Media Revision Notes

GENRE

Jaws belongs to more than one *genre**. There. I've said it.

It is a **horror** film *(a 'monster' killing innocent victims)*, it is a **buddy** movie *(Matt Hooper and Chief Brody... Quint isn't really their 'buddy'!)*, a **mainstream** movie *(the narrative is **plot** driven... there aren't too many 'arty' shots!)*, a **road** movie *(OK, so the road is an ocean, the car is a boat, and the road signs are buoys, but they do go somewhere and come back changed... [plot spoiler alert] well, most of them do, anyway)*... and so on. [What others could you add to this list?]

The point is, the film crosses several genres, and each genre contributes a **part** to the **whole** so (for example):

* the **road movie (genre)** helps give us a ***journey narrative*** arc/plot
* the **road movie (genre)** gives us the ***narrative point*** about Chief Brody hating the sea, then not hating it... (I'll come back to this one in a minute)
* the **horror film (genre)** gives the film its need for a monster
* the **horror film (genre)** gives us the attack on a helpless woman (opening sequence)
* the **horror film (genre)** gives us monster p-o-v camera shots
* the **mainstream movie (genre)** gives us straightforward story-telling with the camera
* the **buddy movie (genre)** gives us the good natured banter between Hooper and Brody, e.g.:

Brody: I used to hate the water...
Hooper: I can't imagine why.

And so on...

In short, **expectations** raised by the particular **genres** identified have contributed to, and influenced, the narrative structure, codes and conventions. (Think about it... if you go to see a romance, you expect there to be a happy ending where the boy finally gets the girl/boy of his or her dreams. In a monster movie, you expect the monster to be killed at the end. In a gangster movie, you expect the baddie to "get it" at the end...)

GENRE CONVENTIONS

Similarly, the **codes and conventions of the genre** are used to inform the language (Oh... look at that man dressed in black in the shadows there... do you think he could possibly be up to no good?) and the

representation (Yep, he looks like a bit of a hero there with his white hat and cowboy shirt and gun and holster and jeans and... oh yes, he's also only John Wayne — the manliest man ever to be called Marion!)

AUDIENCE

Taken together the codes and conventions of any given genre help to define the genre... and let us know some of the things to expect when we go to see a film... Want to see aliens, cool technology and/or time travel? No problems, you need *sci-fi.*

Looking for some suspense, tension and/or excitement? Try a **thriller**

Want music, romance and/or comedy? Got just the thing in this **musical**!

ROLE OF MEDIA

In essence, media companies (*institutions*) have **purposes** *(profit/promotion/public service)*. In order to fulfil this **purpose**, they produce **media content**. An *audience* uses and/or interacts with this content to satisfy their **need** for *entertainment, education* or *information*. In consuming this media content, and audience will be influenced with regards their **attitudes** and **behaviours**. This influence may be *intentional* on the part of the media company, but can also have *unintentional* results.

Attitudes & Behaviours come under the **Role of Media** part of the course *(Q2 in the exam)*. It is the area that considers some of the arguments surrounding whether, and to what extent, the media influence our attitudes and subsequent behaviour. For example, do violent films reduce our sensitivity to violence... or even encourage us to become more violent ourselves? If this is the case, what are we to make of the constant barrage of violence we see on TV in films, programmes or the 10 o'clock news?

And what about our attitudes to others? Are they refugees or migrants or terrorists? Are women portrayed as equal to men, or are they merely objects to be looked at? Are men allowed to have emotions, or are they always meant to be 'strong'? And what values are shown as the 'norm'?

In considering these points, it is important to be aware of the *dominant ideology* of a text. This can be summed up as an understanding of the core values it holds, the view of the world it portrays, and the value it bestows on the people it represents. It also can be seen as a reflection of the society within which the

media is produced… the media epouses the values of that society — perhaps traditional views of family or law and order.

FEMININSM

F-rating is given to any film that meets one of three criteria: It must be written by a woman, directed by a woman or feature "significant women on screen in their own right.

INSTITUTION

Obscure prog rock reference aside, I've just had a query about **Institution** and *PQD*.

Most of the information you need is on the **slides**, but for clarity, the most important things to remember are:

Casting: Terence Stamp (**Wikipedia, IMDB, Guardian interview**) would have appealed to an international audience as the big 'name' in the cast.

