

Perth High School
SQA Higher Media

**The Key Aspects
and Media Analysis Glossary**

Media Analysis

Media Analysis involves the study of media texts in terms of Fiction (*name text and/or medium*) film. You should develop skills of deconstructing a range of media texts and analysing in detail their relationship to social, institutional and audience contexts. You should develop independent critical thinking skills which will enable you to question the content and purpose of the media messages.

The analysis of all media texts will develop the knowledge and understanding of the key aspects of Media Studies, the main critical tools in the analysis of media texts:

- **The Role of the Media**
- **Categories**
- **Language**
- **Narrative**
- **Representation**
- **Audience**
- **Institution and Technology**
- **Society**

The Role of the Media

The analysis of the role of the media is a new aspect of this award and one which underlies all of the other key aspects. Learners will be expected to be able to discuss the role of the media in terms of how it:

Meets needs (information, education, entertainment)

Influences behaviour and attitudes (intentionally, unintentionally)

Achieves particular purposes (profit, promotion, public service).

The role that the media play is wide ranging.

At a basic level it is clear that the main role or purpose could be seen to be that of **entertainment**, building on the Reithian public service broadcasting ethos **of 'inform, educate and entertain'**.

Further analysis relating to the more complex role of the media reveal that it can also be:

- **To perpetuate and maintain dominant ideologies:** this can relate to representations and narrative. It could be argued that many of the institutions that create media reflect the dominant ideologies within a nation. The fact that they are controlled internally and externally by further institutions also could be seen to perpetuate certain ideologies.
- **To maintain status quo within a nation state** – through a continual re-presentation of ideas, codes and conventions media institutions could be seen to be maintaining a set of rules and standards. Through criticism of change and creating 'moral panics' the media could be seen to be maintaining dominant ideas within society and perpetuating certain myths and ideologies.
- **To legitimise and socialise the activities of groups:** it could be argued that the media through representations and narrative has a role in setting public agendas and presenting what is acceptable. This hegemonic process of 'normalisation' of certain activities by groups over time results in the general acceptance of behaviour. This could be further analysed through discussions concerning representations of different groups within society and what effect these have on an audience.
- **To allow groups within society to access elites:** the internet and new media is increasing the ability for non-elite groups within society to feel that they are communicating with the elites. Through blogs, tweeting, online polls, comments

pages and opinion polls the media in all its forms has increased access to the notion of the 'public sphere'.

- **To act as a gate keeper:** this is the idea that the media act as a means of selecting what is appropriate for an audience based on what is perceived to be acceptable. This is an institutional factor whereby notions of 'newsworthiness' and 'in the public interest' come into play. Discussions concerning who are the gatekeepers could be related to what representations are used within what narratives across the media.
- **To act as a fourth estate:** to act as the 'checks and balances' concerning government and other institutions within society. The fact that the media itself is an institution and is regulated by these other institutions is something that must be considered when discussing this idea.
- **To build national identity:** the media, through reporting, retelling and reflecting our society, could be seen to be creating and perpetuating certain ideas about a nation's identity. The fact that the media is the main way that we see others also allows us to define who we are not. Discussions concerning who we are and how the media have constructed us are useful when considering audience and the effect representations have on us.
- **To develop and maintain a culture:** it is through creating events and shared stories then retelling them that the media create and maintain a culture. Events like the 2012 Olympics or the last night of the Proms or the 2014 FIFA World Cup create and maintain our culture and create shared histories. Discussions relating to key events can help to highlight this.

This is not an exhaustive list but is a starting point when considering the role the media play. The course assessment will ask learners to discuss this in a fairly broad way so broad approaches to the analysis of the role of the media through future activities will be encouraged.

You can find out further information at <http://www.sociology.org.uk/cload.htm>.

Categories

This relates to the type of texts you will analyse (or create). You will explore the different types of media that exist, which forms and genres they are presented in, and their purpose, style and tone. In doing so, you will build confidence in categorising texts for the purpose of analysis (or creation).

