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HEINEMANN i o e B

THIRD EDITION

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How to use this book

Chapter content

Chapters 1–5 correspond to Units 1 and 2 of the newly accredited VCE Media Study Design. Chapters 6–8 correspond to Units 3 and 4 of the newly accredited VCE Media Study Design.

1 Representation

Media texts represent and communicate ideas, values, attitudes and beliefs. They also represent and communicate the social, cultural and historical contexts in which they are produced and consumed. Media texts are produced and consumed in a specific social, cultural and historical context. They are produced and consumed in a specific social, cultural and historical context. They are produced and consumed in a specific social, cultural and historical context.



2 Media and change

The increasing popularity of mobile devices has changed the way we consume media. This has led to a new form of media called mobile media. Mobile media is a form of media that is accessed and consumed on a mobile device. Mobile media is a form of media that is accessed and consumed on a mobile device. Mobile media is a form of media that is accessed and consumed on a mobile device.



3 Investigating narrative

Stories are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world.



4 Media forms and narratives in production

Media forms and narratives are produced and consumed in a specific social, cultural and historical context. They are produced and consumed in a specific social, cultural and historical context. They are produced and consumed in a specific social, cultural and historical context.



5 Australian stories

Australian stories are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world.



6 Narrative and ideology

Narrative and ideology are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world.



7 Media production

Media production is a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world.



8 Agency and control

Agency and control are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world. They are a way of making sense of the world.



Case study

Invites in-depth investigation and extends students' knowledge and understanding of media texts, topics, concepts and ideas

Film noir and neo noir

NEO NOIR
Neo noir, meaning 'new', is a revival of film noir which uses and often parodies the film noir genre. Neo noir is a revival of film noir which uses and often parodies the film noir genre. Neo noir is a revival of film noir which uses and often parodies the film noir genre.

FILM NOIR
Film noir is a descriptive term that was initially applied to a style of film that emerged in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Film noir is a descriptive term that was initially applied to a style of film that emerged in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Film noir is a descriptive term that was initially applied to a style of film that emerged in the late 1940s and early 1950s.



Cut away Highlights and explains in more detail important points in the text

3.1 Narratives

People live with stories—from television, films, video games, online readings and viewings they consume in the evening—to a novel in bed before they turn out the light.

NARRATIVE AND STORY
There is a distinction between narrative and story, even though the two words are used interchangeably. At its most basic, a narrative is a series of events and a story describes how those events are arranged. That is, a story has elements such as characters, a beginning, middle and end. Narratives and stories surround us every day. People live with stories from newspapers, radio and television in the morning to encounters throughout the day at school or work and even the various forms of advertising that people consume while traveling. People receive stories on print, audio and visual presentation.

3.1.1 Call of Duty video game Narratives can be delivered in a variety of ways and read by a range of audiences.



Focus in Defines terms and concepts, expresses another viewpoint, or elaborates on main text with an example

The basic structural elements of a story will be essentially the same across the different mediums. The core elements of a narrative will stay the same in a book, a film, a television show, a play, a photographic essay and other mediums. However, the medium may cause the story elements to be arranged differently.

Much of the writing on narrative and story seems obvious when looking at what appear to be the 'natural' storytelling mediums of film and television. But it also applies to other mediums. In photography a story can be told within the frame of a single image or across multiple frames or images in a photographic essay or photojournalism about, for example, a magazine talks a story in half. There is a narrative structure for a magazine that takes the reader on a journey through its pages. Graphic magazines and zines also have an underlying structure in addition to their underlying codes and conventions of the 'readable' text within its pages.

The term 'narrative' is often used interchangeably with the term 'story' and, while it is usually acceptable to do this, there is a difference between story and narrative at a more academic level. Narrative is the overall text, and story and plot combine to form a narrative. The story contains the story elements such as characters, time and space and the plot is the way the story elements are arranged.

The best way to think of this is that the story is how you would describe a film, play, book or so on to someone who had not yet seen it. Generally, the story would describe what happened or chronological order, along the lines of: 'There was a private detective who had been hired to look for an old girlfriend by her husband. The plot is how the story is told and can include techniques, such as flashbacks and voice-over narration. In the case of the private detective example, the film might start with a flashback of the private detective with a voice-over about his long break-up with his girlfriend, then a flash-forward to the present and the story's final ending with dramatic effect.

The essential difference is that the story is what is told and the plot is how it is told.

NARRATIVE ESSENTIALS
AUDIENCE
An audience is a key element to the storytelling process. A story is usually constructed for a particular audience and the audience and their expectations in turn will influence the structure of the story.

An audience may view a work or text with their own expectations. Audience expectations can be based on their previous experiences with the medium or form or with the genre of the story, or may even be based on their expectations associated with the particular actor, director, photographer, writer or publisher. Just knowing that a comic is published by Marvel or DC brings with it a host of expectations.

At the most basic level, the audience expects a story to be established, for events to happen and for there to be a resolution.

If an audience is essential for a story to exist, can the author also be the audience? Or is a story without an audience merely a diatribe?

SELF-REFLEXIVE FILM
A self-reflexive film is a film about filmmaking, creating, audiences and the conflict between creative expression and commercial interests. Jean-Luc Godard's 1965 film *Je Suis un Soldat* (I am a Soldier) was in fact a film about a film being made. Many of the roles in the film being played by actors who had had roles in real life, for example, the fictional director in the film was played by film critic, Renald Clément.



Zines – an anti-style

A zine is a small, self-published print publication that is often produced simply with a typewriter, photocopier and a stapler. Zines are usually in black and white. When colour is applied it is simple and for a specific reason. The colour is often hand-applied and has colour photocopyed. The typewriter is usually one we would associate with a typewriter or it is hand lettered. A zine can contain writing, images, cartoons, graphic notation or a combination of them, which are usually created by the author themselves. The classic size is A5 size, which is usually achieved by folding A4 paper in half.

ZINE RULES

The main rule that can be applied to zines is that there are no rules—although, that is not strictly true as, like all media products, there are rules and conventions that have grown up around these publications of zines and there are general principles like the above which you need to adhere to. One of these general principles is that a zine is not a mass publication and it does not have mass distribution.



FIGURE 3.1.1 A zine by Year 11 media student Ashleigh is learning her things through the media



FIGURE 3.1.2 A zine by Year 11 media student Ashleigh

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Examples of student work

Samples from former VCE Media students' production design plans serve as a guide for current students as they work to produce their media product.



FIGURES 3.1.3 AND 3.1.4 *Mad Cow* (2014) and *Edge of Darkness* (2010) show how the Coen brothers have explored different genres.

