

GCE A LEVEL

WJEC Eduqas GCE A Level in
MEDIA STUDIES

ACCREDITED BY OFQUAL

GLOSSARY



Glossary

ACTION CODE	Something that happens in the narrative that tells the audience that some action will follow, for example in a scene from a soap opera, a couple are intimate in a bedroom and the camera shows the audience the husband's car pulling up at the front of the house.
ACTIVE AUDIENCE	Audiences actively engage in selecting media products to consume and interpreting their meanings.
ANCHORAGE	<p>The words that accompany an image (still or moving) contribute to the meaning associated with that image. If the caption or voice-over is changed then so may the way in which the audience interprets the image. An image with an anchor is a closed text; the audience are given a preferred reading. A text without an anchor is an open text as the audience can interpret it as they wish.</p> <p>The same image of a school in a local newspaper could include a negative or a positive headline, which may change the way in which the same image is viewed by the reader.</p>
APPEAL	The way in which products attract and interest an audience, e.g. through the use of stars, familiar genre conventions etc.
ARC OF TRANSFORMATION	The emotional changes a character goes through in the process of the narrative. The events in the story mean that they will 'transform' by the end of the story.
ASPIRATIONAL	In terms of a media text, one that encourages the audience to want more money, up-market consumer items and a higher social position.
ATTRACT	How media producers create appeal to audiences to encourage them to consume the product.
AUDIENCE CATEGORISATION	How media producers group audiences (e.g. by age, gender ethnicity) to target their products.
AUDIENCE CONSUMPTION	The way in which audiences engage with media products (e.g. viewing a TV programme, playing a video game, reading a blog or magazine). Methods of consumption have changed significantly due to the development of digital technologies.

AUDIENCE INTERPRETATION	The way in which audiences 'read' the meanings in, and make sense of, media products.
AUDIENCE POSITIONING	The way in which media products place audiences (literally or metaphorically) in relation to a particular point of view. For example, audiences may be positioned with a particular character or positioned to adopt a specific ideological perspective.
AUDIENCE RESPONSE	How audiences react to media products e.g. by accepting the intended meanings (preferred reading).
AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION	Where a target audience is divided up due to the diversity and range of programmes and channels. This makes it difficult for one programme to attract a large target audience.
AUDIO	How sound is used to communicate meaning - voice-over, dialogue, music, SFX, etc.
AVATAR	A player's representation of themselves within a game.
BACK STORY	Part of a narrative which may be the experiences of a character or the circumstances of an event that occur before the action or narrative of a media text. It is a device that gives the audience more information and makes the main story more credible.
BINARY OPPOSITES	Where texts incorporate examples of opposite values; for example, good versus evil, villain versus hero. These can be apparent in the characters, narrative or themes.
BRAND IDENTITY	The association the audience make with the brand, for example <i>Chanel</i> or <i>Nike</i> , built up over time and reinforced by the advertising campaigns and their placement.
BROADSHEET	A larger newspaper that publishes more serious news, for example <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> has maintained its broadsheet format.
CAMERA ANGLES	The angle of the camera in relation to the subject. For example, a high angle shot (shot of a character from above) may make them appear more vulnerable.
CAMERA SHOTS	The type of shot and framing in relation to the subject, for example, close-up shots are often used to express emotion.

CAPTION	Words that accompany an image that help to explain its meaning.
CHANNEL IDENTITY	That which makes the channel recognisable to audiences and different from any other channel. Presenters, stars, programme genres and specific programmes all contribute to a channel's identity.
CIRCULATION	The dissemination of media products to audiences/users - the method will depend on the media form e.g. circulation of print magazines, broadcast of television programmes etc.
CONNOTATION	The suggested meanings attached to a sign, e.g., the red car in the advert suggests speed and power.
CONVENTIONS	What the audience expects to see in a particular media text, for example the conventions of science fiction films may include: aliens, scientists, other worlds, gadgets, representations of good and evil, etc. Useful headings to discuss conventions are: characters, setting, iconography, narrative, technical codes and representation.
CONVERGENCE	The coming together of previously separate media industries and/or platforms; often the result of advances in technology whereby one device or platform contains a range of different features. The mobile phone, for example, allows the user to download and listen to music, view videos, tweet artists etc. All this can be done through one portable device.
COVER LINES	These suggest the content to the reader and often contain teasers and rhetorical questions. These relate to the genre of the magazine.
CROSS-PLATFORM MARKETING	In media terms, a text that is distributed and exhibited across a range of media formats or platforms. This may include film, television, print, radio and the Internet.
CULTURAL CAPITAL	The media tastes and preferences of an audience, traditionally linked to social class/background.
DEMOGRAPHIC CATEGORY	A group in which consumers are placed according to their age, sex, income, profession, etc. The categories range from A to E where categories A and B are the wealthiest and most influential members of society.
DENOTATION	The literal meaning of a sign, e.g. the car in the advert is red.