Hugo Weaving, Guy Pearce and Bill Hunter would appeal to the home Australian audience… *(Incidentally, click through on the links, especially Bill Hunter's as it's an interview from 1994 so fits in nicely with society… and also how casting can work)*

Get the casting right, you pull in an audience, your film makes money… or more importantly, your *message* gains an audience…

Production: What would have been the challenges of producing PQD? Especially at that point in history and against the prevailing social background (fear of AIDS, homosexuality was still frowned upon, and so forth)… would it have been easy to get the necessary finance for the film without the likes of Stamp/Hunter on board?

Look at the respective credits for the two main producers, Al Clark and Michael Hamlyn. One has a background in drama (including the critically acclaimed adaptation of *1984*), the other is known for music videos… how might these backgrounds have helped producing PQD?

The production companies involved include the New South Wales Film & Television Office who have a specific remit to promote film-making and as such help subsidise 'edgier' subject matter.

Post-production: The BBFC (in the UK) are responsible for granting the Rating for a film. The Certificate (U, PG, 12/12A/ 15/ 18) is a legal requirement for exhibition of the film in a normal cinema… and also has a role to play in the marketing of a film. The lower the certificate, the larger the potential audience… but also, it gives an indication as to the content, for example, an '18' certificate version of Cinderella would be considerably different from a 'U' certificate version!

Marketing: Look again at the 5 posters for the film included in the slides… can you see how each is designed to appeal to a different audience (mostly through the choice of anchorage — either quotes form reviews, or specific blurbs). This is all part of creating a 'buzz' around the film, and so encouraging people to want to go and see it.

Finally… read **this Guardian article** about the 20th Anniversary of Priscilla. It contains this rather useful paragraph that neatly sums up PQD's main message and why the film was so important:

"That's just what his country needs," Bernadette scoffs. "A cock in a frock on a rock." And, actually, that was just what the country needed: an intelligent and entertaining Australian film that embraces LGBT culture without turning turning a quintessentially personal story into an exercise in outrage-pedalling and button-pushing.

Being realistic, *Institution* is unlikely to be the stem for Q1, but if you swot up on the above, you would be

able to tackle it if it did.

- Stephan Elliott
- *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (PQD)*
- 1994
- Australia

The aria is called *Sempre Libera*, it's from Verdi's **La Traviata** and the translation of the lyrics is as follows:

Free and aimless I frolic
From joy to joy,
Flowing along the surface
of life's path as I please.
As the day is born,
Or as the day dies,
Happily I turn to the new delights
That make my spirit soar.

Love is a heartbeat throughout the universe,

mysterious, altering,

the torment and delight of my heart.

Oh! Oh! Love!

Madness! Euphoria!

KEY ASPECTS

Just a wee heads up… I'll be in the hospital tomorrow during the lesson (I may be back in time… I have no longer how it'll take). Your task is straight-forward is simply to carry out an analysis of the closing scene of Casablanca.

Your focus is up to you, but I'd expect at least one comment and reference (quotation) from each of the starred Key Aspects below. Do your best, and don't forget the things we've talked about with regards the previous clips.

Content-based KA analysis

Categories: genre, purpose, tone, style

∗ *Language*: medium/form-specific technical codes, cultural codes, anchorage

∗ *Narrative*: structures, codes, conventions

∗ *Representation*: representations, selection and portrayal, ideological discourses

Context-based KA analysis

∗ *Audience*: target audience, preferred reading, differential decoding, mode of address

Institution: internal controls and constraints, external controls and constraints

∗ *Society*: time, place

KEY CONCEPTS

These are the areas we have been considering all year and can be summed up as follows…

When we look at media texts, we ask the following questions:

How are texts shaped to meet needs, influence behaviour and achieve a purpose?	**The Role of the Media**
What type of text is it?	**Categories**
How do we know what it means?	**Language**
What type of story does it tell?	**Narrative**
How does it present its subject?	**Representation**
Who has produced it, and what constraints did they face?	**Institutions**
Who receives it, and what sense do they make of it?	**Audience**
When are texts received?	**Society**

KEY TERMS

Cultural codes (eg: what various characters were wearing)

Source music (Diegetic sound) or **underscoring** (non-diegetic sound)

Enigma/enigmatic code (Look it up!)

