Grand Theft Auto 5* grossed over $1 billion. Major film studios could only dream of revenue so high.

However, in order to capture what is clearly a lucrative market, video game developers and console makers like Xbox and Sony have constantly pushed the boundaries of what are socially acceptable levels of sexual and violent content.



FIGURE 11.37 *Grand Theft Auto 5* is an example of how game manufacturers can push the boundaries of content that is socially acceptable.

ACTIVITY 11.20

The first person shooter franchise *Call of Duty* is one of the most popular in video game history and not only features graphic violence, but the opportunity for users to actively participate and be rewarded for their efforts! So the role of video game console makers and the games companies like Rockstar Games must be examined for the responsibility they hold to the audience, in an era of increasing video game violence and public concern over the impact these devices have on users. How could institutions, governments and individuals apply effects studies when regulating and measuring the effects of these games?

Film studios

Hollywood film production is still very much dominated by major film studios. As you have seen in many cases in this study, the production of major films for commercial release is bound by institutional, ideological and economic factors. In order to reach as broad an audience as possible, these studios have begun to alter their own behaviour to appeal to as many countries and audiences as possible. This means they must adhere to the commercial and

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regulatory demands of governments around the world. In the case of the 2015 animated film *Pixels*, several key scenes that saw giant monsters destroy elements of the Great Wall of China were removed, as was dialogue that suggested there was a major computer hack that had come from China itself. At the risk of offending a potentially enormous audience for its film, the scenes were removed for the official release. In this instance, the film studio Sony co-funded the film with the China Film Group and so we are able to see one of an increasing number of examples where major American films, that carry with them all the inherent ideology that influences such productions, are being altered to meet the demands of a global audience.

ACTIVITY 11.21

Research more examples of films that were altered to meet the demands of an international audience. There are a number already mentioned within this book; however, there have surely been more since. Consider the influence and control major film studios would potentially have had in the past. What does a new globalised media market mean for major film studios and the agency of the audience?

Film studios and production companies are, of course, not unaware of the changing nature of media use. After the 2012 release of the film *The Hunger Games*, the film's producer Lionsgate used the social media presence of its target audience to do much of its marketing for it. Utilising social media sites like Facebook and Tumblr, the producers launched 'official pages' that gave users exclusive content unavailable anywhere else. Naturally, this content is shared all over the internet. By encouraging the book and film's fan base to create their own content based on the drip feed of cast interviews, sneak peeks and trailers, that content was shared on the official Facebook and YouTube channels for the film. The users were creating the content and 'buzz' Lionsgate was hoping for.

In addition to this, the film promoters created a website where fans could include themselves within *The Hunger Games* universe. The narrative of the film centres around a dystopian world which has been divided into 'districts'. Via the official website, registered users could take on roles and occupations within each district based on the presence they created for the film on social media. For example, fans could then create their own communities for their 'district' on Facebook or Twitter and could earn badges and titles – like the mayor of a district – based on the likes and shares they created for the film.

ACTIVITY 11.22

The Hunger Games film series is an interesting case study. On one hand, the social media element allowed fans a direct interaction with the media product they were drawn to. On the other, they were used and manipulated by the film producers to generate interest and, therefore, revenue for the film. How will major film institutions survive in the new world of digital technology? Explain how audience agency has been used as a means of control.

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ACTIVITY 11.23

The debate over the role of institutions in the modern media environment is moving as rapidly as the pace of technological change. The line between their previous role and that of the audience they depend on appears to be one of mutual obligation. One needs the other to survive. Consider the following questions to further your own knowledge.

1. Major social media institutions own the private data of billions of users. What rights do these users have towards the protection of their agency?
2. These same institutions also design algorithms that control what, where and when users access content. To what extent do these bodies have the control to set the agenda for the public?
3. To what extent do these same institutions have the power to cultivate world views?
4. Given the way the audience can interact with these services and the sheer diversity of media products available, what is the potential for beliefs and behaviours to be reinforced rather than challenged?
5. Many of these institutions are so big that few governments have been successful in challenging their practices. YouTube, Facebook and Twitter regularly add and remove content based on their own guidelines, not that of any one government. How has this dynamic changed the nature of control in the modern media landscape?
6. Identify where older studies of media effects can be applied to the role of these institutions.

CASE STUDY 11.4

War on Waste

In 2017, the ABC aired the four-part series, *War on Waste*, a multi-platform series aimed at highlighting the concerning and alarming rate at which Australians are producing rubbish and consuming goods. Made by Keo Films, a production company known for its thought-provoking content – see *Struggle Street* – and presented by comedian and satirist Craig Reucassel of *The Chaser* fame, *War on Waste* became a cross-platform phenomenon that resulted in audiences having their consciousness raised about this significant issue. The program highlighted the massive waste of food, clothing, agriculture and packaging Australians create each day, and the statistics and evidence were shocking and alarming to the audience. The episode about plastic bags and coffee cups was particularly disturbing and the show placed the issue of banning plastic bags and limiting the use of disposable coffee cups firmly on the agenda of both everyday Australians, and also politicians and the corporate sector, whom Reucassel and the producers targeted.



FIGURE 11.38 Craig Reucassel, presenter of *War on Waste*

The ABC utilised its popular iView application to enable viewers to access the episodes and extra content, created a specific website to accompany the show and provided resources and ideas that 'everyday Australians' can use to make a difference to their waste, and the all-important hashtag, #waronwaste, which gained considerable traction after each episode. The hashtag was quickly adopted by cafés, which utilised social media to promote the use of reusable coffee cups and offer a discount to customers who made the move to cut their waste. The hashtag has also been used by audiences to highlight wasteful packaging, suggest new ways to limit household waste and to show a clear change in behaviour as a result of the show.

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The appeal of the show and the campaign is that it has utilised humour, relatable examples and does not appear to tell the audience what or how to think but, rather, what to think about; that is, to reconsider the impact little, everyday actions have on the problem of waste en masse. The clever and targeted use of cross-platform – television, streaming, web, social media as well as the hype and buzz created by the show covered by more traditional media forms such as print and radio – has led to the series gaining serious traction and influencing audiences to take real action on their consumption and waste habits.

Analysis

1. Look up the hashtag #waronwaste or #waronwasteau on Instagram or Twitter and analyse the posts. What are audiences posting and how are they reflecting the messages contained in the show?
2. Consider the theories of media effects and apply a theory which could possibly explain the influence that this program has had on an audience.
3. What benefits do you believe engaging a cross-platform approach has in gaining control over an audience?
4. Can you find another example of this cross-platform approach?



FIGURE 11.39 In Australia, we are lucky that freedom of speech is a sacred part of our democracy.

Governments

In Australia we are lucky to have a functioning democracy inside a developed nation. Around the globe, democratic governments wane from the highly functional to the totally corrupt and inept. We are lucky. Despite what you may think about one Australian prime minister or another political party or a particular politician who triggers your innermost anger, the privilege to feel that and express that emotion is the very essence of a functioning democratic nation.

In Australia, everyone is entitled to a view and an opportunity to debate and ultimately vote for those who aim to govern the nation; this is the agency afforded by democracy. In this context, the media and government have a unique relationship. The term 'frenemies' may be most apt. The government needs the media to publish and distribute its message to the population, while the news media in particular are driven by the task to keep our elected representatives honest, to expose dishonesty and corruption. A functioning democracy requires the people of that country to be active, informed and educated about the business of government in order to make sound decisions about the people elected to protect their interests.

The path between governments and the media is paved with good intentions. When functioning, the relationship between the two can actually strengthen and support the audience's faith in the democratic process, and the value of voter agency itself. However, when the audience detect notions of bias and abuse at the hands of politicians, the faith in democracy is tied to the deepening despair some feel about the media itself. Their relationship is mutually beneficial, but equally destructive.

In the 1700s, the Enlightenment thinkers saw a free media as the only way to defeat oppressive governments. In their view, people would never be free if the news media was not. Thomas Jefferson, one of the heroes of the American Declaration of Independence, hated the media. The news journalists of the period criticised and scrutinised his every action. However, his view on its role was clear:

> Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate to prefer the latter.

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As Jefferson highlighted in an era well before mass media, an active audience engaged in media would always lead to a functioning and happy society. Governments need the media to spread messages and receive feedback and the media need the government to share ideas, promote discussion and draw readers to ideas and debates in their own publications. The debate has long raged over who sets the agenda between these two strange bedfellows. Who controls who?

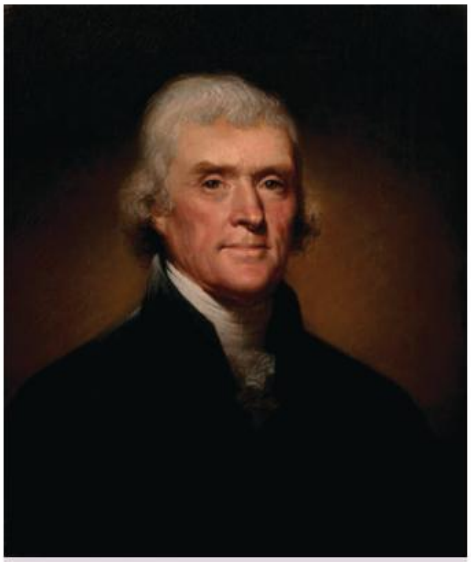


FIGURE 11.40 Thomas Jefferson, a Founding Father and President of the USA, believed the media should serve to simply spread political messages from the government and not have a voice of its own.