Another way to consider a story by one artist that is covered by another artist—the words and how will be the same, but how they are presented is a small number of creative decisions by the covering artist—that is, their style.

Genre is a French word meaning 'type' or 'kind' and when used in English it is typically used to categorise media products. Genre can be seen as part of an industrial or institutional type of production. Filmmakers, photographers and other artists can, and usually do, have a distinctive style, but they can also work within a genre. Genre can feel quite restrictive sometimes to a writer but these constraints can be very satisfying to an audience.

Genre can also be played with, subverted and used out of context to surprise and engage an audience on a number of different levels.

The Coen brothers' films are a good example of filmmakers who play with genre and they bring their own distinctive style to a number of different genres, as illustrated in *Figure 3.1.3* and *Figure 3.1.4*.

Both *Mad cow* and *Edge* also play a large part in the representation an audience has when they approach a film, a print product or other media work. Filmmakers often talk of seeing the new *Wes Anderson* film or that latest action film. Both film and genre codes and conventions shape the story and the way it unfolds and is read by an audience.

Learning activities

- 1 What are the three essential to telling a story?
- 2 Explain the importance of an audience.
- 3 Look at *Figure 3.1.3*. Using no more than five sentences, create a story setting on the photo. What medium would you use and what genre might it be? Justify.
- 4 Look at the following scenarios for the beginning of a film. Using your knowledge of genre convention, add one or three lines describing what happens next and how it ends.
 - The 'unlucky' newly get in always being left out and being picked on by the 'lucky' group.
 - A 'bad' brother holds the city to ransom. There are only five minutes available to deal with the crisis. One is just about to retire and one is just about to be executed.
 - It is one week before the wedding and an old husband comes back to visit the bride.
 - A prisoner is released from prison. He decides to get a job together for one last robbery before he gets the country home.

CHAPTER 3 | ENVIRONMENTAL NARRATIVE 63

Chapter summary

Provides an overview of the chapter in clear, succinct dot points

Assessment tasks

Present opportunities for further research and skills development

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Media productions are constructed using technical, symbolic and written codes. Understanding these codes and what they can signify will enable you to apply and manipulate them more effectively.
- Main genres to investigate and understand the medium or form that you will develop your production in, being aware of commonly used conventions.
- The production process contains different stages: development, pre-production, production, post-production and distribution. Important tasks happen in each stage and contribute to production.
- Pre-production is when important visual and written planning for a media production takes place. Production is the 'making' stage. Post-production involves the editing and refining of a media production.

ASSESSMENT TASKS

- 1 Develop a short media production in line of the media forms listed below that each represent either a theme present in an idea in different ways. (For example, you could portray a teenager as a rebel in a one form and then have working together on a product such as a bottle water on a background from an experience. The different production periods focus on applying the technical, symbolic and written codes mentioned before to complete the media production.)
- Video (Thirty-second ad, commercial, advertisement)
 - Camera angles to convey mood.
 - Sound (including music and voice) to set the tone.
 - Editing (e.g. cut, dissolve or cross-dissolve) to connect the scenes being used.
- Print (Magazine cover or a newspaper ad)
 - Main (highlighting to convey the information)
 - Colour (to convey meaning)
 - Text (to convey information)
 - Layout (to convey information)
 - Images (to convey information)
 - Editing (to convey information)
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- Audio (Thirty-second commercial or interview)
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involves the editing and refining of a media production.

Most media productions are collaborative. They will involve various people working together in different roles to achieve the shared aim of a project. Different individuals will be involved at different times throughout the production process. The involvement of these individuals will also differ and change depending on the scale of the project itself.

There are ethical and social implications to consider and address when making a media production, such as copyright, privacy, health and safety, representation and community awareness.

Share your work with the class and discuss the ways that technical, symbolic and written codes have been used effectively. Evaluate the strengths of each form in conveying the created representation.

After undertaking a particular role on a production (e.g. editing), prepare a short report using the following questions and the data recorded in the role at various stages. Include advice for other students undertaking the role in the future, such as:

- Responsibilities in each stage of the production process.
- Advice on helpful planning templates, equipment and software programs to use.
- Benefits and challenges of the role.
- How to best manage the combined demands involved in the role (e.g. busy periods).
- Tips on collaborating and working with other roles (e.g. the director).

Working individually, develop a short narrative production in a chosen or given form. Use the concept of the three-act structure or Monomyth—monomyth is a term used to describe a story. Complete the written and visual pre-production planning (e.g. script and storyboard) and shoot and edit (e.g. to document your ideas for the project). Then pitch this to the class. Consider individual students to collaboratively bring the plan to life as a media production.

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Learning activities

Can be used as homework tasks or to facilitate classroom discussion

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Provides an overview of the chapter in clear, succinct dot points

Assessment tasks

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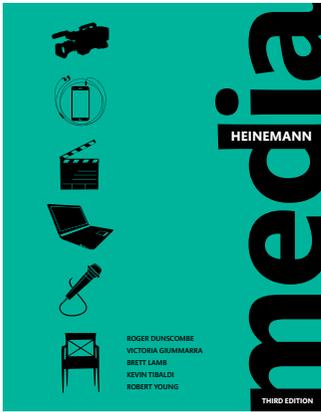
Glossary

A comprehensive list of media words and terms. Each explanation is written in easy-to-understand language.

Digital

Each student book comes with Reader+ Reader+ works both online and offline Reader+ has access to:

- podcasts and video interviews
- worksheets
- additional assessment tasks
- exam preparation ideas, tips and suggestions.



Heinemann Media Third Edition is written for the VCE Media Study Design 2018–2022 and incorporates the requirements of Units 1–4 in one convenient student book.

Student book

- Full-colour text with a highly visual and engaging design
- Dynamic and relevant pictorial and textual media examples, including former VCE Media students' work
- Topic-based units written in accessible language with clear and concise explanations of key terms and concepts
- A variety of learning activities for regular revision and consolidation
- Case studies that describe and encourage in-depth investigation of media texts and topics
- End-of-chapter summaries, assessment tasks and exam preparation
- A glossary and an index for ready reference
- Written by an experienced author team, who are all practising teachers:
 - Roger Dunscombe (lead author), Chair of Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM)
 - Victoria Giummarra, Board member, ATOM
 - Brett Lamb, experienced media teacher, blogger and presenter
 - Kevin Tibaldi, Board member, ATOM
 - Robert Young, Education Officer, ATOM

Reader+

- Available for use online and offline
- Read the student book with bonus multimedia content
- Add, edit, and delete highlights and notes
- Synchronise state and data across multiple devices even when the user is offline
- Student and teacher resources

1 Representation

The idea that reality is constructed and represented is one of the core concepts in media. All media practitioners work to portray or 're-present' a particular version of a reality—for instance, filmmakers begin by consciously thinking about ways they can represent events, characters and ideas on film. Similarly, photographers deliberately decide what to represent and what techniques they will use to do so. Even media texts that claim to show reality, such as documentaries and news, begin with a process of selection and construction and finish with a process of construction.

