

Scheme of Learning: Semiotics and Representation

Topic Sequence:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Semiotics and Representation	Media Theory	The Film Industry	Magazines and Newspapers	TV and the Sci-Fi Genre	Advertising	Online, Social and Participatory Media	Radio and Music Videos

Topic Overview:

This is the first topic of the GCSE Media Studies course, and the main aim is to introduce key skills which will be required throughout their study early. The specification expects pupils to be able to apply semiotic analyses to various media products. Representation makes up one quarter of the theoretical framework and is a fundamental concept in any media analysis, so whilst some of the close study products (CSPs) that the pupils have to explore are not necessarily assessed in terms of representation, a sound understanding is extremely useful. This is the opportunity to demonstrate to pupils the difference in analytical requirements for Media Studies compared to the techniques they will have used in English, and to enable them to talk comfortably and academically about ideas on race, gender identity, equality and politics, along with being able to discuss re-presentations that the media highlights to consumers.

Lesson Sequence:

The lessons have been sequenced to purposely build pupils' understanding and knowledge of what semiotics are, why they are important and how to apply them to their own work. Pupils will learn the subtleties of analysing a media product, along with the ways that meanings are communicated to consumers. The move to representation as a topic reinforces this idea, as it focuses on how and why the media presents things to us in a certain manner.

The topic starts with an initial lesson that gives pupils an understanding of the subject, along with the aspects of the theoretical framework. It introduces some basic terminology (e.g. 'establishing shot') and encourages the pupils to use terminology in their own discussions on the media products. From here, we move into the idea of semiotics, the study of signs, and how we interpret media messages. They will look initially at basic models of communication, before quickly moving to more advanced models. The idea of anchorage, linking text to image to reinforce ('anchor') media messages seems an apt bridge between the introduction to semiotics and the concept of representation.

The concept of representation, or re-presentation in the media is an important idea to be able to discuss across the course, so it is appropriate to introduce this difficult element early. It is challenging, exploring social, political, cultural and historical contexts of media products and views, and the pupils will then consider the concept of mediation, or the selection and omission of information in media products which has an effect on how the audience read them (consider, for example, the order of stories on the news, indicating importance to the viewer). The course will explain why the media makes certain decisions in the presentation of social groups, which moves towards the idea of subcultures and stereotypes. Ideas like social class, ethnicity, location and socio-economic group all contribute to representation in the media, and the pupils will learn how to critically examine the presentations in media products to gauge their level of 'truth'.

The concept of cultural hegemony, or the dominant ideology being seen as common sense, underpins the ideas of values and beliefs, and the pupils will consider their own views and identity and how these place them into the fabric of society. Our reliance on technology has affected the integrity of the reporting of incidents, and we will consider why the concept of 'fake news' has risen. Is our reality actually 'real' or are we just living, breathing avatars in an increasingly digital world?

Sequence of Lessons:

1	What is 'Media Studies'?	Knowledge Map:	1. Knowledge Map: Representation 2. Revision guide: Semiotics	Close Study Products:	None
2	Semiotics 1				
3	Semiotics 2				
4	Anchorage and Signs 1	Assessment:			
5	Anchorage and Signs 2	Knowledge:	Lesson 12 features a number of quick questions grouped under various headings. We'll also do a twenty-question knowledge checking test.		
6	Introduction to Representation				
7	Mediation	Application of Knowledge:	Exam-style question on representation of a common social issue (no CSPs studied yet to use actual exam question)		
8	Who do the Media Represent? 1				
9	Who do the Media Represent? 2	Supportive Reading, linking to Toynbee Literacy and Reading Policy:			
10	Subcultures and Stereotypes 1	Lessons 1 - 5	Daniel Chandler - <i>Semiotics for Beginners</i>		
11	Subcultures and Stereotypes 2				
12	Revision Lesson including Knowledge Test	Lessons 6 - 10	Andrew Robinson - <i>Barthes and Semiotics</i>		
13	Values and Beliefs 1				
14	Values and Beliefs 2	Lessons 11- 15	Dr Sarah Illot - <i>Man Like Mobeen</i>		
15	Representations of Reality				
16	News Reality and Fake News	Lessons 16 - end	Jake Canter - <i>BAME Representation Went Backwards</i>		
17	Assessment Lesson				
18	Allocated for any additional catch-up				