ACTIVITY 11.24

Research today's newspapers in print or online.

1. Examine and quantify how much of the first 10 pages of today's newspaper or online news stories are devoted to government issues. Make a list that quantifies how many refer directly to government business.
2. Of the stories you record, explain how each one reports, analyses or criticises government decisions.
3. Read one story carefully and explain how this story has informed your understanding of the action of government.

Governments use the media to protect the populations they govern. The National Advisory Committee on AIDS (NACAIDS) launched the Grim Reaper campaign in the 1980s to protect citizens from a disease that few people in the population understood. The SunSmart and Traffic Accident Commission (TAC) advertisements that are funded by the government exist to protect the population. If fewer Australians die on our roads or as a result of skin cancer, the burden on the hospital services and general mental health is relieved and more Australians can live happy and productive lives. It's in the interests of the Australian government to protect its population using media messages and, in turn, to control their actions.

FOCUS QUESTION

Research the history of the TAC's media campaigns in Australia. What measurable sorts of effects did the campaign have on Australians?

However, governments can be their own worst enemies in the media. Within those news stories that you read in Activity 11.24, you would have no doubt come across stories that surround the conflict and petty debate that exists between democratic politicians. In many cases, the media is used as a tool or proxy to fight the battles of deeply rooted political rivalries. This has the capacity to develop even further distrust in both the media and democratic governments themselves.

Government protection

To ensure that the population is protected from negative and harmful content that offends and sows division within the population, the government will attempt to control the nature of information and content created by the media. In Australia we rarely experience the direct censorship of media products; however, there are regulatory structures in place that attempt to protect some of Australia's more vulnerable citizens from this type of media content. There is a reason that violent content won't be seen during the 4.30–9.30 pm timeslot on commercial television. You will dissect this topic in more detail later in the chapter; however, what must be established is that democratic governments have a responsibility to the people who elect them and their use of and attempts to control the media are a central component in this duty.

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ACTIVITY 11.25

1 What are the positive elements of the relationship between democratic governments and the media?
2 What are the negative elements of the relationship between democratic governments and the media?
3 Define the relationship between democratic governments, the media and the audience. In your response, suggest how communication theories could potentially explain their relationship.
4 Why do you think democratic governments have a responsibility to monitor what the media produces? Using your understanding of media effects theories, explain why you think they might be motivated to do this.

State-controlled media

Throughout history, governments of various nations have seen the media as a tool to oppress its citizens. Even today, students in other nations around the world are not as fortunate as you. Some of them will not get to read and investigate the topics you are engaged in now; some will never be allowed to question the role of government at all. In 2017, authoritarian nations like North Korea controlled the entire flow of information to the population and relies heavily on an 'effects tradition' understanding of media control. If it controls the message, the population will (hopefully) receive their message and act in the interests of the leaders of the nation. In Nazi Germany or Stalin's Communist Russia of the early broadcast era, the control of information meant that the media was a means to control, incite fear and inspire nationalistic hatred of outsiders or anyone the leaders deemed to be 'enemies of the people'.

ACTIVITY 11.26

Poster One: Stalinist Russia
Poster Two: Mao Zedong's China

In the early years of Communism in Russia and China, the media was a structure of the government, used to inspire adoration of the 'Great Leaders' or specific groups they wanted to promote in society. Define how codes and conventions have been used to do this in each poster.



FIGURE 11.41 Soviet propaganda poster from 1953, featuring Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin



FIGURE 11.42 A Chinese propaganda poster from 1971

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In these authoritarian societies, the media does not enjoy the freedom and independence their democratic counterparts enjoy. They are an apparatus of government control and, as such, function deeply within the strong effects tradition of media theory. Governments have and will go to extraordinary lengths to protect information. News media journalists often die in pursuit of their jobs. In 2016, 115 journalists died doing their jobs of exposing truth. In Afghanistan, nine journalists were directly targeted and killed by the extremist group, the Taliban. In the same year, 216 journalists were sent to jail. Of that number, 182 were charged with producing 'anti-state' content and of that total number, 25 were from Egypt, 38 were from China and 81 were from Turkey.

ACTIVITY 11.27

Investigate the way the nations mentioned conduct government and attempt to control communication with the population. What reasons can you give for the high number of arrests of journalists in these countries?

The danger of reporting and criticising authoritarian regimes is not limited to news media. Australia has a long and very proud tradition of using comedy and satire to critique and break down our political leaders. It is a natural consequence of freedom of speech that democratic nations enjoy. If you can express an opinion about a political leader, it's a lot more fun to use comedy! However, as recently as 2016, the Turkish government was infuriated when German comedian Jan Böhmermann's poem about Turkish President Erdogan included explicit sexual content. The poem was read out on German television and Erdogan's government complained to the German government; subsequently, criminal prosecution was authorised against Böhmermann, but was later dropped.

ACTIVITY 11.28

1 Define the dangers media professionals face working within authoritarian countries.
2 Using media effects theories, explain the motivation these authoritarian governments have for controlling the message sent to their populations.

In the age of the internet and seemingly unchecked access to information, how do governments attempt to control their audience?

During the 2011 Egypt uprising, social media was a key component of the organisation of protest. In years gone by, secret meetings, illegal pamphlets and coded messages in public would bind people together in protest. Following a wave of popular protest against authoritarian regimes in neighbouring countries, protests against the authoritarian Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak were organised on Facebook and Twitter. What resulted was thousands of Egyptians occupying Tahrir Square in central Cairo in protests against the government. Social media was not responsible for the uprising, but it was organised with it. In response, Mubarak's government shut down the communication systems that allowed access to these social media messages. They simply turned off the internet.



FIGURE 11.43 A protester waves an Egyptian flag during the 2011 uprising

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FOCUS QUESTION

Why was the internet disconnected across Egypt in 2011?

In 2016 a failed coup against Erdogan's authoritarian Turkish government led to reprisals across all levels and occupations within Turkish society. Among the 100 000 arrests of police, legal professionals and government workers, over 100 journalists were imprisoned, with over 130 journalists in jail by the start of 2017 and 179 media outlets shut down over the course of 2016. The independence of the press was a specific target.



FIGURE 11.44 In July 2016, supporters of Turkish President Erdogan celebrate after capturing a military vehicle used by the military during their failed coup in Istanbul.



FIGURE 11.45 A youth Communist rally in East Berlin during the Cold War, in 1950. The youths carry portraits of Soviet Russian leader Joseph Stalin.

Modern authoritarian countries control the media companies and thus have great control over the audience they speak to. In nations including Russia, Cuba or Turkmenistan the government exercises control over all media institutions, be they news or entertainment. Their goal is to influence four distinct audiences:

1 First, the political and economic elite are targeted. This is the only group within these societies with the wealth and power to potentially overthrow the existing authority. In Communist Russia, fear of Stalin and his execution of political opponents kept most elites in line.

2 The second is the general population. If the authority can gain control of the media messages being distributed, either by controlling the media organisations themselves or restricting access to the internet, it can cultivate fear of the government and a passive attitude towards the actions of its leaders. In 1960s Communist China, the construction of Mao Zedong as 'Chairman Mao' through print media facilitated not only the education of the population, but the first book many read was Mao's *Little Red Book* that legitimised the Chinese Communist government.

3 The third is the opposition. In an age where the representation of 'the other' is constructed from dominant ideologies, this group need to be identified and isolated as the enemy of the regime. In modern-day Azerbaijan, a pro-government youth group publishes memes designed to ridicule the opposition.

4 The fourth and most difficult to control in modern authoritarian governments are internet users. Not immune to the knowledge that the internet is impossible to fully control, the Chinese government employ tens of thousands to monitor the internet use of a population exceeding one billion. Their solution is to create Chinese alternatives to the major social media services that are owned, run and monitored within China's borders.

ACTIVITY 11.29

Key debate: It appears obvious that there are two distinct ways in which governments use the media. In democratic societies, it is a push and pull battle with a free press to exert influence but allow for open public debate. In authoritarian societies, control comes at the cost of agency. Given the evidence presented to you, what are the challenges facing the agency of the media in the face of authoritarian governments?

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FIGURE 11.46 A Chinese propaganda image from 1966 glamorising leader Mao Zedong



FIGURE 11.47 In Azerbaijan soldiers retaliate against opponents of the government.

