

Knowledge Map: Media Representation

Summary: This knowledge organiser looks at one quarter of the Media Studies Theoretical Framework. It covers how the media re-presents things to us and how it can manipulate our views of things by appealing to certain elements of our own, or society's imposed values and beliefs via methods such as stereotyping.

CSPs that explore representation:	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	

Representation Overview	
Summary	
This deals with the different ways that the media portray events, issues, individuals and social groups by selecting, constructing and mediating the elements they include. You should be able to comment on how all types of media either consciously or unconsciously reflect the social, historical, cultural and political contexts in which they are produced.	
Key Knowledge	
1	The Construction of Reality The media is a 'window to the world' that allows us to extend our senses so we can see and hear things via our screens/radios etc. It could also be a construct of reality; media producers decide how to present something to us. For example, we are aware that <i>Black Widow</i> isn't real; it provides entertainment and escapism. Showing us animals killing and feeding in the wild is based on reality yet we can't confirm it as we're unlikely to see it 'live'.
2	Mediation Mediation is the selection and omission of material in a media product. Even when media producers are trying to show things accurately, they still have to make decisions on what they show (they may only have a ten minute slot on a news broadcast, for example). Even those who saw something 'live' will have seen and heard different things. Signs, signifiers and codes will be chosen to give information to an audience. For example, the first story in a news bulletin is often the most important.
3	Who Do the Media Represent? A lot of media producers focus on young people because we are interested, and keen to identify with, other people. The media uses a combination of different elements, including media language, another part of the framework, to create a representation . Together, these encourage us to make assumptions about the person being represented. These may include appearance, voice, behaviour, visual effects etc.
4	Individuals Have you ever met a celebrity? It's unlikely, but you've probably formed an opinion of them based on representations in the media, or how other people talk about them. You'd probably have a lower opinion of someone if you read about them in a gossip magazine than if you saw them on the news at a charity event. This applies to fictional characters too. Think about how these characters are shown to you, and how you develop your opinions on them.
5	Social Groups We all belong to different social groups by sharing a common interest or background with others. Your family is a social group, and your individual classes at school are too. There are many ways to define social groups, such as demographics or psychographics , but media producers also show social groups using signifiers, just as they do with individuals.
6	Social Class This is one social group, and there are many ways to define it. It could be decided by occupation; consider the representation of van drivers in the 'Vanarama' advert. This method is often used when industries want to target a particular class for a product like a magazine (think of your <i>Tatler</i> CSP). However, it could also be down to how you perceive someone. Think of class-related words, like 'toff' or 'chav' and whether they have positive or negative connotations . Class may be represented in the media through clothing, accent, job, etc.

Subcultures	
Summary	
Subcultures are elements of society occupied by people who don't necessarily conform to society's version of 'normal'. The factors below are simple classifications of subcultures, but a reliance on these in media products could lead to stereotyping.	
Key Knowledge	
7	Subcultures A subculture is a type of social group that has a particularly strong identity because it has a characteristic or interest that differentiates itself from that of most people in mainstream society. It may be a hobby, a political belief, fashion choice, musical preference, or spiritual view. Examples of people from subcultures include vegans, goths, cosplayers and nudists.
8	Ethnicity and Gender People's understanding of ethnicity is often formed by the media because they don't necessarily meet others from that ethnic group. Although clear racism in the media is rare, non-white people remain underrepresented ; negative portrayals are common. Masculinity is associated with traits like strength and bravery, and are often presented as 'better' than 'feminine' qualities like kindness and empathy. Women are often shown as passive victims, whereas as men are often shown to be violent, powerful and authoritarian.
9	Age and Sexuality Heterosexuality has been portrayed as the norm for years; representations of LGBTQ+ people are often stereotypical and problematic. They are often presented as comic or deviant. As society becomes more accepting and liberal, more positive representations of this community are common. Think also about how age is a label, symbolising different social groups. 'Boomers', 'Millennials' and 'Zoomers' have certain behaviours linked to them. Age is often linked to gender; more older men are presenters than women for example.
10	What Do the Media Represent? You can see from the above information that you can get left out of various media products because we fit into such a wide range of social groups and classifications. But the media does not only represent people. They are re-presenting reality to us, and that reality is made up of many different aspects.
11	Religions and Nationalities Depictions of religion are closely tied to nationality and ethnicity. Just as it is misleading to label all teenagers in a certain way for example, it is equally as misleading to label an entire nation or religion. Since 9/11 in 2001, Islamophobia has been significantly more apparent in society, often lazily linking other evils to Islam. Newspapers often use the word 'Muslim' to describe criminals, even when their faith has nothing to do with their crime.
12	Places, Events and Issues Consider how would you present your own hometown if asked to describe it? It would depend on your attitude; do you focus on the great nightlife, or the terrible poverty? Unless you have first-hand experience of a place, you cannot know the 'truth'. This also applies to events and issues; think about how things are reported and what messages that gives. Bias can often be unintentional, but can be created through vocabulary choices, visual images, spacing, character portrayals, juxtapositions , and other elements of media language.