DIEGETIC SOUND	Sound that comes from the fictional world, for example the sound of a gun firing, the cereal being poured into the bowl in an advert, etc.
DISCOURSE	The topics, language and meanings or values behind them within a media text. The discourse of lifestyle magazines, for example, tends to revolve around body image and narcissism.
DISTRIBUTION	The methods by which media products are delivered to audiences, including the marketing campaign. These methods will depend upon the product (for example, distribution companies in the film industry organise the release of the films, as well as their promotion).
DIVERSIFICATION	Where media organisations who have specialised in producing media products in one form move into producing content across a range of forms.
EDITING	The way in which the shots move from one to the other (transitions), e.g. fade, cut, etc. Fast cutting may increase the pace and therefore the tension of the text, for example.
ENCODING AND DECODING	Media producers encode messages and meanings in products that are decoded, or interpreted, by audiences.
ENIGMA CODE	A narrative device which increases tension and audience interest by only releasing bits of information, for example teasers in a film trailer or narrative strands that are set up at the beginning of a drama/film that make the audience ask questions; part of a restricted narrative.
EQUILIBRIUM	In relation to narrative, a state of balance or stability (in Todorov's theory the equilibrium is disrupted and ultimately restored).
ETHNOCENTRIC	A belief in the superiority of one's own ethnic group or culture. For example, a newspaper will be more concerned to cover stories that are closely related to the reader and their concerns. Tabloid and local papers only tend to cover international news stories if they can relate them specifically to their readers.
ETHOS	The beliefs, values and customs of, for example, media organisations. In television, for example, what the channel believes in and what it sees as its role. The ethos is usually set out in the channel's charter.

FAN	An enthusiast or aficionado of a particular media form or product.
FEATURE	In magazine terms, the main, or one of the main, stories in an edition. Features are generally located in the middle of the magazine, and cover more than one or two pages.
FLEXI NARRATIVE	A more complex narrative structure with layers of interweaving storylines. This challenges the audience and keeps them watching.
FOUR CS	This stands for Cross Cultural Consumer Characteristics and was a way of categorising consumers into groups through their motivational needs. The main groups were Mainstreamers, Aspirers, Explorers, Succeeders and Reformers.
FRANCHISE	An entire series of, for example, a film including the original film and all those that follow.
GATE KEEPERS	The people responsible for deciding the most appropriate stories to appear in newspapers. They may be the owner, editor or senior journalists. They will only let the stories most appropriate for the ideology of the paper 'through the gate'.
GENRE	Media texts can often be grouped into genres that all share similar conventions. Science fiction is a genre, as are teenage magazines, etc.
GLOBAL	Worldwide - e.g. a media product with global reach is a product that is distributed around the world.
HEGEMONY	This derives from the theory of cultural hegemony by Antonio Gramsci. Hegemony is the dominance of one group over another, often supported by legitimating norms and ideas. For example, the dominant social position in society is taken by men and the subordinate one by women.
HORIZONTAL INTEGRATION	Where a media conglomerate is made up of different companies that produce and sell similar products, often as a result of mergers. For example a company with interests in film, TV, magazines newspaper.
HOUSE STYLE	The aspects that make a magazine recognisable to its readers every issue. The house style is established through the choice of colour, the layout and design, the font style, the content and the general 'look' of the publication.