This chapter discusses the ways in which media products, messages and meanings are constructed and created through this process of selection, omission, construction and representation. The chapter also explores how meaning and media products are received and understood by audiences through the processes of selection, interpretation and interaction.

The Treachery of Images by René Magritte, oil on canvas, 1928–29. Magritte is saying that in the arts in general and in the media in particular, what is presented as reality is not reality itself.



1.1 Representing reality

Media practitioners work to portray or ‘re-present’ a particular version of a reality. The idea that reality is constructed and represented is one of the core concepts in media.



FIGURE 1.1.1 The media constructs and creates images. An Iraqi prisoner of war and marines from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit in Iraq in 2003. Note how the original Associated Press image [far left] can be cropped so how we read the image changes.

MEDIA AND REALITY

The media attempts to create a believable version of reality—if it was not believable, you would not accept it. The media relies on what has been termed your ‘willing suspension of disbelief’. You know it is a film or a television show but you ‘go along’ with the illusion—if you did not, you would not get any enjoyment from it. This seems obvious when you are talking about fictional texts, but the creation and construction of a reality happens just as much in non-fiction texts such as news and documentaries. It is just that in these latter cases the construction is concealed more by both the creator and the viewer/reader, as illustrated in Figure 1.1.1.

Figure 1.1.1 from the Iraq War in 2003 illustrates how reality can be constructed through selection and omission. In the first and original image, marines from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit are seen offering an Iraqi prisoner of war a canteen. The next image is cropped to show the gun only. The last image is cropped to show the canteen only.

Learning activities

- 1 Look at René Magritte’s painting on page 1.
 - a Describe what you see.
 - b The text in the image, ‘Ceci n’est pas une pipe’ means ‘This is not a pipe’. If this is not a pipe, then what is it?
- 2 Look at the images contained in Figure 1.1.1.
 - a Describe what you think is happening.
 - b By covering different parts of the image (selection and omission), can you create different ways of reading this image?
 - c What implications can you see when images are manipulated like this?

CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY AND SELF

One of the ways the media (and you) can construct a reality is via the process of representation. That is, the media (and you) represent a construction as though it was the original and authentic. These representations can be a variety of different things. They can depict:

- individuals (these can be human or animated characters in narratives, or political and historical figures or celebrities)
- social groupings (such as families, genders, age or ethnic groups)
- institutions (such as the law)
- ideas (such as freedom or equality)
- events (such as wars)
- issues (such as climate change and the environment, or terrorism).

IDENTITY AND CONTEXT

The construction of identity can change with context. If you were constructing an identity for yourself, the way you went about it would be influenced by both:

- the medium, the form it would take; for example, a typed resume or a social media profile
- the audience; for example, a parent, an employer, friends or social peers.

Learning activities

- 1 Write down in a few sentences what 'identity' means to you. In this case, look at identity as: you as an individual; you as part of a group such as a your family, school or class; or how you identify yourself in the broadest sense, such as with respect to gender, ethnicity or something else entirely.
- 2 Using your work from Question 1, choose or create a series of images illustrating your ideas about identity. You can create the images yourself, through drawing or photography, or collect them from existing sources.
- 3 Why did you choose these images? What were you trying to communicate?
- 4 Show your images to the class.
- 5 Create a series of brief identities for yourself for each of the following and include an image:
 - a video game
 - a social media site
 - a job application
 - a dating site
 - a fan-based webpage
 - a school newsletter.
- 6 How has the context changed the identities you have created?
- 7 Read out an identity to the class and see if they can pick which context you have based the identity on.



FIGURE 1.1.2 No-photo icons

CONSTRUCTING REPRESENTATIONS

The images from the films *Australian Rules* (2002) and *Mean Girls* (2004) shown in Figures 1.1.3 and 1.1.4 have been constructed. This construction takes place through camera framing, location, choice of actors, costume, lighting, location and other tools. The constructions or representations in *Mean Girls* and *Australian Rules* are of specific groups in society—teenagers, or two specific groups of teenage boys and teenage girls. These representations are not random, but carefully selected and constructed by the filmmakers. These constructions give the audience clues and cues on interpreting the images. At its most obvious, in the case of *Mean Girls*, the dominant colour in the image is pink, which, in Western culture is generally seen as a girls' colour. Therefore, you can see that these constructions are mediated (influenced) by a number of things including the maker, the viewer and the society or culture that the work was produced in.



FIGURES 1.1.3 AND 1.1.4 *Australian Rules* (2002) [above] and *Mean Girls* (2004) [below]. These images show representations of teenagers from different times and places.



Learning activities

- 1 Look at Figures 1.1.3 and 1.1.4.
 - a What effect does the choice of actors, costumes, camera framing, composition and lighting have on the representations?
 - b Do you think gender has been constructed in different ways in these images?
 - c Why do you think this? Provide examples from the images that support your case.
- 2 Compare your answers with others in your class.
 - a Are there any differences in interpretation? Explain.
 - b How do you account for these differences?

CONSTRUCTING MEANING

To understand the construction of media realities, you need to look at how the viewer/reader or participant makes sense of, reads, understands or constructs the meaning and 'reality' of the text.

The term 'text' in media and cultural studies has a wider meaning. It is best described as the artefact or 'thing' being examined. It can be a film, magazine, video game, photograph or any media product.

An image does not have a meaning in and of itself—there is no inherent meaning that lies within it waiting to be uncovered.

The audience plays an essential role in the creation of meaning in a text. Audiences interpret or read a representation based on a variety of factors, such as their previous experiences with similar images, how their society or culture generally reads these images, and even the language they use to describe or interact with the images.

It is generally acknowledged that people read and interpret images and, in fact, media products in general via the language of their culture. People give meaning to things with words. If an object could not be named or described in words, then it would be very difficult to communicate it to someone else. Communication is one of the core elements of representation in the media, which exists to communicate ideas. Ideas are coded within representations and the decoding starts to occur at one of the most basic levels of language—words. If this is the case, then an examination of how words work to create meaning and how this meaning becomes attached to representations is needed.

