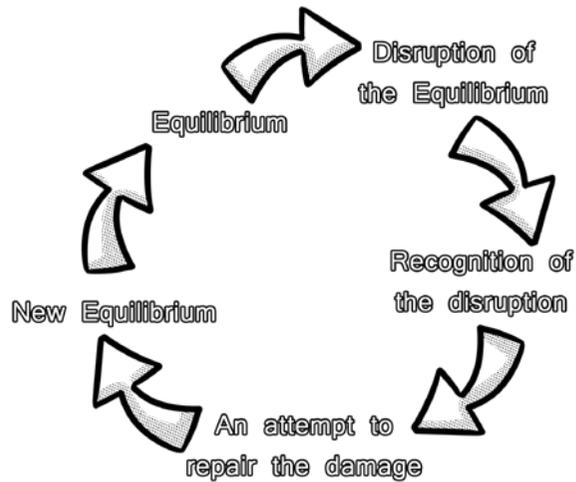


GCSE Key Concept: Narrative



PIXL Media Studies



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ENIGMA?



KnowIT

Why Do we Care About...?

- Almost every media text has some form of narrative running through it, whether it is a clear story with a beginning, middle and ending or a series of events reported through the media. Audiences **construct meaning** through their understanding of narrative structures and roles.

Narrative Theory

Levi-Strauss Binary Oppositions

- **Levi-Strauss** explored the idea that audiences made sense of narratives based on oppositional forces working against each other to drive the narrative forward. Examples of common **binary oppositions** seen in media texts include:

Good vs Evil
Young vs Old
Humans vs Nature

Choose a contemporary media text and explore how binary oppositions are used within the text to drive the narrative forward and engage the target audience.

Narrative Structure

Narrative structure refers to the way the story is told to the audience, the way the events unfold during the text. Narratives can have many different structures to them:

- **A closed structure** - a clear ending to the story, often leaving the audience feeling content and happy with the outcomes.
- **An open structure** - there is no clear and final conclusion to the story, this leaves it open to the audience to interpret.
- **A multi-strand structure** - there are several narratives running parallel with each other during the story, these might interlink at certain points during the sequence of events.
- Conglomerate produced films often end with a closed (happy) ending, whereas independent films tend to challenge this.

Narrative Key Terms

Linear	Non-linear
Structuralism	Binary oppositions
Iconography	Equilibrium
Connotation	Diegetic world

Can you research the definitions of these key terms? Then write them up in your own words, or even better make an infographic?

Digital Media and Creating Narratives

- With advancements in new technologies audiences are becoming more proactive in creating their own narratives. Media theorist Henry Jenkins explores the idea that producers of media texts have created 'worlds' for audiences to engage in, that work together to tell the story of a media text. These worlds are developed and enhanced through on-line digital media and the communities that they have created, he calls this participatory culture.

NARRATIVE

noun: the construction of elements to create a story

Narrative Theory

Propp's Character Roles

Propp wrote about the idea that every narrative contains seven identifiable character roles:

1. The **Hero**.
2. The **Villain**.
3. The **Princess**.
4. The **Helper**.
5. The **False Hero**.
6. The **Donor**.
7. The **Dispatcher**.

Q. Steve Neale (a film theorist) wrote about the importance of repetition and difference within film-making. Why do you think audiences enjoy familiarity in narrative roles and structure?

Whilst these roles might be identifiable in many films, it is important to remember that in modern media texts **challenge the conventions** of traditional narrative structures and narrative roles in order to engage a **modern audience**, and challenge certain stereotypes associated with social groups.

Narrative Theory

Roland Barthes Narrative Codes

Barthes explored how narratives are constructed to appeal to an audience through using different codes. The audience read these codes and make sense of them, resulting in audience gratifications from the text. These codes include:

- **Enigma Code** – a mystery in the narrative that engages the audience.
- **Action Code** – actions or events that move the narrative forward.
- **Symbolic Code** – when meaning is created through the use of signs and signifiers.

Narrative and Audience Appeal

- One of the key narrative hooks that engages an audience is the use of ENIGMA codes within a film. Audiences are used to reading narratives from a young age and therefore recognise and gain pleasure from formulaic narrative structures. During the text the audience is led to expect certain elements linked to the genre conventions of that text, within a narrative this often revolves around the audience's need for excitement/suspense, an element of tension regarding the outcome and closure.

Narrative Theory

Todorov's Narrative Structure

Tzvetan Todorov is one of the most well-known theorists when exploring narrative structure. His theory puts forward the idea that every narrative follows the same structure:

1. An **equilibrium**.
2. A **disruption**.
3. An **attempt to repair**.
4. A **resolution**.
5. A **restored equilibrium**.

This is also known as the classic **Hollywood** narrative structure and provides audiences with the gratifications of familiarity and a clear **resolution** at the end of the narrative.