

Knowledge Map: Media Language

Summary: This knowledge organiser looks at one quarter of the Media Studies Theoretical Framework. It covers how the media communicates with consumers. You'll need to use this along with your media terminology to prepare you for analysis of media products, including your CSPs.

CSPs that explore Media Language:	Online, Social, Participatory Media: Kim Kardashian: Hollywood Lara Croft GO Marcus Rashford	Newspapers: Daily Mirror The Times	Advertisements: Galaxy/Audrey Hepburn Lady Leshurr: Represent OMO: Post-War Britain	Magazines: Tatler Heat	TV and the Sci-Fi Genre: His Dark Materials Dr Who: An Unearthly Child	DON'T FORGET CONTEXTS! Social, Cultural, Historical, Political!
Which exam/section are they in?	Online, Social, Participatory Media: Paper 1, Section A, B Paper 2, Section B	Newspapers: Paper 1, Section A, B Paper 2, Section B	Advertisements: Paper 1, Section A	Magazines: Paper 1, Section A	TV and the Sci-Fi Genre: Paper 2, Section A	

Media Language Overview	
Summary	
<p>You need to understand how the mass media gives messages through their products, and you need to consider what these meanings may be. You should be able to explore them using consistent media terminology.</p>	
Key Knowledge	
1	<p>How the Media Communicates Meaning</p> <p>The mass media communicates to a large number of people. The Internet/TV etc. does this quickly, but other forms, like print media are slower. How they communicate, is Media Language. The most simple way to demonstrate this is the linear model of communication (Sender>Message>Receiver). It shows that communication progresses along a line. However, this doesn't capture the interactive elements of communication. It's just passive; think of a conversation, for example. They require more than one person communicating.</p>
2	<p>Making Meanings</p> <p>Thinking beyond the linear model, we need to consider semiotics. This is the identification of codes and their meanings. Codes are communication systems with three elements: signs (anything that expresses meaning e.g. an image/sound etc.), rules (linking ideas in signs, such as grammar in sentences to ensure they make sense), and shared understanding (we must be able to interpret the code in the same way as others).</p>
3	<p>Example: English as a Code</p> <p>In our language, there are over 170,000 words. Think of what you could say when you were young, and how you communicate now. You move from single words ('cat', 'car' etc.) to linking phrases (e.g. 'there is a cat'). The grammar of sentences adds meaning. Although we get taught 'English' at school, we pick up a lot from others. Media codes work like this; we don't 'think' about them, we create meaning through putting signs together. Language evolves, but we have a shared understanding with other English speakers.</p>
4	<p>How do Signs create Meaning?</p> <p>If the sign is a word, and you don't know it, you can look it up easily. However, often words have multiple meanings. This makes them ambiguous, or unclear. To clarify the ambiguity, you need context. A 'bulb' for example, could provide light or be planted, depending on the context. Signs are not always as easy as words; you can't look up the meaning of an image in a dictionary. As well as written and spoken language, the mass media also uses still and moving images, colours, sounds, music, fashion, behaviour, facial expressions etc.</p>
5	<p>Creating Meaning (Continued)</p> <p>We make sense by storing meanings in our heads as we grow and experience things. Think again of language; you learn meanings as you grow. The learning curve is steeper when you are younger with less experience. Different cultures have different codes so you learn in context, and as you move between cultures you pick up new meanings and rules as you unlock new codes. In Media Studies, you have to learn to dissect these media products and their meanings in detail to work out the messages they are trying to convey.</p>
6	<p>Semiotics</p> <p>This is a way studying signs and systems of rules, and codes which link the signs together to create meaning. A sign always has two components: a signifier (form of the sign - see/hear/touch etc.) and the signified (the meaning, existing only in your head). Think of the word 'TREE'. This is the signifier, a word, and the signified is a big, brown and green leafy thing. Now think of what a tree represents - nature, growth, age, strength etc. This is a way of breaking down the denotation and connotation.</p>