Roland Barthes was a leading French literary theorist and philosopher in the twentieth century. He questioned how much one could understand the written word in relation to speech.

DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION

Roland Barthes, among other influential thinkers, argued that meaning was attached to a representation via the process of language and that the meaning of words is derived from a process of denotation and connotation. At its simplest, this process starts with denotation—attaching a name and a definition to an object. For example, a simple metal object that is triangular in shape with a sharp edge and wooden handle is given the name 'knife' (denotation).

However, the word 'knife' is not neutral. By the process of connotation, a number of meanings can be attached to the word 'knife', which may be as varied as cooking, food and adventure, or murder, blood and violence.

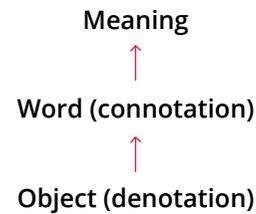


FIGURE 1.1.5 How meaning is created

MEANING: CULTURE AND CONTEXT

Meaning attaches to a representation in a number of ways. Two of the most significant are through the cultures the meaning has been created and viewed in, and the context in which it is read. The role of context can completely change the way an image is read. Take the example of the knife. A knife lying on the floor with blood and broken glass around it will be given a different meaning to a knife placed next to a plate and cake with candles on it. These readings, however, are also culturally based. The knife and candle would be read very differently in a culture that did not bake cakes nor celebrate birthdays like Western cultures do.

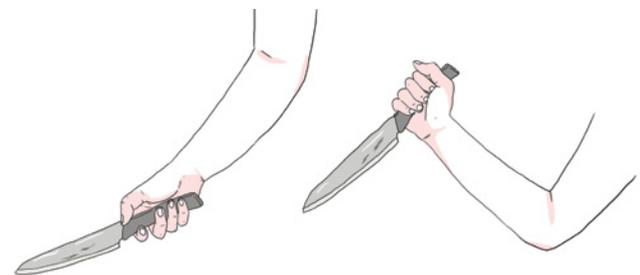


FIGURE 1.1.6 These illustrations reveal how meanings attached to a 'knife' can be altered in subtle ways.

SYMBOLIC CODES

Meaning is also attached to images through references to, and within, culture or society. Barthes also talks of a third level of meaning: when the object can function as a 'myth maker'. By this he meant that the meaning could be an abstract idea that might be difficult or lengthy to explain, but is clear in the society in which it is viewed. In the case of the knife, an abstract idea may be happiness (for a birthday cake) or fear (for a murder). In this way, connotation and denotation can create emotion through meaning (see Figure 1.1.6).

COLOUR CODES

The important thing to remember is that these meanings are specific to the society or culture in which they are viewed. Colours, for instance, hold different meanings in different countries. In Australia, gold is generally associated with wealth and green is related to jealousy. In Western society, red is seen as the colour of love and sexuality. In China, Thailand and many Buddhist countries, red is considered a lucky colour and is worn at weddings. In Western countries, black is the colour of death, but in China the colour of mourning is white. Cultural meanings can also change within a society over time. In Australia, green is now connected to the environment and the environmental protection movement—a meaning that did not exist twenty-five years ago.

CULTURAL CODES

Meaning is attached via what Barthes called a 'cultural code'—that is, knowledge drawn and gained from living in, absorbing and consuming other products of a culture. Imagine this scene: it is the end of the film and the young couple have finally overcome all obstacles placed in their way and are together. The camera lingers on them as they embrace on the deck of the ship that is going to take them away to their new life. They move offscreen as the camera reveals a life buoy with the ship's name on it: *SS Titanic*. Whether this is a happy ending or not depends on your cultural code knowledge. If it tells you that Figure 1.1.7 comes from the film *Titanic* (1997) and that the *Titanic* was a ship that sank, killing most on board, you read this image as tragic and know that there is a tragic ending. If you do not know that the *Titanic* sank, then this is simply a classic ending to a romance.



FIGURE 1.1.7 *Titanic* (1997). Cultural code knowledge means audiences can read this image differently.

Learning activities

- 1 Write down three things that come to your mind when you see the word 'knife'.
- 2 Compare your answers with others in the class.
- 3 What connotations could you apply to each image of a knife in Figure 1.1.6? Draw one more frame for each image that could once again change the meaning.
- 4 You see a knife rack on a kitchen wall. All the knives are there, except the biggest carving knife. Write the meaning you attach to the face of the missing knife if:
 - a it is daytime and sunlight is flooding into the kitchen where food is bubbling in a pot
 - b it is night-time and the kitchen is enveloped in darkness. You can only see the knife rack by a flash of lightning, and the only sound is a door banging in the wind.
- 5 Now think of two other objects and show how the meaning attached to them can also change with the context they are viewed in.

	NAME OF OBJECT	CONTEXT 1	CONTEXT 2
1			
2			

- 6 Write the meanings you generally associate with the following colours: red, pink, brown, yellow, blue, gold, black, white, grey and cream. (There may be more than one meaning.)
- 7 Share your colour meanings with the class. Does everyone agree on the same meanings?

CODES AND CONVENTIONS

Codes and conventions are some of the building blocks of media language and are very important in the construction of representations. Like language they involve elements that create an organised system of order and construction.

Codes and conventions work, in large part, due to audience familiarity and expectations and, as we have seen, can be culturally based. Many of the visual codes people are familiar with from film and television have become a kind of universal language.

SILENT FILMS

The Cabinet of Dr Caligari (1920) and *The Idle Class* (1921), shown in Figures 1.1.8 and 1.1.9, illustrate the codes within early silent movies that became a kind of universal language that could be read in similar ways by diverse audiences around the world, no matter which language they spoke.

There is not a great deal of difference between a code and a convention when talking about representation. Generally, a code is considered to be more like a rule, similar to grammar, whereas a convention is usually an established practice. A code is often the process by which people have learnt the language of the medium. For example, audiences have learnt that when a film cuts from one scene to another, time has passed. A convention may be a symbolic or a story element, such as that the bad guys lose or that a television news broadcast starts with a major story, and is then followed by national news, state news, sport, the weather and then perhaps a good news story. Similarly, a convention in print might be that a magazine begins with a front cover, some advertisements and a title page and ends with a short article or column before the last page, which is often an advertisement.

Learning activity

- 1 Look at Figures 1.1.8 and 1.1.9.
 - a What do you think is happening in each image?
 - b What do you think happened just before and what will happen just after?
 - c Compare your answers with other class members. Was there a generally agreed reading?