The categories include:

MEDIUM (e.g. *print, television, radio, film, internet*)

PURPOSE (e.g. *to inform, to entertain, to persuade, to educate, to gain profit, to politicise an issue or be subversive/rebellious*)

FORM (e.g. *drama, light entertainment, above or below the line advertising, newspaper, magazine, film trailer, outside broadcast, television news*)

GENRE (e.g. *science fiction, soap opera, documentary, game show, broadsheet, western, chick flick, buddy film, period drama, rom-com, horror*)

TONE (e.g. *serious, comic, tongue-in-cheek, ironic, formal, informal, objective, personal, scientific*)

STYLE (e.g. *realist, expressionist, conventional, unconventional, traditional, modern, dark, lavish/flamboyant, fly-on-the-wall,)*

OTHER CATEGORIES (e.g. *nationality, target audience, director, star, public sector, cult, awards, viewing figures*)

Advice

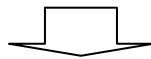
- Write an opening paragraph using all the applicable categories from above.
- Choose two categories most appropriate to the text for a detailed analysis.
- Link your answer to target audience and institution.
- Cross reference to other key aspects and mention technology if appropriate.

Language

This relates to the meanings generated by the texts you will analyse (or create). You will explore the various ways in which meanings are manipulated across a range of media. In doing so, you will build confidence in creating meaning in your own texts.

You should be able to demonstrate skills in identifying signs and codes and their denotations and connotations:

DESCRIBE



Signs

Sign – word, object, image and sound which communicate meaning.

BREAKDOWN



Cultural/Technical Codes

Cultural codes – system of signs whose meaning is shared by members of a culture, e.g. dress/costume, gesture, mise-en-scene, intertextual reference. (Often associated with cultural ideologies.)

Technical codes – specific to media, e.g. *A fade-in is an editing code and may connote the beginning, in print sans serif is a typographic code and may connote modernity.*

EXPLAIN MEANING (DECODE)



Denotation/Connotation

Denotation – (the facts present in a text or image) – the description/definition of a sign, e.g. jeans, fade-in.

Connotation – the meaning associate with the sign, e.g. jeans connote informality, fade-in may connote a beginning.

REASON FOR INCLUSION



Motivation

To aid understanding, to tell the story, for realism, to conform to style for connotations, to engage audience, to move the story on, for intertextual reference, to promote preferred readings (what the maker wants the audience to think).

DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS

**Polysemy**

The idea that a sign can have several different meanings at one time, e.g. by the reader decoding the same sign using different codes. A building on fire could be decoded as arson, accident or natural disaster.

NARROWING DOWN INTERPRETATION

**Anchorage**

A way of 'tying down' meaning. Without anchorage meaning could be polysemic, open to various interpretations, e.g. a picture of a building on fire with the caption 'Gas Leak Destroys Home' ties down meaning.
Music can anchor mood in a film, a voice-over can anchor meaning to moving image.

THE USE OF SIGNS AND CODES

**Conventions/ Encoding / Register**

Conventions – standard way in which signs and codes are used in different genre, e.g. interviews, voice-overs, talking heads, vox pops are conventions of documentary. In a newspaper conventions would adhere to house style, e.g. layout, character formatting, text, page size.

Encoding – the processes by which media producers construct meaning in a text by the use of signs and codes. The selection of signs and codes that illustrate the preferred reading and the de-selection of those that do not, e.g. the editing out of unpleasant views in a TV programme to make a place seem more attractive.

Register – the uses of language in a way appropriate to the audience, e.g. rap music for a young audience, complex vocabulary for an intellectual audience.

Beyond Simple Analysis

- Types of signs:
arbitrary, icon, index, symbol.
- Semiotics (how we read signs):
 - Referential code – understanding is based on general knowledge, e.g. a picture/statue of a historical figure.
 - Signifier – the physical form of the sign, e.g. BBC
 - Signified – the concept associated with the signifier, e.g. BBC equals quality.

- Ideology:

A set of beliefs shared by members of a cultural group influencing the way their societies are run and the rules by which their lives are lived, e.g. democracy and monogamy are ideologies in western society. (Integrates with Representation.)
- Myth:

A story which a culture tells about itself and which explains its history and culture.