Montage (the combination of shots)

Parallel editing (multiple stories being told at once… think Holes)

Preferred reading (a specific interpretation intended by the maker)

LEVI-STRAUSS BINARY OPPOSITION
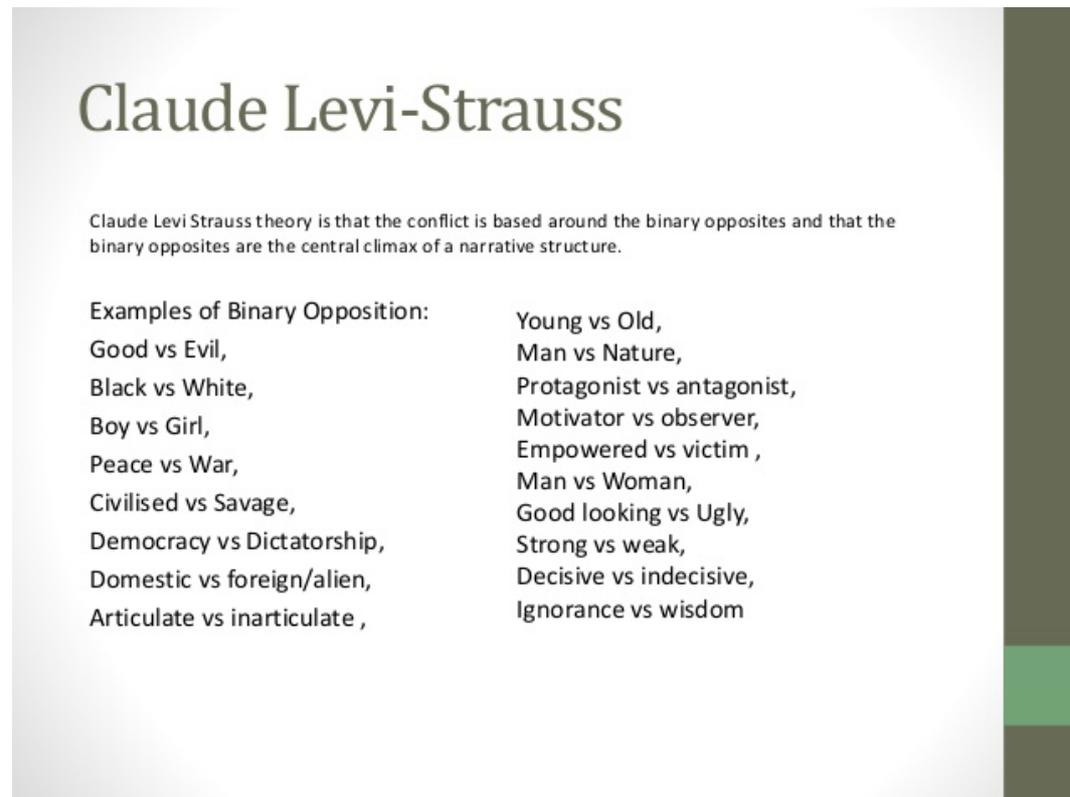
Claude Levi-Strauss

Claude Levi Strauss theory is that the conflict is based around the binary opposites and that the binary opposites are the central climax of a narrative structure.

Examples of Binary Opposition:
Good vs Evil,
Black vs White,
Boy vs Girl,
Peace vs War,
Civilised vs Savage,
Democracy vs Dictatorship,
Domestic vs foreign/alien,
Articulate vs inarticulate ,

Young vs Old,
Man vs Nature,
Protagonist vs antagonist,
Motivator vs observer,
Empowered vs victim ,
Man vs Woman,
Good looking vs Ugly,
Strong vs weak,
Decisive vs indecisive,
Ignorance vs wisdom

PROPP'S CHARACTER THEORY

<u>Hero</u>

Traditionally the hero is a male protagonist whose role it is to restore normality or equilibrium. He does this by defeating the villain(s) and winning the love of the heroine.

<u>Villain</u>

The villain is the cause of the disruption and the enemy of the hero. The villain may also be a threat to the safety and the well-being of the heroine.

<u>Dispatcher</u>

The dispatcher sends the hero on a journey to restore equilibrium. The dispatcher may also be the father or a father figure of the heroine, sending the hero on a quest to see if he is worthy of his daughter.

<u>Donor</u>

The donor gives the hero something to help him along his journey. This gift may be a piece of advice, a skill or an object such as a weapon.

<u>Helper</u>

The helper assists the hero in restoring equilibrium. The helper may be a sidekick, with the hero throughout, or someone he meets along the way.

<u>Heroine</u>

The heroine is usually a passive and vulnerable character, threatened by the villain and needing rescuing by the hero.

<u>False Hero</u>

The false hero is a character who initially seems to be on the side of the hero but who turns against him or deceives.

