GCSE Representation

Media Studies

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Why do we care about...
Representation lies at the heart of many media debates. As students of Media Studies we are interested in whether these representations are positive or negative, truthful or false and what impact these might have on audiences and societies.

Groups commonly represented in the Media:
- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Sexuality
- Religion

Re-Presenting the World
A useful way to think about representation is to think of it as the way in which a media text re-presents the world back to the audience. They create the diegetic world of the text to reflect a world that is recognisable to the audience. This process often involves using stereotypes within the text as they are easy to identify and communicate information to the audience in a short space of time.

STEREOTYPES
Stereotypes are everywhere in the Media. It is important to explore why these stereotypes exist and how they may have changed over time.

Q. What stereotypes are commonly associated with these groups in the media?

Q. Carry out a mix of primary and secondary research to find out whether Gerber’s theory is valid in modern day society.

REPRESENTATION
noun: the way in which the media portrays issues, events, individuals, social groups, or sets of beliefs

Gender Representation
Judith Butler and bell hooks
Feminist theorists such as Butler and hooks have explored how the media and images within media texts construct characteristics and behaviours associated with gender. bell hooks explores the role the media has played in supressing black women through their roles and representations in media texts. Whilst Judith Butler explores how gender is a construction that is influenced by representations of men and women within the Media.

Q. Can you find examples of media texts that represent females in a non-stereotypical way? Research the Bechdel Test, then apply this to the last film you watched.

Representation Theory
George Gerber’s Mean World Syndrome
Gerbner explored the potential impact of representations within the Media on audiences. He argued the more an audience member engaged with a media text that represented the world in a negative way (common in police dramas and action/horror films) the more likely it was that the audiences would believe the society in which they live is a dangerous one.

Q. Does the media offer audiences a window on the world?
Hall argues that whilst the media appears to reflect reality they actually construct reality. This is a challenging concept, simplified this refers to the power the media has to shape peoples’ views and beliefs on different groups or ideas within a society, through the way they are portrayed within media texts such as TV programmes and films.

Q. Think about how different newspapers report stories differently based on their political bias.

Stuart Hall
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Hall also explores how important the role of the producer is in constructing representations within media texts. It is important to understand the purpose of a text when exploring this issue. Hall argues the producers encode their own values and ideologies in their texts through their representations of reality.

Q. Think about how different newspapers report stories differently based on their political bias.

Representation Theory
David Gauntlett- ‘Media, Gender and Identity’
Many media theorists such as Gauntlett have explored how representations in the media communicate messages, values and ideas that are adopted by audiences and used to construct their understanding of their own identity as well as the identity of certain groups they see in the Media. These values are reinforced over time and through repeated representations.

Q. Find examples of repeated representations of certain groups within the Media. What might be the potential impact of these?

Representation Key Terms
Preferred Reading
Symbolic Codes
Cultural Imperialism
Gatekeeping
Ideology
Stereotypes
Mediation
Construction
Propaganda
Bias
Hegemony
Archetypes

Can you research the definitions of these key terms, then write them up in your own words, or even make an informative media text about them?