Introduction to Codes	
Summary	
<p>Codes are methods of giving meaning to an audience or consumer. There must be a shared understanding of what the codes mean. When you use semiotic analysis, there are many different codes you can analyse.</p>	
Key Knowledge	
7	<p>Denotation and Connotation</p> <p>Denotation is what is in the code, connotations are meanings you draw from it. Think of a butterfly; the denotation is a winged insect. The connotations include elegance, colourful, and being delicate. The connotations are not as simple or obvious. If a butterfly was used in an advert (think of the Debenhams make-up ad), and it says 'Natural Colour Combinations' in the text, the connotations it wants you to draw are focused on the idea of colour. Again, it shows we need context.</p>
8	<p>Anchorage</p> <p>Anchorage refers to the way that ambiguous meanings can be tied down for clarification. Think of your 'Galaxy' CSP, the slogan 'Why have cotton when you can have silk?' anchors the idea that Galaxy is a silky-smooth chocolate. Contrast with the advertising for Dairy Milk, which focuses on how milky it is and how it's good to share. Anchorage gives us context so meanings are clear.</p>
9	<p>Symbol and Icons</p> <p>These are two types of signs. Symbols don't look like the thing they stand for; words, flags etc. Icons are signs that resemble their meanings. Don't think of term 'iconic' in this context; that means someone famous and is a secondary meaning, showing why context is so important! Photographs are icons. Signs often communicate as both a symbol and an icon; think of a rose for example.</p>
10	<p>Semiotics (continued)</p> <p>Semiotics differ from the linear model of communication because they take the idea that the meaning has as much to do with the receiver as well as the sender. It refers to messages as texts and receivers as readers. Different readers will interpret texts in different ways. Media producers try to avoid ambiguity in their messages but they cannot force an audience to take a certain meaning. This is not a case of right/wrong readings; factors such as race, religion, age, gender, ethnicity, class, religion etc. all influence how an audience may read a text.</p>
11	<p>Non-Verbal Codes</p> <p>These are codes other than languages, but we focus on human display and behaviour, sometimes called body language. We can break these down to: 1. Dress and Appearance which often links to social class, occupation, age and gender. 2. Facial Expressions/Gestures; different cultures have different meanings of gesture. 3. Body Movement/Closeness; often difficult to interpret. being close to someone could be a warm gesture, or it could be intrusive - context is important! 4. Paralanguage: pitch, tone, volume, pace etc.</p>
12	<p>Print Codes</p> <p>Page design is important to conveying meaning. Few elements on a page for example (or the use of white or positive and negative space) communicates a sense of things being upmarket and classy, whilst lots of elements may suggest excitement (i.e. bursting with info). Other techniques are superimposition (layering images to reinforce links), juxtaposition (placing elements together to add meaning; e.g. a child and a puppy), use of mastheads, use of serif or sans serif fonts, and the alignment on a page (the nine-box grid system and the rule of thirds).</p>

Codes Continued	
Summary	
<p>Codes vary in their content and complexity, and there are many different forms. You've already seen anchorage, symbols and icons, and non-verbal codes. The ones below continue our understanding of semiotic analysis and how we develop meaning.</p>	
Key Knowledge	
13	<p>Photographic Codes</p> <p>Photographers use many techniques to add layers of meaning such as lighting, composition, framing, camera position, lens types and length of exposure. Consider also shot types: Extreme close-up (Eye), Big close-up (Eyes), Close-up (face), Medium close-up (Top of shoulder upwards) Medium shot (Head and torso to waist-ish), Long shot (whole body), and Wide Angle (showing a wider view of the action, fitting multiple subjects in).</p>
14	<p>Composition</p> <p>The rule of thirds divides an image into nine squares. Main subjects of interest in the image are aligned with the gridlines. The rule of space helps show still objects as in motion if space is left in front of the moving object. Diagonals give a sense of excitement of dynamism; this can be achieved by tilting the camera.</p>
15	<p>Focus and Lighting</p> <p>The depth of field is the distance between the nearest and furthest points from the camera that are in focus. Think of a wide angle shot focusing on the stadium and crowd of a football match which would blur the actual football (greater depth), whereas a close-up on the action would use a shallower depth of field to focus on the players. Lighting use may create contrasts between light and dark to suggest mystery and intrigue etc. All of these print codes may be found in websites/social media, too.</p>
16	<p>Moving Image Codes</p> <p>Actors use non-verbal codes to convey meaning. Production codes in film add movement to photographic codes, like: Establishing shot (often wide-angle to establish setting etc.) Pan (fixed shot moving left or right through 180°), Tilt (fixed shot, moving up or down), Zoom (going closer/further from a subject), Dollying (camera moved in or out to follow action), Tracking (camera moved left or right to follow action), Crane Shot (crane/drones lift camera above action for dramatic purpose), Point-of-view (connects viewer to subject).</p>
17	<p>Digital and Post-Production Codes</p> <p>Depending on whether the product is live (like a sports event) or pre-recorded (like a film), different codes will be used. Whilst both types will cut between different camera angles, film uses editing, or how the shots are put together, to indicate elements like passage of time. A film rarely takes place over its runtime; events are compressed and editing is a code for showing that. Continuity (ensuring something makes sense) involves cuts (instant transition between shots), crossfades (or mix or dissolve) where shots fade into one another, and fade-ins/outs, bringing a shot from or to black.</p>
18	<p>Understanding Codes</p> <p>These rules guide us through sequences of events. A key rule of continuity is that things progress in the order they're shown, so editing needs to make it clear to us if that is not the case; We also link by cause and effect: e.g. if we see erratic driving and then an injured person, we link the injury (effect) to the driving (cause). We fill the gaps of what is not shown (ellipsis). In products where continuity is not as important, like music videos, producers may use techniques that are deliberately unusual or jarring as they're free from convention.</p>