THE SEVEN NARRATIVE STRUCTURES

Overcoming the Monster

The protagonist sets out to defeat an antagonistic force (often evil) which threatens the protagonist and/or protagonist's homeland.

Examples: Perseus, Theseus, *Beowulf*, *Dracula*, *War of the Worlds*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Guns of Navarone*, *Seven Samurai* and its Western-style remake *The Magnificent Seven*, the James Bond franchise, *Star Wars: A New Hope*, *Halloween*, *Attack on Titan*, *The Hunger Games*, *Harry Potter* and *Shrek*]

Rags to Riches

The poor protagonist acquires things such as power, wealth, and a mate, before losing it all and gaining it back upon growing as a person.

Examples: Job, *Cinderella*, *Aladdin*, *Jane Eyre*, *A Little Princess*, *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Brewster's Millions*[

The Quest

The protagonist and some companions set out to acquire an important object or to get to a location, facing many obstacles and temptations along the way.

Examples: *Iliad*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *King Solomon's Mines*, *Watership Down*,[2] *The Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, *The Land Before Time*, *One Piece*, *Indiana Jones*, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, *Harold & Kumar Go To White Castle*

Voyage and Return

The protagonist goes to a strange land and, after overcoming the threats it poses to him or her, returns with experience.

Examples: *Odyssey, Ramayana, Alice in Wonderland, Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, Orpheus, *The Time Machine, Peter Rabbit, The Hobbit, Brideshead Revisited, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Gone with the Wind, The Third Man*,[2] *Chronicles of Narnia, Apollo 13, Labyrinth, Finding Nemo, Gulliver's Travels, Spirited Away, Uncharted, The Wizard of Oz*

Comedy

Light and humorous character with a happy or cheerful ending; a dramatic work in which the central motif is the triumph over adverse circumstance, resulting in a successful or happy conclusion.[3] Booker makes sure to stress that comedy is more than humor. It refers to a pattern where the conflict becomes more and more confusing, but is at last made plain in a single clarifying event. Most romances fall into this category.

Examples: *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Much Ado About Nothing, Twelfth Night, Bridget Jones Diary, Music and Lyrics, Sliding Doors, Four Weddings and a Funeral, Mr. Bean*

Tragedy

The protagonist is a hero with one major character flaw or great mistake which is ultimately their undoing. Their unfortunate end evokes pity at their folly and the fall of a fundamentally 'good' character.

Examples: *Macbeth, The Picture of Dorian Gray, Carmen, Bonnie and Clyde, Jules et Jim, Anna Karenina, Madame Bovary*, John Dillinger, *Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar*,[2] *Death Note, Breaking Bad, Dirty Mary, Crazy Larry, Hamlet*

Rebirth

During the course of the story, an important event forces the main character to change their ways, often making them a better person.

Examples: *The Frog Prince, Beauty and the Beast, The Snow Queen, A Christmas Carol, The Secret Garden, Peer Gynt*,[2] *Life Is a Dream, Despicable Me, Machine Gun Preacher, Megamind,*

KEY TERMS IN REPRESENTATION

Construction

This is the way a media text is put together. In a film or television programme this includes the editing and choice of camera angles, in a magazine or newspaper it includes the layout and writing as well as the choice of images.

Mediation

This is the process everything goes through before it reaches an audience.

This can be how a film script is written and re-written before it makes it to production, how newspaper or magazine photographs are cropped and captioned, or how real life events - like a protest or a speech by a politician - are portrayed in a news report.

Selection

This refers to what has been selected to include in a media text.

This can be particularly important in newspaper articles, where selecting certain facts over others can change the angle of a story; what is omitted is sometimes as important as what is included.

Anchorage

These are the words that go along with images to give those pictures a certain meaning in a specific context. This includes captions and headlines in newspapers and taglines in adverts or on film posters.

Stereotypes

These are a simplified representation of a person, groups of people or a place, through basic or obvious characteristics - which are often exaggerated.

For example, Vicky Pollard from *Little Britain* is a stereotypical example of a working class teenage girl.

They can be used to describe characters quickly, relying on existing audience recognition.

Stereotypes are dangerous as they can lead audiences to generalise about people or places.

Ideology

These are ideas and beliefs, held by media producers, which are often represented in their media texts.

In a newspaper, the ideology of the owner or senior editors could influence the way certain stories are represented, such as lending support to a particular political party.

In a documentary about asylum seekers, the representation of their story could be influenced by the ideology of the filmmaker or producer.