Individuals

It is safe to say that individuals now have more agency than ever before. With the ability to actively participate with media across all forms, the audience has now become a central and included element within the entire media production process. When you read about the communication theories of the early 20th century, it was easy to assume that the audience was considered a passive participant in the sending of messages from the media to the audience. Even when later studies of the 1970s, 80s and 90s began to see the audience as a complex and active participant, no theorist could have predicted the level to which the audience has become the creator of content at the level it currently produces.



FIGURE 11.48 In China today there are strong restrictions on social media and internet use.

As you have read throughout this chapter, the emergence of social media and handheld technologies has allowed any user, anywhere in the world, to participate directly with the media at any time. Think back to the early influence of news media and the role news anchors like Walter Cronkite in America played in relaying and commenting on the news of the day. Now, the agency of the audience has reached such a level that they themselves have the power to control and influence.

social media influencer users of social media who have reached a level of popularity where their posts and content have the capacity to influence the actions of other users

The term **social media influencer** is one often used by advertising companies and researchers trying to determine how social media services like Instagram or YouTube hold so much power over audiences. An influencer is a creator of content who is supposedly able to guide audience actions through their content. Andrew Bachelor, otherwise known as King Bach, makes six-second videos using the video sharing app Vine. In 2016 he had over 11 million followers on Vine and was the largest for the platform. Across all platforms he has over 37 million followers. His six-second interpretations of feature films, pranks and comedy can rack up tens of thousands of views in a matter of seconds. In a handful of videos he was paid to wear a t-shirt with the logo of an American sandwich store. That earned him over $300 000.

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FIGURE 11.49 'Social influencer' King Bach

Clearly there has been a shift in the balance of control. The activity of influencers using social media has meant that the major media institutions that have long sought to persuade audiences and sell to them have shifted their attention to find their target audience. A major corporation like McDonald's, Coca-Cola or Nestlé will always spend millions on advertising across the globe. However, to do so in any number of different countries they must navigate a huge range of media laws and regulations that determine how and where they can advertise. Taxes would most likely have to be paid in each of those locations too. You would have noticed that cigarette advertising has disappeared from major sporting events in Australia. So why wouldn't one of these major companies use an individual who, with a press of a button on an iPhone, reach millions more than they could hope to in a mere matter of seconds? Yes, some of these influencers are being paid to do so; however, it is a fraction of the costs incurred taking the traditional route of television and print advertising.

So how does this modern age of 'influencing' work? A 2016 Dutch study from the University of Twente called 'The influence of YouTube on teenagers' asked the question '*What role do YouTubers play in the life of their teenage viewers?*'

The study found that:

YouTubers are often about the same age as their audience. For them it is easier to create content that fits the current frame of reference of teenagers. People tend to copy behaviour of people they like, or share the same behavioural style (Bentley, Earls & O'Brien, 2011). According to researchers of the Stony Brook University (2015), behaviours and beliefs are more contagious among those with shared social connections. Imitating others leads to social benefits, like bonding together on social groups.

ACTIVITY 11.30

1. Consider these findings carefully. What media effects theories could you apply to potentially support the study's contention?
2. What about the audience themselves? Explain the factors that determine which audience gravitates towards which influencer. Can media effects theories attempt to explain this? Why/why not?
3. Consider this debate – these influencers are being used by commercial corporations to do their work for them. Are these creators being exploited for their influence? Use media effects theories within your response to support the potential control each stakeholder employs.

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CASE STUDY 11.5

The Kardashian phenomenon

There is possibly no greater example of the power of the individual to influence than the phenomenon that is the Kardashian/Jenner family. The five sisters – Kim, Kourtney, Khloe, Kendall and Kylie, along with their mother Kris – have a combined Instagram following of around 420 million people (2017). 420 million people. Kim, the original reality star of the family, has 100 million followers alone. This is only one platform where the family holds considerable sway. Their Twitter, Snapchat and Facebook presence is also massive and it has been said that the Kardashians, and Kim in particular, are pioneers of seeing the enormous opportunities that social media can provide through its immediacy and its ability to connect with an audience. It is their reality show, *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, produced by the E! Network, which airs globally to a devoted audience that fuels the ongoing interest in the family.

Since the first series in 2007, audiences have watched the family go through marriages, divorces, babies, rehab, a gender transformation and a violent robbery, just to name a few of the events to which audiences are given access. The show, conceived by 'momager' Kris Jenner, was an attempt to cash in on Kim's fledgling fame-through-association with the then infamous socialite and reality star, hotel heiress Paris Hilton. Jenner pitched the show to Hollywood producer Ryan Seacrest as an access all areas pass to a Hollywood family; and audiences, for some strange reason, resonate with the family, their relationships, their problems and their rise to fame. The show has seen multiple spin-offs about the family and their businesses and marriages, such as *Kourtney and Kim take Miami, I am Cait, Khloe and Lamar* and *Dash Dolls*.



FIGURE 11.50 Kim Kardashian takes a selfie with model Naomi Campbell

As a result of the shows and the social media reach, the Kardashians have jumped on commercial opportunities and are now savvy business women with lines of make-up, denim, handbags, children's wear and perfume. They each have their own apps and Kim even has her own emojis, known as kimojis. When youngest sister – and second most followed – Kylie Jenner released her line of 'Lip Kits', they sold out in 10 minutes. Similarly, when Khloe released her Good American line of denim jeans, the brand sold $1 million worth of product in the first day of release. It is not only their own brands and products that they promote. Brands and companies see the huge value in having the Kardashians wear, use, drink, eat, drive and work out in their products and services. Michael Heller, CEO of digital marketing firm Talent Resources – the same firm that arranges most of the family's deals and endorsements – has stated that some companies have been known to pay Kim up to $500 000 to share branded posts with her followers. It is clear that the Kardashians have seen the opportunities that this new media landscape can provide and they are masters at harnessing the power of social media to influence, sell and promote their brand and, at times, their beliefs.



FIGURE 11.51 Kardashian and her sisters have great reach over audiences through social media, and products they endorse are usually quite popular.

The reach and influence of the Kardashians means that the eyes of some 420 million people are watching and waiting on every image, every Snap, every comment. In 2016, Kim Kardashian West – married to rap star Kanye West, another master of the social media platforms – was violently robbed at gunpoint in her hotel in Paris during Paris Fashion Week. Kardashian West

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had been posting images of her clothing and pieces of very expensive and rare jewellery and it is thought that the perpetrators of the crime had been closely monitoring her locations and moves on her social media accounts. As a result, in the aftermath of the robbery, Kim stepped back from social media for several months – despite the massive income it amasses for her – and is now noticeably more staged and obscure in her posts, which makes her even more lucrative.

Love them or loathe them, there is no denying that the Kardashians are a major contributor to global culture and discussion. Critics have written them off as a passing 'fad', lacking in substance and contributing very little to the media landscape; however, the family continue to harness their reach, agency and power to influence and comment.

The anti-vaccination movement, which is quite influential among Hollywood circles and throughout California, is a target of the Kardashians who are firm believers and supporters of vaccination. This viewpoint was shown in an episode of *Keeping up with the Kardashians* when Kim was pregnant with her first child: she demanded all family members receive the pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine before being allowed access to the baby. It became a contentious episode, with much criticism from the anti-vaccination campaign, but received widespread praise from the medical fraternity for the very public stance the family took in promoting the importance of vaccination. This was again reinforced in 2017, where brother Rob Kardashian and his ex-partner, another social media influencer, Blac Chyna, had their baby Dream vaccinated on camera with a clear message of their belief in vaccination. Other prominent discourses that the Kardashians have contributed to include the Armenian genocide (the Kardashian sisters are of Armenian heritage) and body image and body shaming; they were prominent campaigners for President Obama and Hillary Clinton, and are vocal in their criticism of President Donald Trump's cuts to healthcare and the Planned Parenthood services in the USA.



FIGURE 11.52 Kim Kardashian has the ability to contribute to prominent social discourses online, such as her support for Hillary Clinton during the 2016 US election.

The Kardashian/Jenner sisters are key influencers and they are an excellent example of the power and agency that the individual can wield via social media. They are masters at strategically using the social media channels to engage their massive audience and make them feel as though they are invested in their world. Their posts are constructed to portray a lifestyle of glamour, wealth, family, beauty and aspiration. It is difficult to pinpoint their appeal, but 420 million followers lap up each post and, within moments, the image or the tweet is liked, shared and commented upon millions of times over. Media institutions and governments can only dream about having this type of influence and reach. The Kardashians are a prime example of media control in the new world.

Analysis

1. Find a recent Kardashian/Jenner social media post and analyse the content, the construction and the comments from the audience. What is the message? What or how are the audience being sold/persuaded/influenced?
2. How could you use a media theory or theories to explain the influence and agency of the Kardashian/Jenner family?
3. What other media identities are using social media to influence their audience? Who do you follow and why? What are they communicating through their social media profiles?
4. Can the potential for the Kardashians to influence and control audiences be measured by followers alone?
5. What methods could you use to measure the potential effect of Kim's pro-vaccination episode?

