

Scheme of Learning: Media Theory

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:

The ability to understand and apply various theories to media products is an extremely important element of the course, and to this end we have decided to teach a short, discrete unit on media theory. Previously, this was taught in context, introducing theories as they are relevant in the studies of the CSPs, but after doing a student voice survey in the summer of 2022, pupils' feedback overwhelmingly the preference to introduce theory earlier. This unit will look at a number of theories outlined in the syllabus: Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratifications theory, Vladimir Propp's Narrative theory, Tzvetan Todorov's Equilibrium theory, George Gerbner's Cultivation theory, Stuart Hall's Reception and Representation theories, Daniel Chandler's Representation theory, Levi-Strauss' theory of Binary Opposition, Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze theory, and the Hypodermic Needle theory. We will also look at classifying audiences, using Young and Rubicam's Audience Classification system, along with the National Readership Survey (NRS)'s ABC1 Social Grade classifications.

Lesson Sequence:

As this is a separate unit, the sequencing of lessons is not as important as if study of theory continued to be integrated into the curriculum as we progress. However, we have chosen to sequence the material in an order of common theme, such as active audience (Uses and Gratifications, Stuart Hall's Reception and Representation theories, Daniel Chandler's Representation theory), passive audience (the Hypodermic Needle theory, Gerbner's Cultivation theory), narrative (Propp, Todorov and Levi-Strauss), sex (Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze theory), with audience classification techniques (Young and Rubicam, NRS) at the end of the unit.

Uses and Gratifications deals with the selection of media products being an active process by audience members dependent on what gratifications they expect to take from the use; for example, escapism and entertainment in the case of fictional film and tv, but maybe surveillance, learning and understanding through newspapers. Stuart Hall and Daniel Chandler both expanded upon this, attempting to consider the process that goes into interpreting a media product, and its place in reality, before any gratification is reached. This is in the way that audiences draw meaning and create representations, rather than just unquestioningly accepting what is presented to them.

That naturally leads to the idea of a passive audience, that does indeed accept 'reality' from media products exactly as the producers intended (propaganda is the most obvious example of this). The Hypodermic Needle theory explores how we are 'injected' with ideas and accept them, but that relies on passivity. Gerbner's Cultivation theory builds on this idea, suggesting that if we see or hear something enough, it becomes truth; consider techniques by politicians for an example.

The ability to apply a set of rules to established narratives is also a key skill, because pupils are expected to understand how media products are constructed and may fit into archetypes depending on their intended effects. Levi-Strauss ideas on binary opposition introduce the idea of conflict into media study, and then the narrative exploration of structure and character, by Todorov and Propp respectively, furthers this study.

The final aspect is sex and sexualisation (Mulvey's Male Gaze theory), and this then leads to various ways of classifying audiences as sex and gender are key influencers in the selection, and gratifications, of media products.

Sequence of Lessons (n.b. these may be condensed):		Topic Resources:			
1	Uses and Gratifications Theory	Knowledge Map:	1. Knowledge Maps: Representation, Audience, Language, Industries	Close Study Products:	None
2	Stuart Hall – Reception and Representation		2. Revision guide: Theory		
		Assessment:			
3	Daniel Chandler - Representation	Knowledge:	Lesson 10 will contain a multiple-choice knowledge test.		
4	The Hypodermic Needle Theory	Application of Knowledge:	6 mark exam-style question applying a theory to an unseen media product. The theory will be guided.		
5	George Gerbner – Cultivation Theory	Supportive Reading, linking to Toynbee Literacy and Reading Policy:			
6	Levi-Strauss – Binary Opposition, and Tzvetan Todorov – Equilibrium Theory	Lesson 1	https://thinkinsights.net/strategy/gratifications-theory/ - Uses and Gratifications		
7	Vladimir Propp – Narrative Theory	Lesson 2	Guilsborough School Media's notes on Stuart Hall		
8	Laura Mulvey – Male Gaze Theory	Lesson 4	Information on Daniel Chandler and the Hypodermic Needle Theory		
9	Classifying Audiences	Lesson 8	Caitlin Saroka – Propp, Levi-Strauss and Todorov		
10	Classifying Audiences 2 (if required); Knowledge Test				