E.g. Romantic representation of Scotland as peopled by kilted warriors in rugged landscapes or universal stories which express truths about human existence, e.g. the hero's journey in which the young hero undergoes a major struggle and moves to adulthood. (Integrates with Narrative and Representation.)
- Discourses:

Systematic ways of representing content in a media language so as to express particular ideologies or myths, e.g. nationalistic discourses in sports coverage or the 'tartan' discourse in travel brochures for Scotland (Integrates with Narrative and Representation.)

Advice

- Choose a short extract of the text to analysis in detail, e.g. *the opening sequence of a programme or front page of a newspaper*.
- Analyse the use of cultural/technical codes in detail (denotation/connotation).
- Discuss anchorage.
- Discuss the text as a whole and compare (e.g. conventions, mode of address) to others if appropriate.
- Integrate with other key aspects.
- Discuss technology where appropriate.

Narrative

How fictional and factual stories are shaped and organised into a sequence; the manipulation of space, time, and point-of-view in narratives. Every media text has a narrative.

Story: The actual order of events as they took place in the text, i.e. the reader's reconstruction of events.	Plot: How the maker/producer arranges these events, e.g. the plot could tell the story as a flashback.
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Narrative Structures/Codes/Conventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equilibrium (normality)/disruption/return to equilibrium (normality) • Chronological/flashback/forward • Multiple story-lines • Interwoven story-lines • Fragmentation • Episodic story-lines (TV serial and series) • Investigation (interview, observation, presentation of data)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The resolution of the narrative in relation to representations, ideology and myth.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meaning of the narrative, e.g. the moral of the story or the result of the investigation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conventions or devices used to tell the story, e.g. voice-overs, point-of-view, format, colour, mise-en-scene.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical/cultural codes used that affect the narrative, e.g. cropping, soft focus.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience engagement, e.g. cliff hangers, teasers, enigmas, genre, stars. Strategies used to 'hook' the audience and develop the story i.e. move the story on.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effect of the institution on the narrative and its need to make profit, e.g. genre, finance, bias, preferred reading. And the effect of external constraints, e.g. market position/share, type of market and competition.

Beyond Simple Analysis

Application of theory:

- A state of equilibrium – disruption of the equilibrium by some action – a recognition that there has been some disruption – an attempt to repair the disruption – a reinstatement of equilibrium (Tzvetan Todorov's).
- The actions of the characters in the story and the consequences of these actions – villain – donor – helper - princess – dispatcher – hero – false hero (Vladimir Propp)
- Binary oppositions – the theory that you cannot understand good if you don't understand evil, e.g. heroes and villains (Levi-Strauss).

Narrative Codes:

- Enigmatic or hermeneutic code – when the narrative poses a question, the audience wants to know the answer.
- Semic code – the way in which characters, objects and settings take on particular meaning. A grave look on a newsreader's face may indicate a report on a disaster, the colour and length of a dress may determine a woman's character.
- Symbolic code – textual elements that carry ideological or mythical meaning, e.g. kilted warriors in **Braveheart**. Codes that signify binary opposition (good/evil, male/female, old/young), bad things happen on rainy days.
- Cultural code – references which come from cultural knowledge, e.g. William Wallace is a hero to Scottish people.
- Referential code – references which come from common knowledge, e.g. smoke may signify a fire. References to history, geography, entertainment, politics etc.
- Proairetic, or action code – codes of behaviour we understand because we have seen them before. A hand going to a gun means trouble, someone getting ready for bed means it is night time.

(Roland Barthes)

Advice

- Discuss the type of narrative structure and the narrative codes used and relate to categories, genre and conventions.
- Analyse point of view (first person, third person, single or multiple).
- Discuss treatment, e.g. objective (audience is an observer), subjective (audience is treated as a participant), restricted narrative (the spectator views events via one particular character), omniscient (the spectator views all, even things no character sees), register.
- Manipulation of time and space (how events are organised).
- Discuss technical/cultural codes (i.e. integrate Language).
- Compare to other narratives/texts where appropriate (intertextualise).
- Would the audience have pre-conceived ideas and would different people in the audience interpret the story in different ways (i.e. integrate Audience).
- Discuss appropriate technology used to tell the story.
- Integrate with other key aspects.

Representation

How and why the media select particular representations of people, places, events ideas and themes. Such representations may be stereotyped (instantly recognisable), e.g. tartan images of Scotland.