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11.5 Regulation in Australia

The study into media effects shows us that there is a link between media messages and audiences that is worthy of investigation. What we can determine is that there have been efforts to control and exert agency occurring between governments, institutions and individuals. What we must separate from this debate is the role vulnerable audiences play within this discussion and the role governments have to play in protecting these members of society.

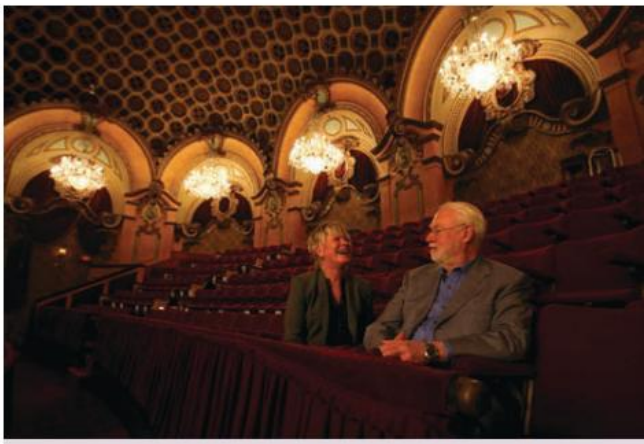


FIGURE 11.53 Australian film critics Margaret Pomeranz and David Stratton, who fought for the right to show banned film *Ken Park* in 2003

It may seem strange to you, but in an office somewhere in Sydney a group of people work to decide what is and is not appropriate for a range of Australian audiences to view. They are known as the Classification Board and their role is to examine all literature, film and video game releases within Australia and determine, based on the nature of the content, what age groups should and should not be able to access this content. In a handful of cases, they have banned films from release in Australia for the graphic nature of the sexual or violent content. Larry Clarke's 2002 film *Ken Park* was banned from release in Australia. No one was allowed to see it as the Classification Board deemed the level of sexual content exceeded what it believed the Australian community would accept as appropriate. Film critics David and Margaret from the long-running movie review program *The Movie Show* were apprehended by police when they attempted to have a screening of the film at a Sydney cinema.

The government and institutional bodies that attempt to regulate the nature of the content audiences use (on the media forms they actually have the power to oversee) exist because there is a belief within the government, as in most democratic governments, that there is a responsibility to oversee the nature of media messages. Consider what you have learned about media effects theories. This is a strong motivation for governments who seek to have a safe and happy society. So why do they focus on media messages?

The reason that the regulation of the media exists lies deeply within a solid understanding of media effects theories. The Australian government, which supports the Classification Board and other regulatory bodies, sees a relationship between the media and the control it could potentially have over various audiences. While it recognises that audiences should have the right to agency and see, read and participate in killing as many respawning zombies as they want, there are clearly some audiences that it sees as its role to protect.

FOCUS QUESTION

What type of media effect on audiences (strong/weak) do you think the Australian government subscribes to?

The regulation of media in Australia is therefore based on the following principles:

1. Some people in society need to be protected from harmful material.
2. The media is powerful.
3. Media organisations are large and profitable; as a result they have both rights and responsibilities.

This area of your study is ripe for debate. Other organisations exist for the specific purpose of regulating and maintaining a basic level of acceptable content on film, video games, television and radio. However, the media landscape has changed since many of these laws and regulatory bodies were created and the impact of the internet, global streaming services and illegal downloading have since left the control of these government bodies behind.

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Tor browser a browser designed for anonymous web searching

geo blocking a technique used to limit the access to certain internet content according to geographic regions

Currently, most of these services that are rising in popularity do not necessarily observe these regulations and practices. Anyone savvy enough to navigate the **Tor browser** can get around **geo blocking** and see content available to view in other countries, or they could simply download it from any number of bit torrent sites. The government can only regulate what is legally available for sale. So the question to guide your reading must be as indicated in Activity 11.31.

ACTIVITY 11.31

As a class, discuss the following question: In contemporary society, what is the role of government regulation?



FIGURE 11.54 The purpose of regulation is to uphold and protect community standards.



FIGURE 11.55 The first televised screen kiss between an African-American woman and a Caucasian man in 1968: Nichelle Nichols as Uhura and William Shatner as Captain James T Kirk in *Star Trek*

Key ideas

Before we go any further, it is essential to determine a few key ideas.

Vulnerable audiences

The purpose of regulation is often motivated by the desire for responsible governments to protect what they see as vulnerable audiences. Children in particular must be protected from content that they simply do not have the cognitive development to understand. As young adults, you have learned and experienced enough of the world to know the difference between fiction and reality, the difference between real and make-believe. As such, the innocence of youth should be protected from these messages to ensure the safe and stable development of the nation's youth.

Community standards

Most regulatory bodies attempt to adhere to what is acceptable within the Australian community. Put simply, there is a range and limit to what the community at large (all age groups, genders, ethnicities and religions) deem to be acceptable. For example, fictional murders are OK, but it is rare that real ones will be allowed for broadcast on television. There is a limit to what will and will not be accepted by the community. How these standards are defined is difficult to pin down. They are also likely to change with time. A 1968 episode of the science fiction program *Star Trek* aired the first-ever televised kiss between an African-American woman and a Caucasian man. As ridiculous as this sounds, it was seen as a borderline breach of what American audiences viewed as acceptable. A 2017 audience would not even consider it an issue. While there is push and pull in this area, regulatory bodies use the feedback of audiences to gauge where the line is at any one time.

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Classification

Classification is not censorship. The groups that examine media products like video games determine the 'level' of content and the audience for which it is most appropriate. The key difference is that classification determines what audience a particular media product is 'appropriate' for. There is little to stop a member of the public from viewing a product that is not recommended for them; however, the Australian government must attempt to provide advice on what they see as acceptable for various audiences. For example, without the ratings system applied on all video games sold in Australia, a parent may innocently purchase *Fallout* or *Mortal Kombat* only to find the content inappropriate for their child. Classification is an advice system that allows all Australians to make informed decisions on the nature of some media content before they purchase it.

CASE STUDY 11.6

Classification in Australia – *Logan*

As an example of the typical classification process in Australia, on 17 February 2017 the Hollywood film *Logan* (dir. James Mangold) starring Hugh Jackman received an MA15+ classification by the Australian government's Department of Communications and the Arts. Twentieth Century Fox, as both the production company and distributor of the film, had applied for the content to be reviewed, with the intention of exhibiting the film in a wide public release. The MA rating was accompanied by consumer advice that the film contained 'Strong bloody violence'. Although the film had been rated R in the US, over there that restriction is for 17+, while here the Classification Board deemed *Logan* to be suitable for audience members 15 years and older.

On the Classification Board's public rating system for extreme content, *Logan* scored the following:

	Very mild impact	Mild impact	Moderate impact	Strong impact	High impact
Themes			√		
Violence				√	
Language			√		
Drug use					
Nudity			√		
Sex					

TABLE 11.3 *Logan*'s rating on the Classification Board's rating system for extreme content



FIGURE 11.56 Promotional poster from the US for *Logan* (2017)

Logan undertook the typical classification process that all feature films shown publicly in this country go through. Overall, the film was approved for distribution and exhibition throughout Australia without any major concerns by the Classification Board, besides the warning about the violent content alongside its MA rating. That rating served as a fair warning to consumers about the nature of the media product.

Self-regulation

Self-regulation refers to the belief that media organisations are mature enough to regulate themselves and only produce content that sits within the notion of community standards. However, the government also recognises that commercial media organisations are in the business of making money from public entertainment. As such, these institutions need

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FOCUS QUESTION

Define the following terms: vulnerable audiences, community standards, classification, self-regulation.

to push the boundaries of community standards every once in a while to see what will best engage them. Several organisations within the Australian media landscape are expected to exercise this idea of self-regulation. In practice, it means that the government should not be expected to step in and act on these media messages that offend the community – the institutions that produce them are trusted to act before the audience is offended. As simple as this sounds, the script writers of *Home and Away*, a program rated for a family audience, is expected to analyse its scripts and story ideas to eliminate concepts and content that could be seen as inappropriate.

Currently, there are several key regulatory bodies within the Australian media landscape.

Australian Communications and Media Authority

What does it do?

ACMA is the government body responsible for the regulation of broadcasting, the internet, radio communications and telecommunications.

ACMA's responsibilities include:

- promoting self-regulation and competition while protecting consumers and other users
- fostering an environment in which electronic media respect community standards and respond to user needs
- managing access to the radio frequency spectrum
- representing Australia's communications interests internationally.

Key challenges

ACMA was designed to handle a much smaller media industry than the one it faces in 2017. Today it is faced with the role of monitoring a highly competitive industry that is vast and spread across a range of platforms. Ultimately, ACMA does not have any legal or legislative power to effectively sanction media institutions. While it operates in an environment of mutual respect for the acceptable standards of the community, it does not have any real power to halt the actions of a large and financially powerful media institution.

Free TV Australia

What does it do?