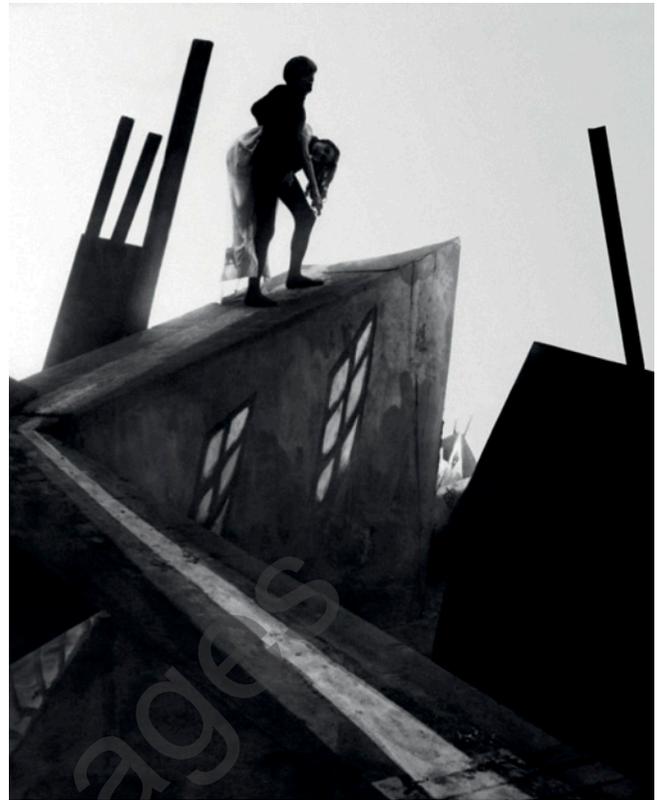


FIGURE 1.1.8 *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920)



FIGURE 1.1.9 *The Idle Class* (1921)

VISUAL CODES IN ACTION

From the example of shots shown in Figure 1.1.10, the viewer can see how images are coded. The images/codes are made up of a combination of elements that, when combined, have meanings attached to them.

- Shot 1: The frame is little more than a shot of a person with a minimal amount of information attached to it.
- Shot 2: If the camera angle is changed to show the shot at a low angle, not only is the image a bit more interesting, but the viewer can begin to develop some assumptions about the person in the shot. Consider what a low-angled shot might mean in this context.
- Shot 3: In this shot, the lighting has been altered. The lighting has been directed from behind the person so that now he has been silhouetted. Consider what you think this combination of back lighting and camera angle might mean.
- Shot 4: In this shot, the person now has an object in his hand; that is, he now has a prop. The inclusion of the prop can alter and/or enhance the image's meaning.
- Shot 5: The person has raised the arm holding the object above shoulder height. There is now an element of performance included in this shot.

READING REALITY

Images like the 'axeman' in Shots 4 and 5 in Figure 1.1.10 can usually be quite simply read, but different audiences

can read other images in very different ways. This idea of audiences and their role in reading codes, conventions and cultural references is vital to understanding how codes and conventions operate within media texts and within the cultures that produce the texts. For codes and conventions to convey meaning there has to be a general agreement among the audience about their meaning—just as there is general agreement about the meaning of words among speakers of a language.

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall developed a theory about audiences and their understanding of a text. Hall's 'reception theory' is broken into three reading types:

- 1 dominant or preferred reading where the reader/viewer shares the coded meaning with the author and reads it in ways that the author may have intended or that is consistent with the dominant cultural and social values
- 2 negotiated reading where the reader/viewer generally shares the dominant reading, but brings to bear their own interests and influences
- 3 oppositional reading where the reader/viewer understands the dominant reading and codes but rejects them and views the text from a different position. An example of this might be a feminist watching a Miss Universe pageant or a Green voter watching a Liberal Party advertisement.

The Italian writer and philosopher Umberto Eco also talked of an 'aberrant' reading, where a totally idiosyncratic reading is made that often has little grounding in a shared reality.

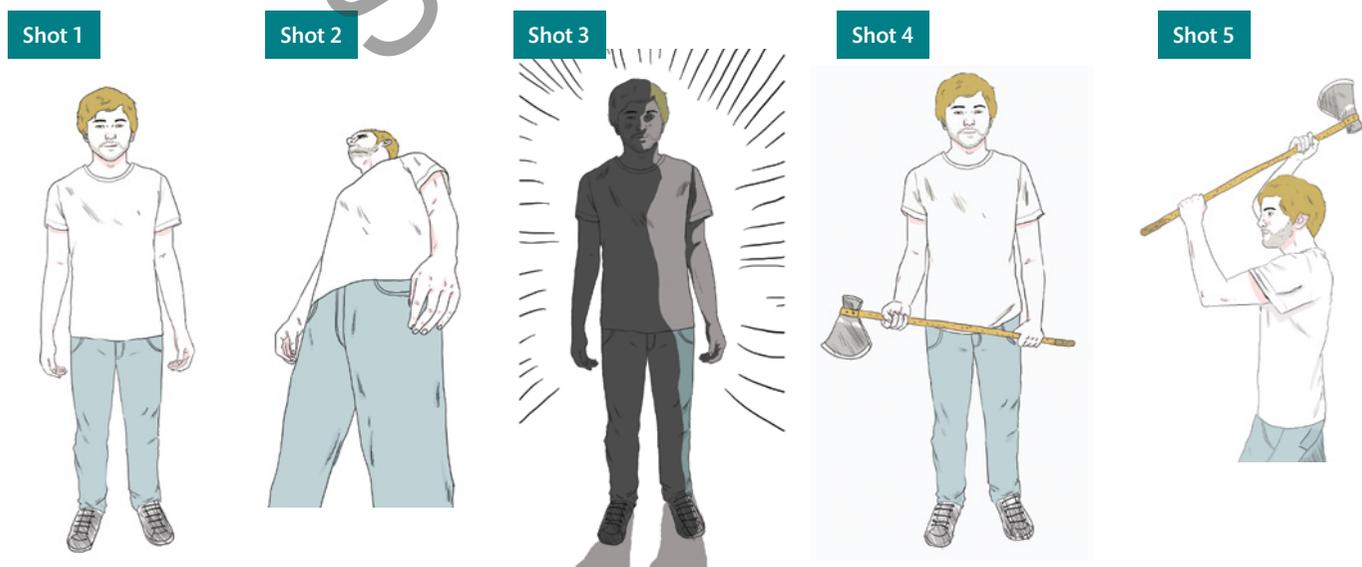


FIGURE 1.1.10 A storyboard showing how images are coded

For example, the song 'Helter Skelter' by The Beatles can be 'read' by an audience in different ways:

- dominant reading: could be, as the songwriter Paul McCartney said, just a wild rock song about a children's ride in an amusement park
- negotiated reading: could accept the dominant reading but also see the song as being about love and its wild ride
- oppositional reading: could be asking how rock stars know what love and life is about when they live in an artificial and isolated world
- aberrant reading: could be the way cult leader Charles Manson read the song—as a call to murder people and to start a racial war through random killings.