HYBRID GENRE	Media texts that incorporate elements of more than one genre and are therefore more difficult to classify are genre hybrids. <i>Dr Who</i> , for example, is a science fiction/fantasy television drama.
HYPODERMIC NEEDLE MODEL	Generally acknowledged to be an out of date media effects theory which suggests that an audience will have a mass response to a media text. The idea is that the media product injects an idea into the mind of an audience who are assumed to be passive and as a result will all respond in the same way.
ICONOGRAPHY	The props, costumes, objects and backgrounds associated with a particular genre; for example, in a police series you would expect to see, uniforms, blue flashing lights, scene of crime tape and police radios.
IDEOLOGY	A set of messages, values and beliefs that may be encoded into media products.
INDEPENDENT FILM	A film made outside of the financial and artistic control of a large mainstream film company. A truly independent film will be privately conceived and funded. However, few films made are really 'independent'. This more commonly refers to a film that is made by a smaller film company on a low budget.
INDEPENDENT RECORD LABEL	A record label that operates without the funding of, and that is not necessarily linked to, a major record label.
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY	A legal concept which refers to creations of the mind for which the owner's rights are recognised. These rights cover such intangible assets as music, literary and artistic works; discoveries and inventions; and words, phrases, symbols, and designs.
INTERACTIVE AUDIENCE	The ways in which audiences can become actively involved with a product, for example by posting a response to a blog or live tweeting during a television programme.
INTERTEXTUAL	Where one media text makes reference to aspects of another text within it. For example, referencing a scene from a film in a television advertisement. Audiences enjoy recognising intertextual references.
INTERTEXTUALITY	Where one media product intertextually references another.

LAYOUT AND DESIGN	The way in which a page has been designed to attract the target audience. This includes the font styles used, the positioning of text and images and the use of colour.
LINEAR NARRATIVE	Where the narrative unfolds in chronological order from beginning to end.
LUDOLOGY	The study of games and those who play them, relevant to video games.
MASCULINITY	The perceived characteristics generally considered to define what it is to be a man. These can change according to sociological and cultural variations
MASS AUDIENCE	The traditional idea of the audience as one large, homogenous group.
MEDIA CONGLOMERATE	A company that owns other companies across a range of media platforms. This increases their domination of the market and their ability to distribute and exhibit their product.
MEDIA FORMS	Types of media products, for example television, newspapers, advertising.
MEDIA LANGUAGE	The specific elements of a media product that communicate meanings to audiences, e.g. visual codes, audio codes, technical codes, language.
MEDIA PLATFORM	The range of different ways of communicating with an audience, for example newspapers, the Internet, and television.
MEDIATION	The way in which a media text is constructed in order to represent a version of reality; constructed through selection, organisation and focus.
MISE-EN-SCENE	In analysis of moving image products, how the combination of images in the frame creates meaning; how individual shots in a film or photograph have been composed.
MISREPRESENTATION	Certain social groups (usually minority groups) may be represented in a way that is inappropriate and not based on reality.
MMORPG	Massively multi-player online role-playing game.

MODE OF ADDRESS	The way in which a media text 'speaks to' its target audience. For example, teenage magazines have a chatty informal mode of address; the news has a more formal mode of address.
NARRATIVE	The 'story' that is told by the media text. All media texts, not just fictional texts, have a narrative. For example, magazines have a clear beginning, middle and end. Most narratives are linear and follow a specific structure (see Todorov).
NEWS AGENDA	The list of stories that may appear in a particular paper. The items on the news agenda will reflect the style and ethos of the paper.
NICHE AUDIENCE	A relatively small audience with specialised interests, tastes, and backgrounds.
NON-DIEGETIC SOUND	Sound that comes from outside the fictional world, for example a voiceover, romantic mood music etc.
NON-LINEAR NARRATIVE	Here the narrative manipulates time and space. It may begin in the middle and then include flashbacks and other narrative devices.
OPEN WORLD	In an open world computer game the player can move freely though the virtual world and is not restricted by levels and other barriers to free roaming.
OPINION LEADERS	People in society who may affect the way in which others interpret a particular media text. With regard to advertising, this may be a celebrity or other endorser recommending a product.
PASSIVE AUDIENCE	The idea (now widely regarded as outdated) that audiences do not actively engage with media products, but passively consume and accept the messages that producers communicate.
PATRIARCHAL CULTURE	A society or culture that is male dominated.
PICK AND MIX THEORY	Suggested by British sociologist and media theorist, David Gauntlett. He asserted the autonomy of the audience and challenged the notion that audiences are immediately affected by what they read. He maintains that audiences are more sophisticated than this and will select aspects of the media texts that best suit their needs and ignore the rest.