Concepts of Representation			
The process of translating ideological concepts into words, sounds and images.	The continual re-presenting of stereotypes.	The presenting of images in new ways (going against stereotype).	A question of who represents whom and for what purpose.

Mediation
<p>Ways in which the media select, interpret and represent social, economic, political and cultural events.</p> <p>Consider the effect of target audience, regulatory controls, sources of funding, ownership and news values on the maker's (institution) selection of what reaches the audience.</p> <p>Consider the role of the media in creating and perpetuating representations.</p> <p>Consider the reason and method of selection or de-selection, e.g. to create bias by selective editing.</p>

Discourses
<p>Texts should be examined for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressions of shared systems of meaning such as ideologies and myths. • Dominant or oppositional discourses which reflect struggles between differing groups in society. • The relationship between the real world and the representations in the text. • Do other texts reinforce these representations? (Intertextualise)

Beyond Simple Analysis

- Application of theory:
 - The actions of the characters in the story and the consequences of these actions – villain – donor – helper – princess – dispatcher – hero – false hero – father (Vladimir Propp).
 - Binary oppositions – the theory that you cannot understand good if you don't understand evil, e.g. heroes and villains (Levis-Strauss).

Advice

- Analyse people, places, events, ideas comparing to stereotypes.
- Analyse dangers of stereotyping if appropriate.
- Give examples of how representations are conveyed by use of technical/cultural codes. Discuss textual conventions.
- Examine and question discourses, ideology, myths and mediation.
- Discuss why the institution chose the representations in this particular text, e.g. to engage audience (through identification etc.), to create bias (preferred reading).
- Discuss the selection/de-selection, by the institution, of the representations in terms of creating a construct and compare their relationship to the real world.
- Compare similar representations in other texts.
- Integrate with other key aspects.

Audience

Without an audience, media itself would cease to exist. Every message, through every medium, is designed with an audience in mind. This is an essential starting point for both Analysing and Creating Media. Every creative decision should bear in mind the needs of the target audience.

Identify Target Audience

The audience or audiences may be identified by the following features in a text:

- Categories
- Access (e.g. channel/ scheduling/certification)
- Intertextual references
- Narrative codes
- Discourses
- Commercialisation of product
- Relate to Institution (external controls), e.g. type of market (niche market – narrows, targets and specialises audiences)

Mode of Address

How a text speaks to its audience:

- Direct/indirect
- Individual/collective
- Omniscient/restricted
- Subjective/objective
- Register

Preferred Readings

The meaning of the text that the maker/producer hopes the audience will accept, the idea that texts contain messages that support mainstream ideologies, e.g. a news story which presents protesters as disrupting social order. Different newspapers – because of political allegiance – will present the same information with a different bias, i.e. they will have different preferred readings.

Differential Decoding

How audiences actually read texts. This may be completely different to the preferred reading of the maker, e.g. an anti-smoking ad will not stop all its audience from smoking.

Different individuals or groups react differently to a text.

Consider:

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnic background
- Education/knowledge
- Experience
- Affiliation/Identification to different groups

Text	Encoding	Preferred Reading	Differential Decoding
A maker produces a text in order to send a message and, generally, make a profit.	The message is created by encoding – the selection of signs and codes that represent the maker’s ideology. Putting the message into a format the receiver can easily decode, e.g. a text message.	The maker wants the audience to interpret the text by use of preferred reading.	Different people in the audience will interpret the text in different ways. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dominant decoding • oppositional decoding

Depending on the medium, audience could also be analysed in terms of:

- ratings
- box office
- circulation/distribution
- social classification categories
- lifestyle
- subcultures.

Beyond Simple Analysis

- Application of readership reception theory – the study of how audiences interpret texts in relationship to how they receive the text, e.g. ethnographic studies which look at family and peer consumption; effects of social class, gender, ethnicity, taste; where the text is consumed, e.g. at home, in a cinema.

