

## **Lang and Lit: Some Terms to Consider**

**Access:** The ability of media consumers to produce their own texts and to have those texts acknowledged by the agenda setting media. Also, the ability of media consumers to respond to the dominant media.

**Agenda-setting:** The ability of the media to tell people what and whom to talk and think about. Also refers to those media that have more credibility than their competition.

**Analog:** Media software which has a physical quality and presence.


**Audience:** The group of consumers for whom the media text was constructed as well as anyone else who is exposed to the text.

**Binary Oppositions:** Understanding something because it is opposite to what we think we know.

**Branding:** The process by which a commodity in the marketplace is known primarily for the image it projects rather than any actual quality.

**Censorship:** The practice of suppressing a text or part of a text that is considered objectionable according to certain standards.

**Connote/Connotation:** A description of value, meaning or ideology associated with a media text that is added to the text by the audience.



**Construct or Construction:** The process by which a media text is shaped and given meaning through a process that is subject to a variety of decisions and is designed to keep the audience interested in the text.

**Consumers:** The audience for whom a commercial media text is constructed and who responds to the text with commercial activity.

**Convergence:** The merging of previously separate communication industries such as publishing, computers, film, music and broadcasting, made possible by advances in technology.


**Critical:** A reflective position on the meaning, biases or value messages of a text.

**Critical Autonomy:** The process by which a member of the audience is able to read a media text in a way other than the preferred reading. Also used to describe the ability of media literacy students to deconstruct texts outside the classroom.


**Critical Viewing:** The ability to use critical thinking skills to view, question, analyze and understand issues presented overtly and covertly in movies, videos, television and other visual media.

**Cut:** An edited transition between two images in which one image is immediately replaced by another.

**Deconstruction:** The process by which the audience identifies the elements that make up the construction of meaning within a text.



**Demographics:** Measurable characteristics of media consumers such as age, gender, race, education and income level.



**Denote/Denotation:** A description of a media text indicating its common sense, obvious meaning.

**Digital:** The storage and transmission of information by reducing it to digits and then reassembling it for an exact reproduction.

**Docudrama:** A filmed dramatization based on fact that combines documentary and fictional elements. In the production process, "based on" allows the creators of the text wide creative latitude and a docudrama is, at best, a skillful representation of a real person or event.

**Dominant:** When a text is read by the audience in a way that is intended by the creators of the text.


**Flak:** An organized attempt to influence media content, which can take the form of letters, phone calls, petitions, lawsuits and legislation.

**Genre:** A category of media texts characterized by a particular style, form or content.

**Hardware:** The physical equipment used to produce, distribute and exhibit media texts.

**Hegemony/hegemonic:** When dominant groups persuade subordinate groups that the dominant ideology is in their own best interests. The media's function in this process is to encourage maintenance of the status quo.

**Homophobia:** The fear of homosexuality as expressed by demeaning images in media texts.



**HTML (Hypertext Markup Language):** is a computer programming language that allows people to create links on the world wide web from one source of information to another in any order.

**Ideology/Ideological:** How we as individuals understand the world in which we live. This understanding involves an interaction between our individual psychologies and the social structures that surround us. Mediating between these are the individual processes of communication as well as the technological processes of the mass media. These ideas are usually related to the distribution of power.

**Industry:** The agencies and institutions involved with the production of media texts. The term is also used in a more restrictive sense to describe the commercial production of media texts for the purpose of making a profit.


**Intertextuality:** When a media text makes reference to another text that, on the surface, appears to be unique and distinct.

**Jolts:** Moments in a media text that are generated by a broad comedy, a violent act, movement within a frame, a loud noise, rapid editing, a profanity or a sexually explicit representation, all of which are calculated to engage an audience's excitement.


**Language Borrowing:** Importing words into one language from another culture's language.

**Loanwords:** Are the words that one culture borrows and incorporates from another language.

**Marketing:** The way in which a product or media text is sold to a target audience.



**Mass Media:** Mass media refers to those media that are designed to be consumed by large audiences through the agencies of technology.



**Media Education:** Traditionally, it's the process by which one learns the technical production skills associated with creating media texts. More recently, it has also included the intellectual processes of critical consumption or deconstruction of texts.

**Media Literacy:** The process of understanding and using the mass media in an assertive and non-passive way. This includes an informed and critical understanding of the nature of the media, the techniques used by them and the impact of these techniques.

**Medium:** The singular form of media, the term usually describes individual forms such as radio, television, film, etc.


**Media:** The plural form of medium; the term has come to mean all the industrial forms of mass communication combined.

**Metacognition:** thinking about thinking. Metacognition asks you to question how we come to know things and why we believe them to be so.

**Monopoly:** Any commercial process in which one seller controls prices and supply of a product.

**"Moral Panic":** A sudden increase in public perception of the possible threat to societal values and interests because of exposure to media texts.

**Narrative:** How the plot or story is told. In a media text, narrative is the coherent sequencing of events across time and space.



**Negotiate:** The process of give and take by which members of the audience interpret, deconstruct and find meaning within a media text.

**Oppositional:** A critical position that is in opposition to the values and ideology intended by the creators of a media text, usually the dominant reading of a text.

**Prime Time:** That part of a radio or television schedule expected to attract the largest audience.


**Production:** The industrial process of creating media texts as well as the people who are engaged in this process.

**Production Values:** Describes the quality of a media production proportional to the money and technology expended on the text.


**Product Placement:** The process by which manufacturers or advertisers pay a fee in order for branded products to be prominently displayed in a movie, TV show or other media production.

**Propaganda:** Any media text whose primary purpose is to openly persuade an audience of the validity of a particular point of view.

**Psychographics:** A more sophisticated form of demographics that includes information about the psychological and sociological characteristics of media consumers such as attitudes, values, emotional responses and ideological beliefs.



**Representation:** The process by which a constructed media text stands for, symbolizes, describes or represents people, places, events or ideas that are real and have an existence outside the text.



**Sign:** a symbol that communicates meaning.

**Software:** The programs written for computers or the media texts that can be played on them.

**Stereotypes:** A form of media representation by which instantly recognized characteristics are used to label members of social or cultural groups. While often negative, stereotypes can contain an element of truth and are used by the media to establish an instant rapport with the audience.

**Studio System:** The factory-like production system in Hollywood by which movies were made from about 1925 to 1955.


**Synergy:** The combination of two separate media texts or products that share similar characteristics so that one helps market the other.

**Technology:** The machinery, tools and materials required to produce a media text. In media literacy terms, technology greatly impacts upon the construction and connotation of a text.

**Text:** The individual results of media production: a movie, a TV episode, a book, an issue of a magazine or newspaper, an advertisement, an album, etc.

**Transparency:** The quality of a media text by which it appears to be natural rather than constructed.

**Vertical Integration:** The process by which a media company acquires another elsewhere in the production process.



**Virtual:** Something which is a representation rather than the real thing. In advertising, the word "virtually" means "almost."

**Word-of-mouth:** Informal way in which media products become known by audiences.

**World Wide Web:** The World Wide Web is the network of pages of images, texts and sounds on the Internet which can be viewed using browser software.