Media Studies Media Language

When analysing the **purpose**, **meanings**, **messages** or **effects** of media language, remember to:

STEP 1:

Describe what you see or hear, using present tense

E.g. We **see** an image of Bond holding a gun.

STEP 2:

Use media terminology to identify the technique being used (see right)

E.g. This use of **props**...

STEP 3:

Explain what idea(s) it connotes or signifies (see list below)
AND/OR what it suggests or implies (about the characters, setting, text, issues or events)

E.g. ... **connotes** authority, power and danger, **suggesting** that Bond is strong and brave...

STEP 4:

Make links to other parts of the text (to build an argument)

E.g. This idea **is enhanced by** Bond's direct mode of address, which signifies his confidence

STEP 5:

(Where relevant) **Explain whether it communicates a message or ideology**

E.g. This supports the idea that men are often dominant in society.

(Where relevant) **Explain whether it targets a particular audience**

E.g. This constructs Bond as a role model to appeal to a male audience.

COMMON CONNOTATIONS:

anger	authority	confidence	danger	death
fragility	happiness	innocence	intelligence	love
modernity	poverty	power	strength	submission
success	tradition	weakness	wealth	vulnerability

Audio codes	Anything you can *hear* in a media text.
Connotations	The symbolic meaning of signs / ideas associated with specific elements of a text.
Diegetic & non-diegetic sound	Diegetic sounds exist in the fictional world of the characters (e.g. speech). Non-diegetic sounds can't be heard by characters (e.g. music/voice overs).
Disequilibrium	The part of a story where things go wrong and conflict arises.
Genre codes	Singular elements which help establish the genre (e.g. a gun in an action film).
High/Low-key lighting	High-key lighting is bright and positive Low-key lighting is dark and moody
Media text	A media product, e.g. a music video or TV programme. E.g. *Luther* is a media text.
Media language	The various ways a media text can communicate ideas via sound and image.
Mise-en-scène	How the scene has been arranged, including **setting, props, dress-codes, non-verbal codes** and **lighting**.
Non-verbal codes	How people communicate without words (e.g. facial expressions and body language).
Repertoire of elements	A *group* of elements which help establish the genre (e.g. a gun, chase, explosion, intense music etc. in an action film).
Technical codes	How the text has been technically constructed, including: **camera framing/angles (long shot/ mid-shot/close-up/extreme close-up/low-angle shot/high-angle shot** etc.), **editing (cuts/cross-cutting/shot-reverse-shot/rapid cutting** etc.)
Visual codes	Anything you can *see* in a media text.

Codes | Conventions | Connotations

Media Language Glossary

NARRATIVE:

Term	Definition
Action code	Something that happens in the narrative that tells the audience that some action will follow (e.g. a gun is drawn).
Binary oppositions	Claude Levi-Strauss's theory that all narratives are based on the conflict of binary oppositions (e.g. good vs. evil).
Disruption (or 'disequilibrium')	Part of Todorov's theory, this is the problem or conflict in the story that disrupts the equilibrium e.g. a murder.
Enigma code	Mysterious elements that tease the audience and encourage them to ask questions.
Equilibrium	A state of balance or stability (in Todorov's theory the equilibrium is disrupted and later restored).
Narrative	The 'story' that is told by the media text. All media texts, not just fictional texts, have a narrative. Most narratives are linear and follow a specific structure.
Propp's "Spheres of Action"	According to Propp's theory, most narratives centre on a **hero** battling a **villain** (with the aid of a **helper**) to save a **princess** (damsel in distress). These can be referred to as "Proppian hero" etc.

ADDITIONAL NARRATIVE TERMS: arc of transformation / back story / flexi narrative / linear narrative / non-linear narrative

GENRE:

Term	Definition
Conventions	What audiences expect to see in a particular genre.
Genre	Media texts can be grouped into genres that all share similar conventions, e.g. horror films.
Hybrid genre	Media texts that incorporate elements of more than one genre e.g. action-comedy
Iconography	Visual elements associated with a genre.
Realism (or *verisimilitude*)	A style of presentation that claims to portray 'real life' accurately and authentically. Different genres have different amounts of realism (or "verisimilitude").
Sub-genre	Where a large genre is sub-divided into smaller genres, each of which has their own set of conventions. For example, horror can be sub-divided into vampire/zombie/slasher etc.

ADDITIONAL TERMS:

Term	Definition
Anchorage	The words (or sounds) that accompany an image (still or moving) give the meaning associated with that image (e.g. a negative headline or mood music).
Composition	How the elements onscreen appear in respect to each other and within the frame, itself – e.g. placed in the **background** and **foreground.**
Ideology	A set of messages, values and beliefs.
Intertextuality	Where one media text references another media text.
Mode of address	The way in which a media text 'speaks to' its target audience, e.g. "a chatty/informal mode of address", "a formal mode of address" or "direct mode of address".
Montage (& Photomontage)	Selecting, editing and piecing together separate sections of film (or images) to form a continuous whole.
Sign/code	Something which communicates meaning, e.g. colours.
Tagline	This is the short phrase or slogan that appears in trailers and on posters. It gives a clue to the genre and storyline of the film and often includes an enigma.
Typography	The style of font/lettering. **Serif fonts** like Times New Roman are more traditional and formal, while **sans-serif fonts** (like Calibri) are more modern and *sometimes artistic*.
Viewpoints	Different perspectives in relation to values, attitudes, beliefs or ideologies.

ADDITIONAL TERMS cont. (see full glossary for details):

General terms:	**Background / foreground / denotation / media forms / media platforms / media products / *discourse* /**
Magazine terminology	**Masthead / cover lines / house style / feature / layout & design / subject-specific lexis / rhetorical question**
Moving image terminology	**Audio / camera angles / camera shots / editing / privileged spectator position**
Newspaper terminology	**Broadsheet / caption / colloquial language / headline / masthead / red top / splash / tabloid**
Video game terminology	***MMORPG* / *open world* / *avatar***