Media Studies Year 11

Therapy and Testing

Key Focus: Representation
Area of Understanding

To reach the top grades, students need to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how representations within the media shape an audience’s knowledge and understanding around social issues and events.

Q. What does this mean?
Key Terminology

Can you write a definition of each of these media terms?

- Mediation and selection
- Realism
- Medium
- Essentialism
- Constructionism
- Connotations
- Audience positioning
- Dominant values
- Ideologies and hegemony

To test your understanding can you put each of these into a sentence when discussing any of your set texts for the exam?
Re-Presenting Reality

All media texts create their own diegetic world in which the audience is encouraged to ‘suspend their disbelief’ and engage in the world that is presented to them as though it is the real world. There are various forms of media language that producers use to create these worlds. Through creating their own reality, producers have a large amount of power as they choose who to populate this fictional world with.

Task: Explore a diegetic world created in one of your set products. Identify which groups of people are represented in this world and, more importantly, which groups are not represented. Why do you think the producers have chosen to represent these groups and not represent others? What might be the potential impact of the representations presented in this media product?
Positioning the Audience

In order for a media text to be successful it has to target a specific audience and offer them representations they either identify with or agree with. When analysing media texts it is interesting to explore how they have engaged their target audience through offering them a set of representations that they will identify or agree with. For example if we explore the cover of many men’s magazines, such as GQ or Men’s Health, we will see a representation of masculinity that is strong and powerful, using media language to signify the importance and dominance of the male gender.

Q. How are gender roles constructed in your print set texts?

Q. What do these representations suggest about the role of men and women in society?

Q. How has the selection of visuals been used to create these specific representations?
The Medium is the Message

Social commentator Marshall McLuhan coined the term ‘the medium is the message’. You might have heard this before within Media Studies as this is fundamental to the key theoretical framework within the subject. He was exploring how the media form plays a role in shaping the meaning, or message, within a specific media text. When exploring representations and audience responses it is always important to consider what medium the media text is in, and how this might affect the representations on offer.

Q. How might the representations on offer in a music video aimed at a youth audience, differ to those found in a broadsheet newspaper?

Q. Why might these two different mediums offer different representations of similar groups?
Mediating Reality

Media producers create their own reality through a process of selection; they select everything that we the audience see, by physically placing items in the shot, and they select how we see it by the technical codes used. It is sometimes just as important to explore what has not been included, alongside analysing what has been.

Q. David Buckingham has stated that “the media don’t just offer us a window on the world... [they] offer us versions of reality”. Explain what he means in this quote, incorporating examples from your set products as evidence.
Reviewing your Learning

I understand the difference between presenting the world to an audience and re-presenting the world.

I understand representation within media studies explores constructions of reality.

I understand representation and theories around this focus on the selection and construction of materials.

I understand media producers created mediated views of reality within their products.
Gender Issues

There are largely two views within the representation of gender within the media:

• **Essentialist views** - that males and females are different categories with essential features, behaviours and attributes that define them.

• **Social constructionalist views** - that the same features, behaviours and attributes are constructed by society (including the media) and not by nature.

Q. **What are your personal thoughts on this? Do you believe in one more than the other? Can you find research or examples from media texts to support your views?**
Nature or Nurture

A key area of study within the field of Representation is how media products work to make certain images, views or ideologies appear ‘natural’. Stuart Hall noted how repeated representations within the media worked to reinforce the power of certain groups in society. Mainstream media products tend to reinforce the popularist views held in a society during the time it is produced, hence media texts can be used to explore dominant values in society at their period of production.

Task: Choose two of your set texts that were produced in different time periods, compare the values and ideologies present within these texts and explain how these reflect society.

Q. Do you think the media plays a key role in shaping peoples’ views, or do they merely reflect them?
Reviewing your Learning

I understand the representation of gender in the media can shape people's views and opinions.

I understand essentialist views around gender.

I understand social constructionist views around gender.

I understand media producers make choices around how to represent individuals, groups, events and ideas.
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