Advice

Identify the target audience/s in terms of:

- Categories, e.g. genre
- Intertextual reference, e.g. other texts the audience may have seen which attract them to this one, like the same stars or director
- Narrative
- Discourses
- Representations
- Institution – external controls (market, competition)
- Analyse mode of address (there could be several)
- What would the maker like the audience to think? (preferred reading)
- Do different people or groups react differently to the text?(differential decoding)
- Consider audience enjoyment.
- Integrate with other key aspects.
- How does the audience receive the text? (technology)

Institutions and Technology

This key aspect refers to the creators and conditions of production from which the text has emerged. The points for discussion in this key aspect are wide-ranging and impossible to include here fully. You should use internet sources to add to your body of knowledge about the makers of texts in order to analyse the impact that institutional factors have had in the shaping of their texts. As with the other key aspects, you should begin to see how institutional constraints will impact on your planning for making media text(s) of your own.

External Constraints	
Legal Constraints	E.g. Statutory (Acts of Parliament), e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex Discrimination Act • Racial Discrimination Act Copyright laws Libel laws Health and Safety Laws Employment Legislation Restrictions to locations
Self-Regulatory/Codes of Practice	E.g. Press Complaints Commission Broadcasting Complaints ASA (Advertising Standards Authority) Guidelines
Market Controls	E.g. Audiences buy media products Advertisers buy access to these audiences Market structures can also restrict media messages Type and size of market Competition
Societal Controls	E.g. Public opinion Gate-keeping and changing perceptions of media texts Censorship and Public Decency
Technology/Materials	E.g. The ability with new DTP packages to copycat publications or produce new magazines cheaply Pirating

Internal Constraints

- The role of ownership
- Type of ownership, e.g. entrepreneurial, conservative.
- Finance/budget
- Internal operation, e.g. editorial policy, budgets, the control of senior appointees. Whether it is pro-active, reactive, innovative etc.
- Quality of staff and technology
- Reputation/ Image
- Company – remit, mission statement, logo, slogan.

Beyond simple analysis

- Draw conclusions of the effect of constraints on the text discussing possible consequences, e.g. cultural imperialism.

Advice

- Who produced the text? Are they linked to other companies? Who financed the production? (If appropriate consider market structures, e.g. monopoly, oligopoly and factors which affect these structures such as media conglomerates, media moguls, new technology.)
- What effect do ownership, finance and market structures have on the text?
- How was the text distributed? (Consider technology.) Did this have an effect on the audience?
- Did certification, scheduling, distribution restrict the audience?
- Analyse any other effects on the text such as legal constraints, the watershed, taste etc.
- Integrate with other key aspects.

Society

Like audience and institutions, society is a contextual factor that affects the way that media content is produced, received and/or responded to.

You should be able to describe factors that relate to the time and place in which specific examples of media content are made and/or consumed. You should also be able to analyse in detail how these factors may have affected, or been affected by, the production, reception or response to the content.

These factors could include:

Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• technology• points of view• ideas• history• events• trends• politics• other relevant factors.

Media Analysis Glossary

This glossary of media terminology is for further student reference.

action code (also proairetic code)	codes of behaviour we understand because we have seen them before, e.g. a hand going for a gun means trouble, a look between a male and female hints at romance
actuality	sounds and images that are obtained on location rather than created in a studio
aesthetic	the way the text creates appreciation in the audience
agenda-setting	the way in which the media select and emphasise certain issues, e.g. headlines, running orders and story treatment in newspapers
analyse	to apply concepts and knowledge to demonstrate insight into, and give reasons for, the way in which media texts are constructed and understood
anchorage	a way of 'tying down meaning', without anchorage meaning could be polysemic – open to various interpretations, e.g. a caption anchors meaning to a photo, music anchors mood in a film
arbitrary signs	learned signs that label something, e.g. green means 'go' but it could just as easily be yellow
archetype	a character type or pattern of action, which recurs, related to universal myths, e.g. the hero, the quest
art cinema	narrative film mode, which may be contrasted with classic narrative – art cinema favours style over story, ambiguity over clarity, open endings over closure, cineliterate over popular audience
audience	a key aspect of Media Studies – how audiences are identified, created and addressed and how audiences access, interpret and respond to texts
auteur	a film director whose films show a personal vision or style