Free TV Australia began life as the Federation of Commercial Television Stations (or FACTS) in 1960, just four years after the advent of television in Australia. It now represents all of Australia's commercial free-to-air television stations and is one of the few organisations in Australia which represents every organisation in its own industry.

Free TV is worthy of investigation as it is an institutional body that is not a representative of government control; it attempts to work with other commercial television broadcasters to set an agreed standard of acceptable content on free-to-air television.

Key challenges

Free-to-air television relies on the money provided by advertising (except for the ABC). It is the model that sustains their existence. In this sense, it is easy to see self-regulation in action. If a television channel was to broadcast something that offended their audience to a large extent, viewers would exercise their agency and simply turn it off or, worse still, change the channel! If viewers walk away from a program, so do the advertisers. Once the revenue that sustains the life of a television network is taken away, decisions must be made over the nature of the content. It is a simple relationship. One issue that continues to raise its head in Australian television is the appearance of betting advertising during live sports broadcasts.

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Australians love their sport. For television broadcasters it is a lucrative business. Viewers in their hundreds of thousands tune in to see their favourite teams snatch defeat from the jaws of victory on a weekly basis. One of the key funding models that supports these leagues is gambling. In recent years, the prevalence of gambling or betting on live sports became so great that updated odds were given throughout matches and betting ads featured in almost every advertisement break. As sport is considered family entertainment, concern was raised over the volume of gambling ads in programming that children were likely to watch.



FIGURE 11.57 Australians love sport, and broadcast rights are a lucrative business.

In response to complaints and attempts to ban gambling advertising altogether, Free TV struck a balance between the need for the advertising dollar from these gambling companies and the protection of children from gambling content, stating in February 2017 that:

> These measures include a ban on the promotion of live odds during play, as well [as] a ban on the promotion of odds by commentators and their guests for 30 minutes before and after play.
>
> Source: Free TV Australia media release, 8 February 2017, 'Free TV rejects unwarranted ban on the promotion of betting services during live sport'

These restrictions are in addition to the family viewing time safeguards that prohibit:

- all advertisements relating to betting and gambling during any programs classified G between 6 am and 8.30 am, and 4 pm and 7 pm
- all advertisements relating to betting and gambling during any program that is broadcast between 5 am and 8.30 pm and that is principally directed to children, regardless of the classification.

These protections were endorsed by ACMA as it recognised the need for institutions to make money and for vulnerable audiences to be protected.

ACTIVITY 11.32

Why do vulnerable audiences need protection? Use a range of media effects theories and research methods in your response.

Advertising Standards Bureau

In a similar fashion to Free TV, the Advertising Standards Bureau (ASB) promotes self-regulation among commercial companies looking to advertise in the media. It assumes that companies will respect the standards of the community when selling products and services to it:

> The Advertising Standards Bureau administers a national system of advertising self-regulation through the Advertising Standards Board and the Advertising Claims Board. The self-regulation system recognises that advertisers share a common interest in promoting consumer confidence in and respect for general standards of advertising.
>
> Source: Advertising Standards Bureau, https://adstandards.com.au/about

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Essentially the ASB encourages a specific purpose – the consumer (the one who will buy what the advertiser is selling) has standards of appropriate content that must be respected.

Key challenges

Advertising is not limited to television. It is everywhere and even appears as 'sponsored content' in social media feeds. Interestingly, the ASB, unlike other bodies, has had an effective impact on the nature of advertising on YouTube videos. In late 2016, it upheld a complaint made by the Obesity Policy Coalition (OPC) that protested the nature of a YouTube advertisement that promoted Paddle Pop ice-cream. The relationship between junk food advertising and child obesity is, again, one that is steeped in media effects theory. The OPC stated its protest on the grounds that:

> ... We do not think that the message is sufficient to promote good dietary habits or physical activity. In our view, child viewers of the advertisement are unlikely to pay significant attention to the message and are likely to be focused on the visual and audio content ...
>
> Source: Advertising Standards Bureau, https://adstandards.com.au/cases/2016/November?ref=0512/16



ACTIVITY 11.33

Analyse the protest made by the OPC. What media effects theories underpin its point of view? What reasons do you have for this?

Classification Board

The role of the Classification Board is much clearer as it has legal power to determine what is and is not appropriate content:

> The Classification Board is a statutory body which makes classification decisions for films, computer games and certain publications. The Classification Board is a full-time Board based in Sydney. Principles for decision making are set out in the National Classification Code, agreed by the Australian Government and the States and Territories. The Classification Board is independent from government.
>
> Source: Classification Board, http://www.classification.gov.au/About/Pages/Who-We-Are.aspx

The Classification Board works to examine the following elements of media products:

1. the importance of the context
2. assessing the impact
3. the six classifiable elements of drug use, language, nudity, themes, sex and violence.



ACTIVITY 11.34

Why would the Classification Board choose to focus on these three elements? Explain what you know about the study of influence and control in media products that suggests these may be areas of concern for audiences.

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Key challenges

The Classification Board constantly runs a fine line between community standards and what adults and those below the age of 18 should be able to see. Unlike the other regulatory bodies, it has the power to alter, restrict or, in some cases, ban content from classification. This means the DVD, game or book may only be sold under the conditions set out by the Classification Board.

The Board works to the accepted idea that adults should be free to watch, play and read whatever they want. However, they acknowledge that there are audiences that should be protected from certain content *and* there is some content that simply does not have any artistic or educational merit (like an unnecessarily violent film) and may need to be altered prior to release and, in rare cases, refused classification and therefore banned from sale.

In 2016, the Classification Board deemed the documentary *Embrace* (2016, dir. Taryn Brumfit) to be of a MA15+ rating. The film concerned itself specifically with the important issue of female body image. The target audience included women and teenage girls who may be dealing with complex issues of media and societal expectations over the ideal female body image. However, the documentary featured a series of close-ups of female genitalia which led to the Classification Board branding the film with a 'MA15+' rating. This means that if the film were to be shown in schools (where the authors saw it as being of great benefit) it could only be shown to audiences above the age of 15. While the filmmakers protested the rating, the debate centres on the responsibility the authors have towards their target audience. If it was to be shown to audiences below this age, should they have done more to adapt their film to the 'community standards' that the Classification Board adheres to?

ACTIVITY 11.35

Using the media effects theories and ideas gathered earlier in this chapter, demonstrate your understanding by filling in the table below. The table explains how each regulatory body uses different ideas of media influence and impact to justify their structure and action.

Body	What does it do?	Classification or self-regulation?	What theories underpin its approach to regulation?	Does it assume audiences are active or passive? Why?
Free TV Australia				
ASB				
ACMA				
Classification Board				

Based on what you have compiled here, complete an extended response essay that explains the role of media communication theories in Australian media regulation.

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CASE STUDY 11.7

Grand Theft Auto

One of the more famous cases of video game censorship came with the release of the *Grand Theft Auto* franchise in Australia. Never far from controversy, elements of the 2001 release of *Grand Theft Auto 3* were banned shortly after its release as the game contained a scene which involved sexual violence with a prostitute. The Classification Board made the makers of the game re-edit the game for sale excluding the scene. As is often the case with video game classification, the participatory nature of the form always goes hand in hand with the user's reception of the content.

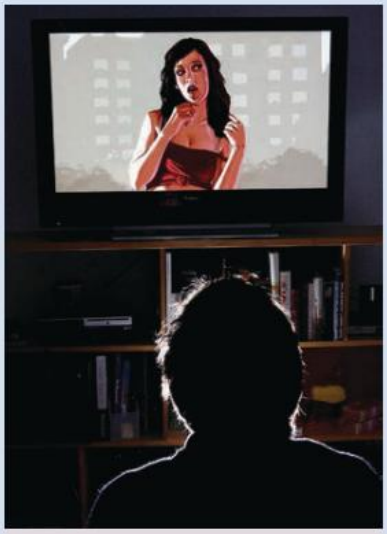


FIGURE 11.58 One of the female characters from *GTA 5*

Interestingly, in 2015 a later version of the game, *GTA 5*, was banned from shelves, not by the Classification Board, but by some of the retail stores selling it. Target and Kmart agreed to pull the game from its shelves after three survivors of sexual violence gained 40 000 signatures on a petition to the retail stores to remove the game as the petition stated:

> It's a game that encourages players to murder women for entertainment. The incentive is to commit sexual violence against women, then abuse or kill them to proceed or get 'health' points … grooming yet another generation of boys to tolerate violence against women.
>
> (Source: Change.org petition, *Target: Withdraw Grand Theft Auto 5 – this sickening game encourages players to commit sexual violence and kill women*)

GTA 5 has a current classification of R18+. This means only people over the age of 18 can legally purchase the game. The Classification Board had already reviewed the content and given it a rating it deemed appropriate for the audience it saw it to be suitable for. However, this case provides an interesting insight into the role of the Board and audiences with increasing agency. The petition, launched on the petitioning website 'Change.org', gathered enough momentum to persuade two large corporations to discontinue the game on moral grounds, or on the perceived damage their refusal of the petition may do to their own image!