CODES AND CONVENTIONS IN ACTION

While audiences may interpret codes differently, they also tend to read them in similar ways. Some people's reading of codes is so ingrained that it just seems the 'natural' way to do it. For example, at a basic level, audiences most often read a film's fade in as a cue that time has passed or, when an object is zoomed in on, they know to attach importance to it.

VISUAL AND AUDIO CODES

Broadly speaking, codes can be divided into two main groups, visual and audio—these are in addition to the cultural codes mentioned earlier.

These are the codes associated with production elements or technical devices such as camera work, sound effects, lighting and so on. Some of the visual and audio codes audiences are familiar with are:

CODE	EFFECT OR MEANING
Low-angle camera, looking up	Character appears powerful
High-angle camera, looking down	Character appears vulnerable
Lighting is low with many shadows	Mystery
Fade to black	Time has passed
Cut to and cut back	There is simultaneous action that the audience is seeing two things that are happening at the same time
Music builds	Tension is increasing

Learning activity

Create your own story around Shot 5 and include four other shots.

				
SHOT 1	SHOT 2	SHOT 3	SHOT 4	SHOT 5

You can carry out this exercise in a variety of ways:

- Use a digital camera to capture the images.
- Sketch the images by hand.
- Select someone in the class to perform to your directions, using the boundaries of the whiteboard as your frame.

GRAPHIC NOVELS

Codes and conventions from one medium can be seen or used in other forms. For example, film codes have become part of the visual language of graphic novels, as seen in Figures 1.1.11 and 1.1.12.



FIGURE 1.1.11 *Runaways: Pride and Joy*, Vol. 1, Marvel Comics, 2004

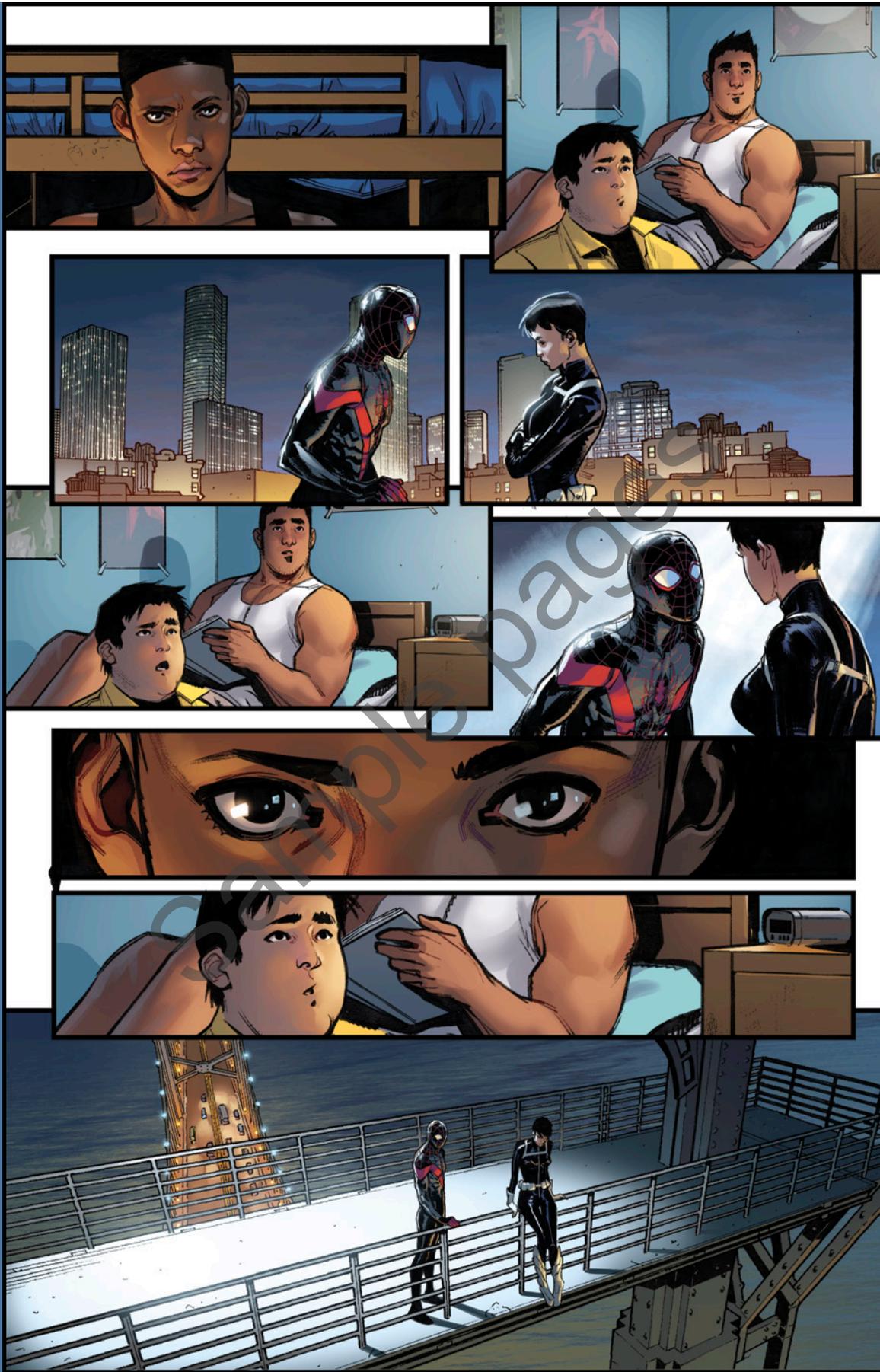


FIGURE 1.1.12 Spider-Man, No. 12, Marvel Comics, 2017

Learning activities

- 1 Look at Figure 1.1.11.
 - a Write down all the visual codes that you can see.
 - b What effect might these have on an audience?
 - c What might you expect to happen next?
- 2 Write down at least three audio codes such as music, voice or sound effects that you think would fit the image. Explain why you have chosen each one and the intended effect on the audience.
- 3 Look at Figure 1.1.12.
 - a What are some of the codes and conventions from graphic novels that you can see? For example, what direction/order are the frames being read in?
 - b What are some of the codes and conventions from film and television that you can see?
 - c What effect do you think the combining of these codes and conventions has?

