Media Studies Media Language

When analysing the **purpose**, **meanings**, **messages** or **effects** of media language, remember to:

STEP 1:

Describe what you see or hear, using present tense

E.g. We **see** an image of Bond holding a gun.

STEP 2:

Use media terminology to identify the technique being used (see right)

E.g. This use of **props**...

STEP 3:

Explain what idea(s) it connotes or signifies (see list below)

E.g. ... **connotes** authority, power and danger

STEP 4:

Explain what it positions the audience to think or feel

E.g. ... **positioning** the audience to think that Bond is strong and heroic.

STEP 5:

Make links to other parts of the text (to build an argument)

E.g. This idea **is enhanced by** Bond's direct mode of address, which signifies his confidence

(Where relevant) **Explain whether it communicates a message or ideology**

E.g. ...reinforcing patriarchal ideology.

COMMON CONNOTATIONS:

anger	authority	confidence	danger	death
fragility	happiness	innocence	intelligence	love
modernity	poverty	power	strength	submission
success	tradition	weakness	wealth	vulnerability

Audio codes	Any sounds used to create meaning.
Connotations	The symbolic meaning of signs / ideas associated with specific elements of a text.
Diegetic & non-diegetic sound	Diegetic sounds exist in the fictional world of the characters (e.g. speech). Non-diegetic sounds can't be heard by characters (e.g. music/voice overs).
Disequilibrium	The part of a story where things go wrong and conflict arises.
Genre codes	Singular elements which help establish the genre (e.g. a gun in an action film).
High/Low-key lighting	High-key lighting is bright and positive Low-key lighting is dark and moody
Media text	A media product, e.g. a music video or TV programme. E.g. *Luther* is a media text.
Media language	The various ways a media text can communicate ideas via sound and image.
Mise-en-scène	How the scene has been arranged, including **setting**, **props**, **dress-codes**, **non-verbal codes** and **lighting**.
Non-verbal codes	How people communicate without words (e.g. facial expressions and body language).
Repertoire of elements	A *group* of elements which help establish the genre (e.g. a gun, chase, explosion, intense music etc. in an action film).
Technical codes	How the text has been technically constructed, including: **camera framing/angles** (**long shot/ mid-shot/close-up/extreme close-up/low-angle shot/high-angle shot** etc.), **editing** (**cuts/cross-cutting/shot-reverse-shot/rapid cutting** etc.)
Visual codes	Anything you can *see* that creates meaning

Codes | Conventions | Connotations

Media Language Glossary

NARRATIVE:

Action code	Something that happens in the narrative that tells the audience that some action will follow (e.g. a gun is drawn).
Binary oppositions	Claude Levi-Strauss's theory that all narratives are based on the conflict of binary oppositions (e.g. good vs. evil).
Disruption (or 'disequilibrium')	Part of Todorov's theory, this is the problem or conflict in the story that disrupts the equilibrium e.g. a murder.
Enigma code	Mysterious elements that tease the audience and encourage them to ask questions.
Equilibrium	A state of balance or stability (in Todorov's theory the equilibrium is disrupted and later restored).
Narrative	The 'story' that is told by the media text. All media texts, not just fictional texts, have a narrative. Most narratives are linear and follow a specific structure.
Propp's "Spheres of Action"	According to Propp's theory, most narratives centre on a **hero** battling a **villain** (with the aid of a **helper**) to save a **princess** (damsel in distress). These can be referred to as "Proppian hero" etc.
ADDITIONAL NARRATIVE TERMS: arc of transformation / back story / flexi narrative / linear narrative / non-linear narrative	

GENRE:

Conventions	What audiences expect to see in a particular genre.
Genre	Media texts can be grouped into genres that all share similar conventions, e.g. horror films.
Hybrid genre	Media texts that incorporate elements of more than one genre e.g. action-comedy
Iconography	Visual elements associated with a genre.
Realism (or *verisimilitude*)	A style of presentation that claims to portray 'real life' accurately and authentically. Different genres have different amounts of realism (or "verisimilitude").
Sub-genre	Where a large genre is sub-divided into smaller genres, each of which has their own set of conventions. For example, horror can be sub-divided into vampire/zombie/slasher etc.

ADDITIONAL TERMS:

Anchorage	The words (or sounds) that accompany an image (still or moving) give the meaning associated with that image (e.g. a negative headline or mood music).
Composition	How the elements onscreen appear in respect to each other and within the frame, itself – e.g. placed in the **background** and **foreground.**
Ideology	A set of messages, values and beliefs.
Intertextuality	Where one media text references another media text.
Mode of address	The way in which a media text 'speaks to' its target audience, e.g. "a chatty/informal mode of address", "a formal mode of address" or "direct mode of address".
Montage (& Photomontage)	Selecting, editing and piecing together separate sections of film (or images) to form a continuous whole.
Sign/code	Something which communicates meaning, e.g. colours.
Tagline	This is the short phrase or slogan that appears in trailers and on posters. It gives a clue to the genre and storyline of the film and often includes an enigma.
Typography	The style of font/lettering. **Serif fonts** like Times New Roman are more traditional and formal, while **sans-serif fonts** (like Calibri) are more modern and *sometimes* artistic.
Viewpoints	Different perspectives in relation to values, attitudes, beliefs or ideologies.

