

Media Studies | Representation

STEP 1: WHAT DO YOU SEE/HEAR? WHAT DOES IT CONNOTE?

Describe what you see or hear, using media terminology

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

Explain what idea(s) it connotes or signifies

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

STEP 2: EXPLAIN HOW THIS REPRESENTS THE SUBJECT

Is it a **positive** or **negative** representation?

E.g. ... This constructs a positive representation of men, by making him seem brave.

Is the representation **empowering** or **disempowering**?

E.g. ... This constructs an empowering representation of men, by making him seem dominant.

Does it **reinforce** or **subvert** specific **stereotypes**?

E.g. ... This reinforces the patriarchal stereotype that men are dominant and aggressive.

Has any group been **over-represented** or **under-represented**?

(Is the text dominated by a certain group? Has a group been excluded/left-out/ignored?)

Does it **misrepresent** (deceive), **objectify** (for the **male gaze**) or present a group as **different** / "other"?

STEP 3: DEVELOP YOUR POINTS, WHERE POSSIBLE

Does the representation **support** or **challenge** a specific **message** or **ideology**?

(E.g. ... challenging patriarchal ideology / supporting feminist ideology)

Does it help **construct** a **narrative** or **story**?

*(E.g. This constructs her as the strong, powerful **hero** in the narrative)*

Does it **appeal** to a certain **audience** (e.g. by using certain role models)?

(E.g. This has been constructed to appeal to its male target audience, who may look up to...)

Representation	How the media presents or portrays individuals or groups (i.e. gender, race/ethnicity) places, issues and events.
Feminism	The movement fighting <i>for</i> gender equality and <i>against</i> the patriarchal oppression of women.
Objectification	The action of degrading someone (usually women) to a mere (sexualised) object
Male gaze	The idea that most media texts are constructed from the point-of-view of (and appeal to) men—often by sexualising women for a male audience
Patriarchal ideology	The idea that men are superior to women
Patriarchal Stereotypes (Men)	Strong, dominant, confident, powerful, independent, aggressive, logical, decisive, unemotional, practical and are the providers or "breadwinners".
Patriarchal Stereotypes (Women)	Weak, submissive, vulnerable, domestic (do the housework/look after the children), emotional, indecisive and that their worth is dependent on their physical beauty or appearance (often objectified for the pleasure of the male gaze).
Patriarchy	A society or culture that is male dominated.
Reinforce (stereotypes)	When a media text repeats, uses or supports a stereotype.
Stereotype	An exaggerated and over-simplified idea about someone or something (e.g. "men are unemotional").
Subvert (stereotypes)	When a media text goes against, challenges or opposes a stereotype.

Stereotypes | Ideology | Mediation

Representation Glossary

FROM EDUQAS MEDIA STUDIES GLOSSARY OF TERMS

TERMS MARKED WITH ASTERIX (*) ONLY REQUIRED AT A-LEVEL

Colonialism	The practice of nations settling in and controlling other countries to exploit them economically.
Colonial ideology	The racist idea—underpinning colonialism—that “inferior” nations & cultures should be ruled by “superior” ones.
Colonial stereotypes (white Europeans)	Wealthy, intelligent, civilized, saviours, sophisticated, law-abiding, superior and “normal” (an ethnocentric representation).
Colonial stereotypes (“other”/non-white cultures)	Poor, uneducated, uncivilized, helpless, primitive, criminal/violent/dangerous, inferior and different/unusual or “exotic”.
Encoding & decoding	Media producers encode messages and meanings in products that are decoded, or interpreted, by audiences.
Ethnocentric	A belief in the superiority of one's own ethnic group or culture.
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 (e.g. hegemonic masculinity)
Ideology	A set of messages, values and beliefs that may be encoded into media products. (Essentially, a way of thinking about politics or society, shared by a group).
Masculinity	The perceived characteristics generally considered to define what it is to be a man. These can differ according to sociological variations and cultural changes.
Mediation	The way in which a media text is constructed in order to represent the producer of the text's version of reality; constructed through selection, organisation and focus.
Misrepresentation	Certain social groups (usually minority groups) may be represented in a way that is inappropriate and not based on reality.

Persona	The image or personality that someone, for example a celebrity, presents to the audience.
Political bias (left/right-wing bias)	Where a newspaper may show support for a political party (or ideas) through its choice of stories, style of coverage, cartoons, etc. Left-wing bias may be demonstrated through liberal ideas and support for the Labour party Right-wing bias may be demonstrated through traditional ideas and support for the Conservative party
Realism	A style of presentation that claims to portray 'real life' accurately and authentically.
Representation	The way in which key sections of society are presented by the media, e.g. gender, race, age, the family, etc.
Selection & 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.
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.
Underrepresentation	Certain social groups (usually minority groups) may be rarely represented or be completely absent from media products.
Viewpoints	Different perspectives in relation to values, attitudes, beliefs or ideologies.
'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.