NARRATIVE CONVENTIONS

Narrative conventions are some of the ways a story is organised and portrayed. Audience expectations when approaching a story are, to some extent, shaped by familiarity with the codes and conventions of storytelling. Genre expectations also shape the way an audience approaches a media product, how the story will unfold and how it will end.

The codes and conventions of television news is a good example. During a broadcast, the audience expects to be approached by a newsreader (an authoritative figure)

who will introduce the items and reporters 'on the scene'. Viewers also expect the stories to be presented in a certain order (e.g. important, national, local, international, sport, weather, novelty) and that they will contain interviews and opposing viewpoints. These conventions are so familiar that, to the audience, they define a news bulletin, and seem to be the 'natural' or 'normal' way of delivering the news. The viewer does not tend to see news bulletins as a particular construction that may have other values at play.

Learning activities

- 1 Watch the news on television tonight. The conventions are so strong that it does not matter which one. Write down all the codes and conventions you can see. They may be technical as well narrative. Compare your responses with others in your class.
- 2 Fill in the following table using your knowledge of genre narrative codes.

GENRE	MAIN CHARACTERS	SETTING	STORY	ENDING
War				
Romantic comedy				
Teen comedy				
Space				

1.2 Representations and values

The media is not neutral—its values influence the representations that are constructed.

REPRESENTATIONS

The representations that are a vital part of the media's construction of reality are not neutral—there are a variety of values that are embedded in them. Some of these are obvious and others are deep-seated and concealed by what we consider to be 'normal' or 'natural'. An image, a film, an advertisement or other media artefact is a product of the society and so it will contain the values of that society. These values can range from what the society considers proper, such as all children should go to school, to values that a society holds to be important or essential, such as killing is wrong.

The values that the viewer or audience brings to the interpretation of the representation are important, but a reading can be directed by a variety of influences that can include:

- prior knowledge
- cultural understandings
- personal opinions or biases
- the text itself and the context that surrounds the representation or construction.



FIGURE 1.2.1 Caption from US media source: 'A young man walks through chest-deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans.'

MEDIA INFLUENCE AND REPRESENTATION

Figures 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 show how the captions that may accompany news images can and do influence the reading of an image. The captions that accompanied the news images from Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans tell a great deal about values in America, particularly regarding race relations and how media outlets commonly represent African Americans and Americans of European heritage. The captions also reference values regarding youth and maleness, particularly when attached to race.

Hurricane Katrina was one of the worst storms to hit the USA. It devastated the city of New Orleans—a city with a population that was more than 60 per cent African American. The 280 kilometre per hour winds caused massive destruction, a storm surge caused the levees and floodwalls protecting low-lying areas to fail and 80 per cent of the city was flooded. The areas where the majority of African Americans lived were the hardest hit. Nearly 2000 people died as a result of the hurricane and tens of thousands of people became homeless. Many people blamed the government for taking too long to send aid to the city and argued that the overreaction of the authorities, such as the police, sparked claims of racism.



FIGURE 1.2.2 Caption from US media source: 'Residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina.'



VALUES AND CONSTRUCTION

Figures 1.2.3 and 1.2.4 show two views after hurricane Katrina, and how the same event can be seen differently. The images show how construction can have different values attached to it.

FIGURE 1.2.3 A man waves a US flag among other Hurricane Katrina victims as the clean-up effort continues in the wake of the devastation created by the hurricane that swept through New Orleans on 29 August 2005.



FIGURE 1.2.4 A.D. New Orleans after the Deluge, Pantheon Books, 2010

Learning activities

- 1 Describe the ways in which your reading of a representation may be influenced or directed.
- 2 Look at Figures 1.2.3 and 1.2.4. What attitude or values to hurricane Katrina and the authorities do you think each image is portraying?
- 3 Find an image from a newspaper, news magazine or news website.
 - a Keep the original caption, but write another believable caption.
 - b Share your image with your class and see who can pick the original caption.

ANALYSING REPRESENTATIONS IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

As a media student, there are some key questions you need to ask yourself when you look at how media representations operate in a social context:

- What is being represented?
- How is it being represented?
- Who made or produced the representation?
- When was it made? How does it fit with other images of the time? How did events of the time shape the representation?
- Why is this being represented and why is it being represented in this way?
- What is being emphasised and what is being left out?
- What do you understand by the representation? Would others have the same understanding?
- What alternative representations have you seen? What is the difference between the two?

REPRESENTING 'OTHER' AND POSTCOLONIALISM

Representations can reveal a great deal of information about the attitudes and values of the society that produced them:

- what a society values
- what it respects
- what it fears.

This is particularly the case when examining representations of other cultures and ethnicities. Representations of ethnicity include racial, ethnic and linguistic groups.

Colonialism in this study is taken to mean the expansion of Europe and European nations into other continents to extend their power and authority. The sophisticated technologies of weapons, transport and communications enabled Europe to conquer peoples in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Americas and the Pacific. Colonialism reached its peak in the late nineteenth century and began to decline after the Second World War when, after fighting for freedom in Europe, many of the European colonies began demanding freedom and independence.

Part of this struggle for freedom and independence was an increased recognition of how colonisation had worked on a cultural level and an examination of the role played by representations created by the colonising powers. These myths included the idea that Europeans were superior in all fields including the cultural and were coupled with a consistent portrayal of the colonised as the outsiders or as 'other'.

POSTCOLONIALISM

Postcolonialism, the study of the cultural aftermath of colonial rule, explores the effects on a society after it has experienced a period of foreign control. It became a prominent area of study in the latter half of the twentieth century, when previously colonised countries and peoples had gained or were fighting for independence. Postcolonialism contributed to an increased recognition of how colonisation worked on a cultural level and the role played by representations in creating the myths Barthes talked about.

Palestinian American literary theorist Edward Said argued that, almost from its earliest beginnings, Europe had culturally defined itself at the centre. This then placed all others as outsiders—even terms such as 'The East' defined other cultures by their relationship to Europe as the central point.

The geographical region known as the Middle East was named as such because it is situated between Europe and what was known as the Far East, now known more commonly as Asia.

Said argued that Europe defined:

- itself as rational, forward moving, progressive, free, safe, scientific, educated and civilised
- outsiders, the East, as the opposite: dangerous, backward, irrational, ignorant and inferior.

Said pointed out that these attitudes and values could be seen in the images Europeans used to represent both themselves and the colonised.