Stereotypes	
Summary	
Stereotyping is a quick way of constructing media representations. They convey quickly information about a group or person by tapping into assumptions the audience is already likely to have.	
Key Knowledge	
13	Functions and Uses Stereotypes are a way of imposing order in diversity by simplifying traits; consider Propp's Narrative Theory , here. However, reducing characteristics, complexity and diversity of a group of people can be problematic, as they reduce (groups of) real people to a few, limited characteristics. They may be based on the truth, but it is difficult to represent the 'whole' truth. Exaggerating certain characteristics over emphasises the difference between people. It can be humorous, but can also cause conflict.
14	Constructing Stereotypes Stereotyping is often related to power. Those who create media representations have the power to decide what is included in those representations. This means that stereotypes are often created by in-groups (dominant members of society, such as politicians, media company owners etc.) at the expense of out-groups (minorities in a society). For example, a newspaper may stereotype teenagers as lazy; think of a newspaper's target audience and ownership.
15	Positive and Negative Stereotyping There are many negative and derogatory stereotypes. Negative age-related stereotypes are common, like in the example above. Of course, some teenagers do fit these stereotypes, but the majority of people contribute positively to society. There is a danger that biased or unfair stereotypes are accepted as truth e.g. if a drama showed a black man mugging an old woman, it could reinforce negative portrayals of young black men. Stereotyping is often at the expense of the under-represented.
16	Development and Variation Positive stereotypes can improve perception of a particular social group. For example, a six-pack on a man is a symbol of strength, health and sex appeal. However, stereotypes change over time as messages are passed from one person to another and are reinforced. The Royal Family were once considered elitist and inaccessible, yet now two non-royal women have married into the family. It almost sounds like a fairy-tale narrative! Media can also turn negative stereotypes into positive ones by providing consumers with an alternative take.
17	Under-representation We know that representation can be biased. This is often created by under- or mis-representation. Some biases aren't immediately obvious. It is often a matter of identifying who or what is missing, and then thinking about why they occur. We can ask the following questions when we consider representations in the media: 1. How is the media product re-presenting the world to us through its codes and conventions? 2. What does it suggest is typical and what is not? 3. Who is speaking, and for whom? 4. What is being represented to us, and why?
18	Mis-representation Think of your <i>Lady Leshurr: Represent</i> CSP. BAME people are under-represented in blood donation, so the ad campaign is aiming to encourage the BAME community to give blood and feel a sense of pride. The ad also says 'you could be a rapper', which is a stereotype of black people, but then juxtaposes it with 'you could be a pilot', suggesting that assuming all black people want to be rappers is a misrepresentation.

Values and Beliefs	
Summary	
Media products reflect the society and times in which they are produced - the social, historical, cultural and political contexts. Different societies have different ideologies, and these are reflected in media products.	
Key Knowledge	
19	Representing Values and Beliefs We all have our personal ideology - our own set of rules about what we think is right or wrong. Each society has a dominant ideology , which is a set of values and beliefs accepted by most people in that society. Think of 'British Values', developed in 2014. These are democracy, respect the rule of law, liberty, respect and tolerance. Soap operas show the ideology that family is all-important, for example.
20	Dominant and Minority Representations Some suggest dominant ideology is the ideology of the most powerful group in society. People are persuaded to conform to this via cultural hegemony , which is the process where people believe the views of the dominant in society are common sense and should be followed. E.g. a dominant ideology in society is more money equals better lives; think of huge cash prizes on games shows. If you don't agree with the dominant ideology then you could be seen as strange, rebellious, or even as a threat, giving minority groups (even) less power.
21	Representation of the Self We all have our own sense of identity, formed by backgrounds, experiences, social groups, and partly by how we see people like us reflected in the media. Previously, the mass media (tv/papers etc.) held most of this power. Now, online social media allows us to more easily create versions of ourselves in the way we want to be portrayed. This has also allowed us to learn more about different identities, such as the LGBTQ+ community. Online, we tend to create a 'better' or aspirational version of ourselves, so we mediate our own online image.
22	Representations of Reality We know it's difficult to represent reality truthfully. We make decisions about selection and omission of materials, and we consider what impact the signs and codes we project will have on people's views. We, and media producers, choose what to show and how we show it so bias is always present. Reality may be constructed through using: people, places, mise-en-scene , ideas, script, sounds, camerawork, lighting, and in particular, editing.
23	Audience Theory We all decode media products based on our own knowledge and experiences, and our own willingness to accept the product as a depiction of reality. Whether or not we believe in the particular version of reality depends on a number of factors, such as: 1. The quality of the product (think of the <i>Galaxy</i> ad CSP; how real did Audrey Hepburn look?!). 2. What you are doing at the time of receiving the media product. 3. Why you are engaging with the media product (consider the Uses and Gratifications theory), and 4. Whether you identify with what is being presented to you; this could be character, situation, identity, etc.
24	Cultural Imperialism Cultural imperialism is where something from one culture becomes part of the dominant ideology in another. Think of Disney; they're an American company yet almost every country in the world will have engaged with them, and understand their cultural references. It could be argued that Disney is helping to 'Americanize' other societies, which could be destroying their own culture. Thus the representation of a certain culture or society changes.