Narrative	
Summary	
<p>For Media Studies students, 'narratives' refer to all media products, not just what we would consider 'stories'. This is because they tell 'stories' in a way that is structured as a narrative.</p>	
Key Knowledge	
19	<p>Sound</p> <p>Dialogue, voiceovers, music and interviews add hugely to meaning in moving images. Sound can 'smooth' transitions. Sound and video tracks do not need to be cut at the same time. There are four types: 1. Diegetic sound (naturally occurring sound from what is on screen). 2. Non-diegetic sound ('soundtrack' added at the editing stage). 3. Wild sound (naturally occurring background noise, often recorded separately and added in the editing process). 4. Heightened sound (a piece of diegetic sound unnaturally amplified for effect e.g. the cocking of a gun).</p>
20	<p>Narrative</p> <p>All media products tell a story. Narrative is the way these stories are put together. Narratives deal with causality (why things happen), time (when things happen) and space (where things happen). We organise narratives in our lives e.g. think of how you would describe your day to someone. Events are not narrative, the telling of the story is.</p>
21	<p>Todorov</p> <p>Todorov studied fairy tales, discovering they progress forward in a chronological order. They have five elements. 1. Equilibrium (things are 'normal'). 2. Disruption ('normal' is upset) 3. Recognition of disruption (a solution to the disruption is sought) 4. Repair (attempts to 'sort' disruption) 5. Things are now not disrupted (not necessarily 'as they were', creating a new equilibrium). There are many ways of telling stories, but these elements often appear, and the audience can infer how the story progresses.</p>
22	<p>Propp</p> <p>Propp's narrative theory focuses on character, suggesting in 'quest' tales, there are various character archetypes: 1. Hero (agent of change). 2. Villain (places obstacles in front of the hero, must be defeated in a climactic confrontation). 3. Donor (gives the hero something; weapon, info etc.). 4. Helper (Hero's trusted sidekick). 5. Dispatcher (gives hero the mission). 6. Princess (person/reward from completing the quest). 7. False hero (appears good but isn't).</p>
23	<p>Confrontation, Mystery and Action</p> <p>Narratives always try to keep the audience engaged. Some don't manage it, but there are methods that keep us focused. They are usually driven by confrontation; hero v villain is an obvious example. We may like the hero or dislike the villain because they represent values we approve or reject. They symbolise good versus evil, so think of qualities associated with a hero and why we would identify with them. Good v Evil is a binary opposition; other binary oppositions that can drive narratives could be wealth/poverty, present/past, city/country etc.</p>
24	<p>Enigma and Action Codes</p> <p>An enigma code is a mystery that draws the audience in. If a show opens with a body in a lake, we want to know: how it got there, who it is, was it a murder, why were they killed etc. Writers structure their drama to gradually reveal information to keep viewers hooked. Action codes are also useful. These are a series of signs hinting at something happening, e.g. a hero is in a graveyard at night, an owl hoots in the silence, a twig snaps, a cloud blocks the moon, etc.</p>