REPRESENTATION THEORY (For A-Level)

<p>Does the text stereotype people in any way?</p> <p>Then use Hall (T31)</p>	<p>Stuart Hall argues that representation creates meaning through language (which is a system of signs and codes), often stereotyping people by reducing them to a few simple characteristics or traits.</p> <p><i>"...This narrow selection of signs and codes reinforces Stuart Hall's theory that stereotyping reduces people to a few simple characteristics or traits."</i></p>
<p>Does the text's use of stereotypes, demonstrate an inequality of power (e.g. patriarchal or colonial ideology)?</p> <p>Then use Hall (T32)</p>	<p>Stuart Hall argues that stereotyping tends to occur where there are inequalities of power.</p> <p><i>"Stuart Hall argues that stereotyping tends to occur where there are inequalities of power. This is applicable to ..., which reinforces many stereotypes of..."</i></p>
<p>Does the text objectify women?</p> <p>Then use van Zoonen (T25)</p>	<p>van Zoonen also asserts that the display of women's bodies - as objects to be looked at - is a core element of western patriarchal culture.</p> <p><i>"...By drawing attention to the women in this way, we could argue that the text reinforces male hegemony, as Liesbet van Zoonen argues that the objectification of women is a core element of western patriarchal culture."</i></p>
<p>Are you analysing a historical text that represents gender?</p> <p>Then use Gauntlett (T29)</p>	<p>Gauntlett argues that in the past, the media tended to convey singular, straightforward messages about gender, particularly in communicating ideal types of male and female identities.</p> <p><i>"Gauntlett argues that – in the past – media texts often conveyed narrow, straightforward messages about male and female identities. We can see evidence of this in ..., where ..."</i></p>
<p>Are you analysing a contemporary representation of gender that challenges stereotypes or gender "norms"?</p> <p>Then use Gauntlett (T29)</p>	<p>Gauntlett argues that people construct their identities through the media (and the media provide us with 'tools' or resources to do so). He argues that contemporary media texts offer a variety of different gender identities, which audiences can "pick and mix" from.</p> <p><i>"Gauntlett argues that media now offer a diverse range of gender identities, which audiences can "pick and mix" from. This is evident in... where..."</i></p>
<p>Are you analysing two (or more) media texts from different time periods (or countries/cultures), which carry different messages about gender?</p> <p>Then use van Zoonen (T24)</p>	<p>van Zoonen proposes that gender is constructed through discourse (the way it is discussed and treated in a culture), which means that the meaning of gender varies according to its cultural context.</p> <p><i>"In the past, it was normal to think of men/women as being..., whereas, today such views are considered... This reinforces Liesbet van Zoonen's theory that gender is constructed through discourse and that its meaning varies according to its cultural and historical context."</i></p>
<p>Is the representation of gender likely to be read differently today (by "a contemporary audience") than it was in the past?</p> <p>Then use van Zoonen (T24)</p>	<p>van Zoonen proposes that gender is constructed through discourse (the way it is discussed and treated in a culture), which means that the meaning of gender varies according to historical context.</p> <p><i>"[Describe an historical text, which displays a dated/sexist representation of gender]. In the past [describe past attitude/belief/value about gender], whereas today [describe how this attitude/belief/value has changed]. This reinforces Liesbet van Zoonen's theory that gender is constructed through discourse and that its meaning varies according to its historical context."</i></p>
<p>Does the text display men's bodies?</p> <p>Then use van Zoonen (T26)</p>	<p>van Zoonen holds the position that men's bodies are constructed differently to women's in mainstream culture. Whereas women are frequently objectified, visual and narrative codes often present men's bodies as spectacle – powerful and impressive.</p> <p><i>"...reinforces van Zoonen's argument that the male body is often presented as "spectacle", which differs from how women's bodies are objectified for the male gaze."</i></p>
<p>Does the text challenge patriarchal oppression?</p> <p>Then use bell hooks (T27)</p>	<p>bell hooks advocates the view that feminism is not the struggle for gender equality (as this may only benefit wealth, white women) but a struggle to end sexist/patriarchal oppression and the ideology of domination.</p> <p><i>"It could be argued that ... is a feminist text as bell hooks argues that feminism is a struggle to end patriarchal oppression, and ... does this by..."</i></p>
<p>Does the text emphasise a group's differences or 'otherness'?</p> <p>Then use Hall (T33)</p>	<p>Hall maintains the position that any racial groups that may be considered subordinate (or are excluded from the mainstream) are often constructed as different or 'other' in mainstream culture (e.g. through ethnocentrism – presenting one's own ethnicity as the norm).</p> <p><i>"Stuart Hall argues that groups can be subordinated through constructing them as alien or "other". This is evident in the ..., where ..."</i></p>
<p>Does the text feature working-class women or women from racial and ethnic minorities?</p> <p>Then use bell hooks (T28)</p>	<p>bell hooks asserts that race and class (as well as sex) determine the extent to which individuals are exploited, discriminated against or oppressed.</p> <p><i>"bell hooks argues that the representation of gender is also affected by an individual's race and class. This is true in ..., where ..."</i></p>