COLONIAL REPRESENTATIONS

Figure 1.2.5, an 1896 advertisement for Camp Tea, is a representation of European settlers' opinions of themselves as part of a European colonising power and reflects their attitudes towards Australia's Indigenous inhabitants. Meanwhile, in a typical colonial representation from *Tintin in the Congo*, shown in Figure 1.2.6, Europeans (and even their animals) are portrayed as educated and powerful figures who deserve total respect, if not adoration.

Learning activities

1 Look carefully at Figure 1.2.5, the ad for Camp Tea.

a Describe:

- who is in the image
- what they are doing (What positions do they hold in the frame of the image?)
- what they are wearing
- what their possessions are
- the relationship they may have to each other and to the country.

b Do you see any evidence of some of Said's arguments in this representation? What conclusions can you draw?

2 Look at Figure 1.2.6, the image from *Tintin in the Congo*.

a What evidence can you find of European superiority?

b Do you think there are any exaggerated physical features? Explain.

c What might the effect of these be?

d Do you see any evidence of some of Said's arguments in this representation?

e The Tintin books are aimed at children. How may illustrations such as this influence the way children see Africa?

f What conclusions can you draw?

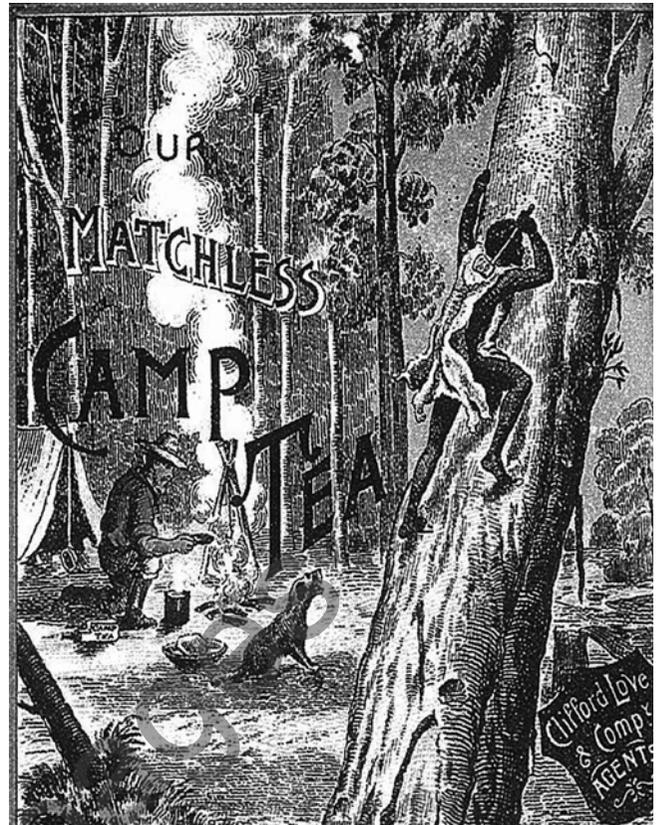


FIGURE 1.2.5 Camp Tea, Australian advertisement, 1896



FIGURE 1.2.6 *Tintin in the Congo*, 1931, revised 1946

Representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

In Australia, representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People have changed over time. These changes can be seen in an advertisement from the 1920s (Figures 1.2.7); *Dead Heart* (1996), a film that looks at the divide between non-Indigenous Australian values and Indigenous culture (Figure 1.2.8); and *The Sapphires* (2012), a film about four Indigenous women who form a band and travel to Vietnam to sing for the Australian troops during the Vietnam war (Figure 1.2.9).



FIGURE 1.2.8 *Dead Heart* (1996)

NULLA-NULLA

“AUSTRALIA’S WHITE HOPE,
THE BEST HOUSEHOLD SOAP”



FIGURE 1.2.7 A 1920s Australian advertisement for soap

Learning activity

Look at Figures 1.2.7, 1.2.8 and 1.2.9. How do you think representations of Indigenous Australians have changed over the years? Include any other representations of Indigenous Australians that you like.

Note: Use the analysing representations focus questions to help you form a response.



FIGURE 1.2.9 *The Sapphires* (2012)

THE EXOTIC, THE DANGEROUS, THE HUMOROUS AND THE PITIED

Many media theorists argue that while the representations of ethnicity may change over time, they usually still function in the same way in order to perpetuate the stereotypes, myths and values societies hold towards the 'other'.

Alverado *et al.* in *Learning the Media* (1987) have grouped representations of ethnicity into four categories: 'the exotic', 'the dangerous', 'the humorous' and 'the pitied'. Some of these groupings serve to remove what may be seen as a 'threat', while other groupings emphasise it. Remember, the composition of these groups is not fixed and will change over time. It is also important to remember that these representations come from the dominant culture—not all groups in society see the representations in the same way.

The exotic is a representation that the dominant society uses to group people who are seen as different, exciting, mysterious, strange or glamorous, but still as outsiders or 'other'. This representation can often be used about a place or time, as well as a group of people.



FIGURE 1.2.10 'Exotic' Greek culture in the USA in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002)

The dangerous is a representation that tends to be prominent in news, current affairs or narrative texts. They are generally represented as a threat to the dominant culture or 'way of life' that needs to be dealt with. The types of people who are considered dangerous often changes over time, from place to place and culture to culture.

The humorous is a representation often found in situation comedies and advertising. It generally relies on stereotyping, or characterising an individual or a group according to a conventional idea or concept. Often, it is hard to criticise representations that claim to be humorous when someone argues that they are 'just a bit of harmless fun'. This representation often functions to mock and humiliate those that the dominant society sees as a minor threat. It also serves to keep the group in their position as 'outsiders', who are to be laughed at, not with. The humorous representation may change with time and place.

The pitied is a representation often used by Western nations atoning for the damage they have caused through colonisation, economic exploitation or war. The pitied may be represented as the victims of famine and war. Usually, the causes of these famines or wars are not examined so as to avoid directly engaging with the actions of the Western nations. Representations of the pitied often go hand in hand with connotations of primitiveness, backwardness or underdevelopment, where again, the causes are not explored. There can be a fine line between the pitied and the dangerous.

Learning activities

- 1 Provide an example that you have seen in the media of a representation from each of the exotic, the dangerous, the humorous and the pitied categories. You may choose from any media form such as television, advertising, film, print and online media.
- 2 Can you think of representations of people that have changed over time? What category did the group(s) belong to before and after the dominant culture's change in perception?
- 3 Find an example of one of these representations and write a short presentation for your class discussing it in light of your reading.