ADDITIONAL TERMS cont. (see full glossary for details):

General terms:	**Background / foreground / denotation / media forms / media platforms / media products / *discourse* /**
Magazine terminology	**Masthead / cover lines / house style / feature / layout & design / subject-specific lexis / rhetorical question**
Moving image terminology	**Audio / camera angles / camera shots / editing / privileged spectator position**
Newspaper terminology	**Broadsheet / caption / colloquial language / headline / masthead / red top / splash / tabloid**
Video game terminology	***MMORPG* / *open world* / *avatar***

MEDIA LANGUAGE (A-Level Theory)

Are you exploring a text's **connotations**? *Then use **Barthes** (T12)*	Barthes argues that texts communicate their meanings through a process of **signification**. Signs can function at the level of **denotation**, which involves the 'literal' or common- sense meaning of the sign, and at the level of **connotation**, which involves the symbolic meanings associated with - or suggested by - the sign.
	"Roland Barthes argues that texts communicate on a connotative level. We can see this in … which connotes…"
Does the text repeat an idea or '**myth**' that often appears in media texts? *Then use **Barthes** (T13)*	Barthes also argues that constructed meanings, when repeated often enough, can come to seem natural or self-evident, achieving the status of **myth** through a process of **naturalisation**.
	"Roland Barthes proposes that ideas can be repeated so often in the media, that they become naturalised as what he terms 'myths'. This applies to … which reinforces the idea that … - a myth commonly perpetuated in mainstream media."
Does the text follow the **equilibrium/ disequilibrium/new equilibrium** narrative structure? *Then use **Todorov** (T14)*	Todorov proposes that all narratives share a basic structure, which involves a movement from one state of **equilibrium** to another. These two states of equilibrium are separated by a period of imbalance or **disequilibrium**.
	"Todorov proposes that all narratives share a basic structure, which is centred on disequilibrium. This is true of …, where the text's equilibrium - … - is disrupted by …. A new equilibrium emerges at the end when…"
Does the **disequilibrium**'s resolution communicate a message/**ideology**? *Then use **Todorov** (T15)*	Todorov also argues that the way narratives are resolved can have particular **ideological** significance.
	"Todorov argues that a narrative's resolution often has ideological significance. We can see this in the ending of…, which appears to support the message that…"
Does the text follow the **conventions** of a **genre**? *Then use **Neale** (T16)*	Neale points out that genres are dominated by repetition.
	"According to Neale, genres are dominated by repetition. This is clearly evident in …, which makes heavy use of conventions/tropes from the… genre."
Does the text **deviate** from or "**reinvent**" the **genre** it belongs to? *Then use **Neale** (T17)*	However, Neale also argues that genres are also marked by difference, variation, and change - they develop and vary as they borrow from (and overlap with) one another.
	"However, Neale also argues that genres are marked by difference, variation and change. This is supported by … which deviates from the … genre by …"
Has the text's **genre** been affected by its **context**? *Then use **Neale** (T18)*	Neale holds the position that genres exist within specific economic, institutional and industrial contexts (effectively: who financed it and what was popular at the time).
	"Neale's theory - that genres exist within specific contexts - is true of …, which has clearly been influenced by …"
Does the text's narrative make use of **binary oppositions**? *Then use **Lévi-Strauss** (T19)*	Lévi-Strauss argues that texts can best be understood by examining their underlying structure; meaning is dependent upon (and produced through) pairs of oppositions.
	"Lévi-Strauss argues that meaning is constructed in texts through binary oppositions. This is evident in … which establishes the binary opposition …"
Does the resolution of these **binary oppositions** communicate a message/**ideology**? *Then use **Lévi-Strauss** (T20)*	Lévi-Strauss proposes that the way in which these **binary oppositions** are resolved can have particular **ideological** significance (it communicates a message).
	"Lévi-Strauss also argues that the resolution of binary oppositions communicates a message or ideology. In the case of …, it could be argued that the binary opposition reinforces the message that…"
Is there any confusion between reality and media construct? *Then use **Baudrillard** (T21)*	Baudrillard holds the position that we live in a postmodern age, where it is no longer possible to distinguish between reality and (media) simulation (the **simulacra**). We are immersed in a world of images, which no longer refer to anything 'real', and the boundaries between the 'real' world and the world of the media have collapsed. Media images have come to seem more 'real' than the reality they supposedly represent, creating a sense of **hyperreality**.
	"According to Baudrillard, we live in a post-modern age of simulacra, where audiences have difficulty distinguishing between reality and the hyper-real images presented in the media. This could be true in the case of …, where …"