Analysis

GTA 5 grossed over $800 million in its first day of sale. Its popularity is almost unparalleled in gaming. Construct an argument that contests the decision made by Target and Kmart. In your response, refer to media effects theories and understandings of agency among video game users.

Exit International

In 2010, an Australian euthanasia advocacy group called Exit International produced and attempted to screen a television advertisement that discussed the legislation on assisted suicide. Free TV originally approved the ad for television, but withdrew its permission after it was decided that the ad promoted assisted suicide, a criminal offence in Australia. The 30-second ad is still available on YouTube and by 2017 it had been viewed over 100 000 times. The author of the $30 000 ad protested that the ad was aimed at challenging government legislation, which in a democracy is one of the functions of the media.

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ACTIVITY 11.36

Apply media effects theories to justify Free TV's decision.

How could you use other theories, as well as an understanding of audience agency in a modern media environment, to challenge it? Discuss.

Greenpeace and the political economy of the media

The *political economy model* of media control suggests that there is a relationship between the capitalist needs of large media institutions (i.e. they're in the business of making money) and the political structures in which they exist. In most cases, it suggests that those with the money and power to create mass media messages usually do so with profit as their motive. They make content that sells and will usually be wary of anything that challenges this motive and the dominant ideology of that society.

In 2013 a Greenpeace commercial that attempted to raise public awareness of littering in the ocean featured a woman holding a plastic bottle that looked very similar to one made by a major soft drink manufacturer. Even though Free TV approved the ad for screening, Channel 7 deemed it to be 'inappropriate' without offering much more information. In the same week that the ad was seen over 850 000 times on YouTube, the soft drink manufacturer purchased the Google AdWord 'Greenpeace', which would lead Google searchers for that word and others like 'recycling' to advertisements for the soft drink company.

STUDY TIP

To recap the discussion about the political economy model, see Chapter 4.



FIGURE 11.59 A 2013 Greenpeace commercial attempted to raise public awareness of littering in the ocean, but this message was subverted by a soft drink company's advertising on YouTube.

ACTIVITY 11.37

In this instance, explain the forces that are exercising control over media messages.

11.6 Issues and challenges facing regulation

Regulation raises a number of key debates that will be important now and into the future. None of them have an easy answer, as future problems are tackled with past theories and ideas of media control and agency that vary in relevance, thanks to advances in technology and audience agency.

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ACTIVITY 11.38

Before you go any further, in small groups, look over this chapter and your responses to the activities you have completed so far. You should draw on everything you have learned so far about the changing face of the media and the role digital and social media now play in the way audiences and creators have become simultaneously powerful and controlling.

As a group, determine a one-sentence response to the following questions:

1 Can the government control the media?
2 Should it control the media?
3 How does the government justify its attempt to control the media?
4 How does the government recognise audience agency?
5 Is government regulation still relevant?

ACTIVITY 11.39

Advertising

Childhood obesity has long been linked with the prevalence of junk food advertising on television. The belief has been that advertisements for chocolate, fried food and fast and unhealthy foods have often appeared on television between the hours of 4.30 pm and 6.30 pm, the very time that vulnerable audiences were likely to be watching television. This in turn put images of junk food in the mind of children who would in turn pressure their parents to buy said food, leading to increased rates of childhood obesity. The Australian government reacted and in 2009 worked with the food industry to reduce the rate of advertising during these times through a process of self-regulation. By 2017, it was clear that self-regulation had not had the desired impact. A 2017 study by the New South Wales Cancer Council found that children were being exposed to the same levels of junk food advertising as they were when the guidelines were proposed. Given the dangers posed to the community by poor health, the role of media, regulation and new media all impact the position of junk food advertising in the community.



FIGURE 11.60 Children dressed as Colonel Sanders, of fast-food chain KFC fame

1 Identify which media effects theories underpin the intention to restrict the level of junk food advertising on commercial television.
2 The Cancer Council claimed in 2017 that these efforts had failed. Discuss how the regulatory structures that guide this media form could explain this.
3 If a teenager only needs to be 13 to open a Facebook account, they can like and follow any Facebook page they want. Most junk food advertisers have a social media presence. Do regulatory structures exist to prevent these ads reaching a vulnerable audience? Explain your understanding.
4 Discuss what impact social media has on the relevance of advertising standards.

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ACTIVITY 11.40

Classification

In an era when anyone smart enough, at any age, can download any media product they want from the internet via illegal downloading, what is the point of classification? In a time when fewer people are buying physical media products like CDs and DVDs than ever before, why do audiences need classification?

In 2015, the Classification Board deemed specific content from the video game *Hotline Miami 2*, a scene that involved sexual violence and perceived rape, to be in breach of normal community standards and so banned it from sale. In response, the creator of the game, Jonatan Söderström, released a statement on the chat forum Reddit that actively encouraged Australian gamers to flout the censorship laws and download the game illegally. The audience exercised its agency through increased digital access and found their way to play the game.



FIGURE 11.61 Children play computer games all around the world. Here we see kids playing in a refugee camp in Syria in 2015.

ACTIVITY 11.41

1. Explain how classification guidelines have failed to protect vulnerable audiences in this instance.
2. Why do you think the creator of *Hotline Miami 2* took this action? Explain your response with your knowledge of the new media landscape.

CASE STUDY 11.8

A Serbian Film

In 2011, a Serbian feature film, uniquely titled *A Serbian Film* (2010, dir. Srđan Spasojević), was refused classification in Australia. The grounds upon which it was banned (as it was in a number of other countries around the world) were based on the Classification Board's summary that the film's themes and scenes of explicit sexual violence and child abuse were not justified by the context, or 'literary merit' of the film. In short, the Board felt the level of content was too extreme and was not justified by the story or nature of the text. Contextually, it is important to understand that the film was not banned in the country the story concerns. This could be explained by a number of contextual and ideological reasons that the film deals with. Serbia is still, like other central European states, attempting to navigate its way through democracy after a brutal war with neighbouring states after the collapse of Communism in the former Yugoslavia. The director of the film, Srđan Spasojević, claimed that the film serves as a vehicle to criticise the corruption of past Serbian governments. In addition to this, the Serbian government does not censor or classify films at the same level of scrutiny as in Australia.

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Analysis

1 Why was the film refused classification in one context but not another? Explain.
2 Discuss what challenges this presents for governments who cannot control illegal downloading.
3 Investigate recent trends in attempts by the Australian government to tackle the issue of illegal downloading and explain how recent trends and decisions may or may not have an impact on this trend.



FIGURE 11.62 In recent years, democratic governments in Western nations such as Australia have been fighting for control over information about their citizens with global media institutions.

Governments and data

There have been recent efforts by democratic governments to force global media institutions to share the data of their users. This raises several issues that are worthy of your investigation. In 2017, the Australian government instigated a metadata law that forces communication and media institutions to retain the data of its users, which will allow the government and law enforcement agencies to combat crime and terrorism in the new technological landscape. On face value, it appears to be an effort by the Australian government to wrest some control back from global media institutions in the interests of protecting their citizens – a key role of democratic governments.

The laws allow the government to see:

- every email you send and to whom, what time, where you sent it and the subject of it
- the location you took a photo, the settings you took the picture with and the camera model
- some Internet Service Providers may record the Internet Protocol address of the websites you visit.

ACTIVITY 11.42

Essentially, today your behaviour online is and can be monitored legally. So what does this mean for you, your privacy and your ability to create media products? Could this potentially usher in a new era and sphere of government regulation? What other purpose could this data be used for?

1 In this instance, do you believe the government has the right to control private data? Explain why/why not.
2 Propose what this might do to the relationship between governments and news media that seek to keep the government accountable.
3 Do you see potential for abuse? What would more authoritarian governments be able to do with this information? Discuss.
4 Explain what responsibility you think global media institutions have to share information with governments.

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11.7 Ethical and legal issues in media production, distribution, consumption and reception

If you've made it this far and you're feeling overwhelmed, that's OK! The nature of agency and control in contemporary media involves layers of technological, social, political and economic complexity that few of the early theorists from the persuasion theories could possibly conceive. However, here is what you need to do:

1. It is your job to try and make sense of it all and identify the changes in the way agency is wielded and control is asserted.
2. It is your job to understand how theorists, research and studies from past decades help us understand more about previous relationships between the media and the audience and how much of it still applies today.
3. You need to clarify the new relationship between global media institutions, governments and individuals.
4. You need to determine your own predictions of what the future holds for institutions and governments who vie for control.
5. You need to determine your own predictions for the future of an audience that has an exponentially increasing sense of agency.

It's a lot to think about, so it's best to consider how and where these issues affect the production, distribution, consumption and reception of media products.

STUDY TIP

A quick recap:

- **Production:** the process of constructing a media product.
- **Distribution:** the means by which that product is shared with the audience.
- **Consumption:** refers to the social, cultural and technological influences over the way audiences read media products.
- **Reception:** refers to the way in which an audience engages with a tangible or intangible media product and the way that can influence how it is read.