avant garde	innovative, experimental work which breaks main stream conventions
balance	to give all sides of a story (not biased)
bias	the idea that news stories deliberately or unwittingly favour a point of view
binary oppositions	the theory that you cannot understand good if you don't understand evil, e.g. heroes and villains
blockbuster	high profile films with big budgets and tie-in, spin off and theme park potential – made by major studios
brief	a summary of instructions for the production
broadsheet	a large size newspaper such as The Herald or The Guardian
categories	a key aspect of Media Studies – how producers and audiences categorise texts in terms of medium, purpose, form, genre, style etc
cinema verité	film which seeks to show the truth through probing interviews shot in stark naturalistic style (unlike mainstream cinema)
classic narrative or classic Hollywood narrative	the dominant narrative mode found in mainstream film which uses traditional narrative structure (equilibrium, disruption, return to equilibrium) and continuity editing to give clarity
cliché	the predictable treatment of any element of a media text, e.g. happy ending of most media blockbusters
cliff-hanger	an ending that creates suspense, often used in a 'soap' to make the audience watch the next episode
climax	the point in the narrative where conflicts/enigmas are resolved

closure	the completion of a narrative in a classic narrative, e.g. the happy ending in which the hero defeats the villain
codes	systems of signs which can be analysed in terms of denotation and connotation
commercial media	media which is self financing as opposed to the BBC which is funded by government
compilation	texts constructed from existing material
connotation	the meaning associated with a sign, e.g. a red rose could be associated with love
construct	the idea that a media text is not a 'window on the world' but is a product of individuals in organizations making decisions over the selection and structuring of content, in other words we see what they want us to see
consumption	how audiences access media texts, e.g. films may be viewed in cinemas, on video, on DVD, on cable, on satellite etc
content analysis	a method of measuring content, e.g. comparing tabloids and broadsheets by measuring column centimetres of news, features, sport
context	external aspects of a text which shape its style and meaning, e.g. the audience, social and institutional contexts
convention	established ways of treating genre, codes, narrative or representations
cropping	cutting parts from an image, often used to create preferred reading
cult	a text which has an avid following by a group of people
cultural codes	sign systems that are shared by members of a culture, e.g. dress, gestures, linguistics

culture	the shared ideas and practices of any social group
decoding	the processes by which media audiences interpret meaning in a media text
demographics	the social characteristics of an audience, e.g. social class, age, gender
denotation	the description of a sign, e.g. the dictionary definition
describe	to identify individual elements, name these and indicate how they work together in a text
de-selection	when the maker deliberately leaves something out of text for the purposes of preferred reading
diegetic sound	the sound that actually comes from the set or studio like dialogue, not added later like music to set mood
direct address	making the audience feel they are participating in what is happening, e.g. newscasters use direct address as if they are speaking directly to the viewer
discourse	systematic ways of presenting representations so as to express particular ideologies or myths, e.g. nationalistic discourses in sports coverage; the discourse of the countryside as natural, peaceful, beautiful etc
docudrama	a text based on real events which uses elements of drama, e.g. a documentary with some dramatized reconstructions
documentary drama	fictional narrative which resembles a documentary and allows the audience to experience realistic events in a subjective way
dominant decoding	when a reader interprets a text in the preferred way, e.g. they interpret the text the way the maker wants them to
dominant ideology	when the beliefs of the majority or powerful groups in society dominate
dumbing-down	the idea that media is becoming more trivial, e.g. entertainment has replaced information, soft news is replacing hard news

encoding	the process by which media producers construct meanings in a text
enigma	a question posed in a text
enigmatic code	structuring a narrative to pose a question, e.g. minor enigma (who is this character), major enigma (will they live happily ever after)
escapism	the audience's use of media to escape from the pressures and limitations of everyday life
explain	to describe how the elements of a text work together and give reasons for the way in which the text has been constructed
exposé	documentary or article which lays bare facts assumed to be unknown to the audience
eyeline match	a technique of continuity editing, e.g. a shot shows someone looking off screen, the next shot shows what they are looking at
faction	a text whose story is based on real events with some fictional events
film noir	type of film made in the 1940s and 1950s which used low-key lighting, shadows etc to reflect the dark side of human nature
fly-on-the-wall	documentary form which tries to be non-obtrusive as if the film crew are not there
font	the design/style of characters in the typeface
format	the recipe for producing a media product in a particular genre, e.g. hard news at the beginning, sport at the end of a newspaper or news programme
genre	a set of conventions or common practices which guide the production, marketing, identification and interpretation of texts