PLURALITY	In a media context, this refers to a range of content to suit many people.
POLITICAL BIAS	Where a newspaper may show support for a political party through its choice of stories, style of coverage, cartoons, etc. It may be subtle and implicit or explicit as in the case of the tabloid newspapers on election day.
PRIVILEGED SPECTATOR POSITION	Where the camera places the audience in a superior position within the narrative. The audience can then anticipate what will follow.
PRODUCTION	The process by which media products are constructed.
PRODUCTS	Media texts, including television programmes, magazines, video games, newspapers etc. as well as online, social and participatory platforms.
PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTER	A radio and television broadcaster that is financed by public money (e.g. the licence fee in the UK) and is seen to offer a public service by catering for a range of audiences and providing information, as well as entertainment.
REALISM	A style of presentation that claims to portray 'real life' accurately and authentically.
REGULATOR	A person or body that supervises a particular industry.
REPertoire OF ELEMENTS	Key features that distinguish one genre from another.
REPRESENTATION	The way in which key groups or aspects of society are presented by the media, e.g. gender, race, age, the family, etc. Literally, a re-representation or constructed version of that which is shown.
SELECTION AND COMBINATION	Media producers actively choose elements of media language and place them alongside others to create specific representations or versions of reality.
SEXUAL OBJECTIFICATION	The practice of regarding a person as an object to be viewed only in terms of their sexual appeal and with no consideration of any other aspect of their character or personality.

SIGN/CODE	Something which communicates meaning, e.g., colours, sounds. The meaning of the sign changes according to the context, e.g., the colour red can mean passion, love, danger or speed depending on how and where it is used.
SIMULCAST	The streaming of live radio programmes from the website at the same time as they are broadcast on the radio.
SPECIALISED AUDIENCE	A non-mass, or niche, audience that may be defined by a particular social group (for example young, aspirational females) or by a specific interest (for example skydiving).
SPLASH	The story that is given the most prominence on the front page of a newspaper.
STEREOTYPE	An exaggerated representation of someone or something. It is also where a certain group are associated with a certain set of characteristics, for example all Scotsmen are mean, blondes are dumb, etc. Stereotypes can be quick ways of communicating information in adverts and dramas, e.g. the rebellious teenager in a soap opera, as they are easily recognisable to audiences.
STRIPPED	A technique used in radio and television whereby a certain programme is broadcast at the same time every day. In radio this attracts an audience who associate a particular programme with their daily routine, for example driving home from work.
SUB-GENRE	Where a genre is sub-divided into smaller categories each of which has their own set of conventions. For example, the television drama genre can be sub-divided into teen drama, hospital drama, costume drama, etc.
SUBJECT-SPECIFIC LEXIS	The specific language and vocabulary used to engage the audience. Subject-specific lexis used on the front cover of the magazine will make the reader feel part of the group who belong to the world of that magazine. For example, terminology used on the front covers of gaming magazines.
SYNERGY	The combination of elements to maximise profits within a media organisation or product. For example, where a film soundtrack sells the film and the film sells the soundtrack.

TABLOID	Refers to the dimensions of a newspaper; a tabloid is smaller and more compact in size. However, there are further connotations attached to the term and it also tends to refer to a newspaper whose content focuses on lighter news, for example celebrity gossip, sport and television.
TARGET AUDIENCE	The people at whom the media text is aimed.
TECHNICAL CODES	These are the way in which the text has been produced to communicate meanings and are part of media language (see Section 8).
TEXTUAL POACHING	The way in which audiences or fans may take particular texts and interpret or reinvent them in different ways e.g. by creating fan fiction.
UNDERREPRESENTATION	Certain social groups (usually minority groups) may be rarely represented or be completely absent from media products.
USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY	Suggests that active audiences seek out and use different media texts in order to satisfy a need and experience different pleasures.
VERTICAL INTEGRATION	Vertically integrated companies own all or most of the chain of production and distribution for the product. For example, a film company that also owns a chain of multiplex cinemas to exhibit the film and merchandise outlets.
VIEWPOINTS	Different perspectives in relation to values, attitudes, beliefs or ideologies.
VIRAL MARKETING	Where the awareness of the product or the advertising campaign is spread through less conventional ways including social networks and the Internet. Viral marketing is so named because many of the messages use 'hosts' to spread themselves rapidly, like a biological virus.
VISUAL CODES	The visual aspects of the product that construct meaning and are part of media language, for example clothing, expression, and gesture (see Section 8).
'WINDOW ON THE WORLD'	The idea that media texts, particularly those that present aspects of reality, for example news programmes, are showing the audience the 'real' world as it happens.

Glossary courtesy of Illuminate Publishing and Christine Bell.