Production debates

What are the challenges that modern media technologies create for the production of media forms?

For this question you might need to consider:

- the speed and number of platforms available
- the way each platform could influence the agency the audience has towards your product. How will the feedback loop inform production?
- the impact on news media
- how various media platforms inform the style and production itself
- current regulatory debates and how this influences production decisions
- how these regulatory structures could be related to questions of influence and control.

What are the challenges for the audiences when creating media products in the face of government and institutional structures?

For this question you might need to consider:

- Who owns your product?
- How would regulation and classification issues in both government and institutional platforms like YouTube influence the production process?

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- What challenges do authoritarian systems have on the production of any media product?
- What are the strengths and limitations of social media 'influencers' within the production process?
- How could you use the Kardashian phenomenon to respond to this debate?

Distribution debates

What is the responsibility of governments to control the flow of information?

For this question you might need to consider:

- the role governments played in the broadcast era and their motivation for control
- how theories of communication and control influenced these decisions
- the role of governments in modern media environments
- the motivation for governments to exert control in the modern media environment
- the reasoning behind government regulation of media products
- the reasoning behind the control of freedom of speech
- the reasoning behind the control of metadata
- how do issues of state-controlled media and the regulation used in democratic societies influence this debate?

What is the responsibility of globalised media institutions towards their audience?

For this question you might need to consider:

- the role of media institutions in the broadcast era
- the role of new media institutions
- the relationship between agency and control created by modern media institutions
- the nature of private information and content held by these institutions
- the financial scale of these institutions and the ability of governments to challenge them
- the 'monetisation' of social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram and Facebook
- the ownership of private data held by these institutions
- the nature of video games and violent content
- the role institutions play in the manipulation of their audience's agency
- the role algorithms play in supporting the position of some communication theories.

Consumption debates

How has the new balance of agency and control in the media changed the way audiences consume media products?

For this question you might need to consider:

- the way in which governments and institutions used dominant ideologies in the media and its impact on consumption
- what a range of communication theories suggests about the media's impact or otherwise on audience consumption of media products
- the changing face of control and agency – who now has the power and where?
- technological changes in media production and distribution in film, television, print and online digital media
- the agency audiences have developed in major political events, like elections, that have increased participation and destabilised control
- the increased and dominant role global media institutions play in the flow and distribution of media products. How does Facebook help shape the cultural and social background of audiences?
- the changing nature of agency and control on democratic elections.

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Reception debates

Do individuals really have agency?

For this question you might need to consider:

- the way audiences receive texts today in comparison to the broadcast era
- the ability for audiences to participate during reception
- the impact new technologies have on reception and the reading of media products
- the power of social media influencers
- the process of data collection and its use by media and government
- the difference between propaganda and information distributed by responsible government
- the relevance of government regulation in reference to technological developments
- how media communication theories may suggest potential danger in an open world of audience agency and access.

What dangers face the agency of the individual?

For this question you might need to consider:

- the agency individuals experienced in the broadcast era
- the impact technological change has had in increasing audience agency
- the range of ways different media forms can impact and potentially control audiences during reception
- the way governments and global media institutions utilise algorithms and regulation to control the flow of information to audiences and individuals
- the relevance of regulation and the dangers its current position poses for the nature of content potentially available to a range of audiences
- communication theories that could suggest the above may have possible negative effects on audiences
- the way YouTube and other media institutions use audience agency for their own gain.



CHAPTER REVIEW

Summing it all up

So there you have it! Take a deep breath and consider all that you have learned. The modern media environment that you will work in, interact with and be influenced by will be one that evolves in real time – and probably as a consequence of your own actions. It will be vital to take with you a clear understanding of how and what shaped the media and its potential for control in the broadcast era. It may be the last time we will ever see a relationship between the media and audiences that was somewhat easy to define. Today, the disruption caused by constant and rapid technological change has opened the door for a whirlwind of factors that influence the way agency and control is exercised. Significantly, we must acknowledge the way that the individual can in many cases land on equal footing with global media institutions for their ability to reach and potentially control the behaviours and ideas of millions. However, what was once seen as a linear model of media producers and the audience has become something of a pitched battle between the government, institutional and individual forces who wield their own sense of agency against perceived forces of control.

To end this chapter and to begin your journey beyond your studies, we will turn to the esteemed journalist Edward R Murrow. He was a highly respected figure who used the mediums of radio and television to hold back the aggressive Cold War ideologies of the 1950s with frank, open and honest political debate with government leaders looking to exert political and social control. At the end of each broadcast he would sum up his findings from the program and, in turn, provide the audience with the opportunity to wield their own emerging agency with a simple closing phrase:

'Good night, and good luck.'

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Revision questions

1 Define the role of the media in the broadcast era.
2 Explain how agency and control shifted during two US election campaigns.
3 Define the impact of web 2.0 technologies in the shift between agency and control.
4 Explain the role of a feedback loop in media control and agency.
5 Define the agency created by social media.
6 Define the term 'media effects'.
7 Explain the difference between active and passive audiences.
8 Explain the strengths and limitations of research in the media effects field.
9 In your own words, define at least six media effects theories.
10 Explain the new role of institutions, governments and individuals in the modern media environment.
11 Why does media regulation exist? Explain with examples.
12 Explain the roles of all Australian regulation bodies.
13 Identify the challenges facing the legitimacy of these regulation bodies.
14 Explain the challenges facing the production, distribution, consumption and reception of the media.

Practice assessment questions

1 In the 20th century, explain how the media used audiences.
2 Evaluate whether in the 21st century the audience has agency over the media.
3 When does the media have agency over audience? Explain.
4 Define the role of media effects theories in determining the nature of agency and control in the 20th century.
5 Define how and which of these theories still apply to the modern media environment.
6 Assess what the emergence of global media institutions means for the regulation of the media.
7 Is media regulation still relevant today? Discuss.

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Glossary

acts the traditional dramatic segments in films and stage plays

agency the capacity to act and exert power over media messages/products

algorithms a set of digital instructions that internet applications use to provide responses to users; search engines use search instructions and previous-use data to provide new results the user is most likely to want

anchoring the process of attaching a meaning to an image through the use of text

antagonist a character opposed to the hero/main character/protagonist; usually a villain whose actions create the dramatic conflict and tension

aperture the amount of light let through the lens, measured in f/stops. The lower the f/stop number, the more light you are letting through the lens opening.

arc the overall span and progression of the story as well as what happens to a character during the drama

atomised a way to describe how audiences are defined as specific individuals, in opposition to the idea that they could be considered a 'mass media audience'

authoritarian demanding that people obey completely and refusing to allow them freedom to act as they wish

binge-watching the practice of watching an entire television series in one or a small number of sittings

broadcast era a period between the 1950s and 1990s where large institutions dominated media production of film, television, radio and print within a specific geographic location

broadsheet a newspaper printed on a larger page (double that of a tabloid) to allow for more detailed information. Often more detailed and complex than tabloid newspapers; broadsheets attempt to avoid sensationalism.

cinéma vérité a style of documentary-making that avoids artificially constructed realities

citizen journalism citizen-created video, photos or tweets that are used to provide a factual basis to news stories; usually found and distributed on the internet

clickbait links and headlines found on the internet that are of a sensational and enticing nature. Intended to draw traffic and users to internet sites; can often be misleading.

close-up framing showing something in detail, such as a face

codec the format of a completed video project

connotative the meaning that the audience attaches to the people, objects and things we see in the image

consumption context relates to the ways in which a media product is consumed by an audience

content analysis research technique that systematically evaluates large amounts of textual content, with the goal of turning qualitative into quantitative data

content guidelines rules by which media content is selected for appropriate audiences

context refers to the time, place, location, social and cultural situation in which media products and societies exist

contracted time the shortening of time so it takes less time than it would in reality to pass

control whether the media has the power to influence audiences

correlation studies used in research to look for relationships between variables

coverage refers to the amount of film or video shot from multiple angles of the same scene. It can also refer to footage used to provide context to audio and assists in engaging an audience with multiple visuals.

curated media content that has been gathered and collected by users for a specific audience

cutaways a situation where a new shot is used to cut away from the normal action

dailies the raw footage shot each day during production

decipher to understand or interpret

deconstructed simplified or stripped back; reduced

deep focus where the entirety of an image is in focus

denotative the basic objects, people and things you see in the image, not the meaning that is attached to them

denouement a French term that refers to the unravelling of storylines to draw the narrative to a conclusion

depth of field refers to how much of an image is in focus and where the focus is located within the image. Depth of field can be shallow, or a small area of the image, or can be wide, or a large area of the image.

diegetic within the world of the story or narrative; from the Greek term *diegesis* (meaning 'recounted story')

diffuser an accessory used to make light appear less hard or harsh

digital convergence the replacement of old media practices with new, digital practices. It can involve the convergence of letters and voice calls into email and text messaging.