globalisation	the domination of the world's media by transnational media conglomerates leading to media products aimed at the international market rather than local interests
hard news	serious news stories
hegemony	the dominance that powerful social groups and their ideology have in society, to the point that it seems natural
hermeneutic code	see enigmatic code
high key	very bright lighting
hooks	ways of getting the attention of the viewer so they will watch or continue to watch, e.g. trailers, cliff hangers
icon	a type of sign that has a close resemblance to what it represents, e.g. a photograph or a portrait. Someone idolised by others, e.g. pop star, politician
identify	when a viewer becomes emotionally involved with a character or what is happening
ideology	shared beliefs and values in any social group (see dominant and oppositional ideologies)
image	<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. a visual representationii. the general impression of a person, event, object or organisation which has been specially constructed for the mass media, e.g. the image of the Prime Minister constructed by spin doctors
impartiality	the idea that broadcasters should be fair in their treatment of stories and not take sides
index	a type of sign that links or gives evidence, e.g. smoke – fire, sweat – effort or state of mind
institutions	key aspect of Media Studies – how the production of media output is organised, financed, and controlled and how these shape media texts

integration	the links between each key aspect
intertextuality	links between texts, e.g. genre, stars, subject matter, spin-offs
juxtaposition	the side by side positioning of an article/item in relation to others which gives added or contrasting meaning
language	key aspect of Media Studies – how the media create meanings through the use of codes (technical/cultural codes)
low key	a darkly lit scene, e.g. film noir or to suggest evil
mainstream	popular texts
major	international media company which is part of a larger conglomerate, e.g. Warner Brothers is part of Time-Warner
market research	research into possible audiences
match on action	a technique of continuity editing. A shot shows someone starting to move then the next shot shows them finishing the movement – the viewer follows the action and does not notice the cut
media construct	a text constructed from signs and codes chosen by a maker to create preferred reading
mediation	ways in which the media select, interpret and represent events
merchandising	products which are based on films, e.g. T-shirts, toys etc
mise-en-scène	whatever happens in the frame, i.e. characters, set, props
mode of address	how the text speaks to its audience, e.g. direct or indirect
montage	an editing technique combining several shots, these shots are not necessarily related, a conspicuous technique unlike continuity editing

motivation	the reason for the use of a specific code, e.g. to aid understanding, to tell the story, for realism
multi-plotted/storyline	a narrative containing several plots, e.g. soaps
myth	the stories a culture tells about itself, e.g. representation of Scotland as a romantic land peopled by brave warriors in kilts
narrative	key aspect of Media Studies – how texts are organized
narrative codes	various rules used to construct narratives, e.g. enigmatic, action, semic etc
narrative structure	a recurring structure which is the basis of many different texts, e.g. classic narrative, the quest
news value	the criteria used by journalists and news editors to select what is 'newsworthy'
non-chronological	when events in the story are not presented as they happened, e.g. flashback
non-diegetic sound	sound that does not come from the set/location, usually added in editing , e.g. theme music, voice-over
non-resolution	when the end of the narrative is left open for the audience to decide what happened
objective treatment	treating the audience as an observer
observational documentary	when film makers try to be objective and not interfere with events
oppositional decoding	when a reader interprets a text in a different way from the preferred reading
oppositional ideology	when the beliefs of a minority group in society opposes the beliefs of the dominant ideologies
paparazzi	photographers who specialize in taking intrusive pictures of celebrities

parallel editing	when a film sequence cuts from one location to another to show events happening simultaneously
plot	the order of events as they took place in the text (see story)
point-of-view	the perspective from which narrative events are seen or narrated (POV – technical term for a camera shot taken as if from a person’s eyes)
polysemy	the idea that all signs can be decoded in different ways
popular culture	media texts enjoyed by a mass audience rather than an elite
postmodernism	a style in arts and media which mixes high popular culture with different genre and historical periods, e.g. ‘Blade Runner’
preferred reading	the idea that texts contain messages which support mainstream ideology, i.e. how the maker wants the audience to read the text
proairetic	see action code
product placement	the use of brand name products in a film or programme – companies pay for this sort of advertising
production schedule	the organisation and deadlines to be met when creating a production
propaganda	texts which use emphasis and selection to try to persuade the audience of a particular view point
public service broadcasting	(PSB) broadcasting system whose primary aim is to serve the public
public sphere	the social space in which ideas and opinions are exchanged. The news media are the main space for the representation of a society’s ideas and opinions
quality press	broadsheet newspapers which have high standards of reporting and analysis

quest

a common narrative structure in which a hero(ine)

quest	a common narrative structure in which a hero(ine) searches for something or someone
reception theory	the study of how social conditions affect an audience's reading/reaction to a text, e.g. background, effects of social class, condition under which the text is consumed (peer pressure), ethnicity, gender etc
referential code	providing references in a narrative to general knowledge, e.g. references to history, geography, entertainment, politics etc
regulations	the rules under which media institutions and media producers work
representation	key aspect of Media Studies – how media texts represent people, places, and events
resolution	the outcome of a narrative conflict
running story	a story which develops over a number of days
sans serif font	typeface whose characters do not have strokes at the end, e.g. Arial (used to connote modernity)
scheduling	the organisation of programmes over the day and week; scheduling seeks to maximise the ratings compared with those of other channels
selection	the idea that producers and audiences are both selective, e.g. editors select the news from that day's events and audiences select what to watch and remember
self-censorship	the removal of certain content by a media producer because it might offend owners, regulators, audiences etc
self-regulation	voluntary codes of practice for media institutions, e.g. Press Complaints Commission. Such self-regulation attempts to avoid government legislation
semantics	the study of the meanings of signs and codes (as is studied in Language)

semic code	the way in which characters, objects, and settings take on a particular meaning, e.g. serious facial expression on a newscaster connotes gravity of story
serial	continuing storylines over a number of episodes – soaps are ‘unending serials’
series	a set of episodes with the same characters and settings but with a complete story every episode
serif font	typeface whose characters have short strokes at the ends, e.g. Times (used to connote tradition and to aid readability)
sign	word, object, image or sound which communicate meaning
signified	the concept associated with the signifier, e.g. BBC equals quality
signifier	the physical form of the sign, e.g. BBC
soap	a serial that focuses on the lives of ordinary people in realistic settings and uses multiple storylines and cliff hangers
soft news	light news
sound-bite	a short phrase designed to receive maximum exposure in the media, e.g. Tony Blair’s ‘education, education, education’
spin	an organization’s interpretation of events
spin doctor	a public relations person who issues press releases, briefings, ‘leaks’ which represent an organization’s interpretation of events
splash	lead news story on front page
statutory obligations	legal requirements on media institutions which are controlled by law

stereotype	representations of people, places or events in an instantly recognizable way, e.g. Scots with red hair wearing kilts
story	the actual order events took place, i.e. the reader's reconstruction of events
storyline	one story in a narrative, e.g. soaps usually have several storylines at any one time
subjective treatment	the audience is treated as a participant, e.g. when the camera is addressed directly or imitates the viewpoint of a character
symbol	a type of sign which is significant to a social group, e.g. the cross is a symbol of Christianity
symbolic code	textual elements that carry ideological or mythical meaning, e.g. kilted warriors in <i>Braveheart</i>
tabloid press	newspapers printed on smaller sheets of paper than broadsheets, e.g. <i>The Sun</i> – the term tabloid is associated with trivialization and sensationalism ('gutter press')
target audience	the main group or groups of individuals at whom the product is aimed
tartanry	a discourse which represents Scots as kilted warriors set against rugged landscapes
technical codes	sign systems in the language of the medium, e.g. a fade in may connote a beginning, sans serif font may connote modernity
technology	key aspect of Media Studies – how media products are created and distributed to the audience and how technology shapes the production process and its products
tentpoling	scheduling strategy where a popular programme will be placed at the peak of prime time with less popular programmes either side – the aim is to attract viewers to the programmes before and after

term	definition
text	the film, programme, piece of popular music, newspaper, magazine etc
tie-ins	promotional campaigns tied to specific texts, e.g. food chains who tie-in to a blockbuster film
vox-pop	street interview with members of the public (voice of the people)
voyeurism	the pleasure of looking at real people (not characters), e.g. reality TV
zapping	use remote control to flick through channels