dolly the apparatus used to move a camera during the shot

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dolly or tracking shot where the camera is placed on a cart with wheels or on tracks and follows the action

dolly zoom aka '*Vertigo* Effect'; an in-camera effect that appears to undermine normal visual perception. The effect is achieved by using a zoom lens to adjust the angle of view (often referred to as field of view, or FOV) while the camera dollies (moves) towards or away from the subject in such a way as to keep the subject the same size in the frame throughout.

echo chambers an enclosed media space where only agreeable voices and views are heard and seen

electromagnetic radio waves a form of radio waves that can travel through airspace and can be received by media forms like television, radio and telephones. Once the messages are received the waves are converted into sound and vision.

emojis small digital images or icon signs used to express an idea or emotion in electronic communication

empirical evidence data based on what is experienced or seen rather than on theory

establishing shot usually a long or wide shot at the start of a new scene indicating where the action for the scene will take place

Eurocentric reflecting a tendency to interpret the world in terms of European or Anglo-American values and experiences to the exclusion of a wider view of the world

expanded time the lengthening of time so it takes more time than it would in reality to pass to allow the audience to absorb multiple details

explicit ideology exists in media products that are made to persuade the audience to think a certain way

exposure the combined settings of the aperture, shutter speed and ISO when taking a photograph

extreme close-up framing something small in great detail, such as eyes or a key

eye-level shots where the camera is positioned at a neutral angle, often used for conversation scenes

fables stories that contain a moral purpose or message for children

fade-ins fading in to a new shot

fade-outs fading out of a shot

feedback loop the process of a message being sent out to an audience and the influences upon the feedback that is sent back to the media creator

final cut the final edited version of a film, approved by the director and producer

first person a singular perspective from which a story is told, often from the eyes and body of the storyteller

focus the area of the image that is crisp and can be seen in detail

gatekeepers the theory that mass media could decide what was and was not a worthy piece of news or media; they decided what did and did not get through 'the gate'

genre a way to categorise different types of stories, characters and plot structures

geo blocking a technique used to limit the access to certain internet content according to geographic regions

handheld shot camera shots created without the stability of a tripod

hashtag the symbol on a telephone keypad (#) used on social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram to group comments and contributions to common online conversations

high angles where the camera is positioned high and points down at a subject

hybridised media media forms that collect and deliver converged media products. Instagram is an example of hybridised media that includes text, images, hyperlinks and/or video in one form.

hyperlinks embedded links within online text or images that allow the user to branch away from the main narrative

hypotheses ideas or explanations for something that are based on known facts but have not yet been proved

iconic signs pictorial symbols for a word or phrase

ideology a world view, a system of values, beliefs and attitudes held by an individual, group or society about what is true or important

implicit ideologies found in media products where the protagonist and antagonist represent conflicting ideologies

index signs society's symbolic meanings behind certain objects, colours, expressions, etc., that help us understand representations

institutions commercial and not-for-profit organisations that produce, sell and provide media messages and services to large audiences

intangible media product that has the engagement time fixed by the author

jump cut an editing technique that abruptly cuts from one scene to another

L cut an editing technique where the audio from a previous scene overlaps the vision from the following scene

linear model meaning a direct or clear relationship between cause and effect

long shots (also known as wide shots) framing showing something large, such as a person walking down a street

low angles where the camera is positioned low and points upwards at a subject

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machinima an animated film created using an old or obsolete video game engine

mass communication the process of using mass media to reach a large audience

mass media media forms that reach large numbers of people

mass media audience a large audience that is considered the same and homogeneous

media codes technical, written or symbolic codes used by the author to create representations

media conventions when media codes are used in ways that help an audience understand a representation

media form the type of technology or physical object that delivers media narrative

Media production what the Units 3 & 4 student will produce for their SAT

media products consumable media, such as literature, film, television or games

mediated stories with structures and techniques shared and agreed upon by audiences over a long period of time

medium depth of field where the majority of an image is in focus, with some background blur

medium shots framing showing something mid-sized, such as two people talking from the shoulders up

meme an image, video or piece of text that is shared among internet users, usually funny, to comment on and alter slightly

micro-blogging synonymous with the platform Twitter, this refers to communicating within a strict restriction on the length of text available to the user

mise en scene literally, 'put in the scene' (French), refers to all the theatrical elements necessary in composing a scene to be filmed: props, sets, lighting, sound effects, costumes, make-up and actors' placement (blocking)

mockumentary a style of documentary that parodies and satirises the documentary filmmaking process

montage an edited sequence in a film that compresses story time, usually to show the development of a character, most often accompanied by non-diegetic music

moral panic the feeling and expression of fear among a large number of people

narratives in VCE Media, narrative is used to describe fictional and non-fictional media stories in all media forms. In narratives, the term 'story' refers to all events that contribute to the narrative.

neutral ideologies those media products where the main purpose is to entertain rather than persuade the audience one way or another

non-diegetic outside of the world of the narrative

omission what was chosen to be excluded

pans where the camera moves side to side from a fixed position

perspective the person from whose point of view the story is being told

podcasting recorded audio narratives that can be downloaded online and listened to on mobile audio devices

post-broadcast era the period following the introduction of digital technologies and the subsequent changes in audience behaviour and use of media technologies in a globalised context

post-truth era an era in news media and political discussion where the sheer volume of information available clouds fact from fiction. In most cases, the emotive element of ideas is seen as more important than its factual basis.

principal photography the phase of film production in which the movie is filmed, with actors on set and cameras rolling

product placement the process of placing a commercial product in a media narrative with the intention of selling the product to the audience

production design set of written and visual documents that detail the stages of production of a proposed product (written in Unit 3) the student will realise in Unit 4

propaganda information or media messages used to promote a political cause or point of view

protagonist the main character in a story or a play

pull focus a camera technique that involves using the focus function to make one subject still and clear, while making the background, or other subjects, blurred

purpose the intention of the author

qualitative research research that aims to find out people's opinions and feelings rather than information that can easily be shown in numbers

quantitative research research methods that emphasise objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires and surveys

reaction shots used to show character reaction to action within a shot. Often used after a cutaway.

reception context the process of receiving a message and how the location, time and emotions of the audience impact on how it is received and how meaning is made

regulation the process of applying rules and codes to the classification and self-regulation of media content

remix a method of using a variety of different storytelling techniques to create a new one

representation the ways in which the media portrays particular groups, communities, experiences, ideas or topics from a particular ideological or value perspective

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restricted narrative a story that withholds information from the audience

rough cut the first version of a film after preliminary editing

sandbox a style of video games that allows for 360-degree freedom of movement and interaction with the virtual environment

School-assessed Task (SAT) the major production for VCE Media Units 3 & 4

screen real estate relating to how much space an object takes up on the screen

selection what was chosen to be included

semiotic constructivism language theory that considers the role signs play in mass media. The theory looks at signs as the 'denotation' and the meaning we attach to those signs as the 'connotation'.

sepia a reddish-brown colour associated particularly with monochrome photographs

shallow depth of field where the main subject of an image is in sharp focus and the background is blurred

short-form content a style of video production that has emerged from the popularisation of digital media platforms like YouTube, Snapchat and Facebook. Often are short, bite-sized videos that cater to a more immediate mobile media environment.

shutter speed the amount of time the shutter remains open to capture light and images

slow motion where the speed of a sequence is slowed down to reveal greater detail

social media digital media forms like websites and applications that enable users to create and share content. Can provide access to news and social commentary on key issues.

social media influencer users of social media who have reached a level of popularity where their posts and content have the capacity to influence the actions of other users

social media presence the level of visibility and popularity of an individual on one or more social media platforms

soft box a studio lighting accessory that diffuses the light and softens the shadows cast on the subject. It is a flexible box that attaches to a light stand by encasing it in a screen.

stakeholders people, organisations and governments involved in the media

status quo an existing state of affairs

steady cam a device that allows a cameraperson to mount the camera to their body to follow the action

stereotype an overly simplistic representation

sub-plots secondary storylines that exist within narratives to add to and sometimes are involved in the main storyline

surrealist a style in which unusual or impossible things are shown happening

symbols a sign, shape or object that is used to represent something else

tabloid a newspaper printed with only five columns to a page that provides condensed and simplified versions of daily events. Usually focuses on sensationalised versions of key stories.

tangible media product where the audience determines the length of time it engages with it

three-act structure the traditional dramatic structure of most fictional narrative films

three-point lighting a standard lighting method used in visual media such as film, video, still photography, theatre and computer-generated imagery

tilt shot where the camera tilts up and down from a fixed position

time lapse where the pace of a sequence compresses the vision of a long period of time into a shorter format

Tor browser a browser designed for anonymous web searching

tracking shot where the camera follows along with moving action, usually when the camera is mounted on tracks that allow for smooth movement

transitions used to communicate that a period of time has passed

tweets the name for the 280-character messages sent out and commented upon using the social media platform Twitter

unrestricted narrative a story that reveals all elements and information to the audience

whistle blowers groups or individuals who reveal hidden truths to media organisations and on internet platforms

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