

Film trailers and posters

Section B: Thinking about the media – planning

This section supports the development of students' own planning and creative skills through the study of film posters leading to a series of creative tasks. Through their own planning students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of the key concept areas in relation to film posters and the wider topic area of advertising and marketing.

Genre: codes and conventions of film posters, iconography, repetition and variation of a repertoire of elements, subgenres, hybridity and the relationship with the audience's needs.

Narrative: narrative construction via the organisation of elements within the film poster frame, character roles within narratives, settings and locations in which narratives take place.

Representations: stereotypes and representations, identification and recognition of the way that people/characters and places are represented.

Media organisations: marketing and promoting films, branding, the use of stars/celebrities, cross-media campaigns, distribution.

Audience and users: targeting audiences, fans, audience engagement, audience response and interpretation, uses and pleasures.

You will need to show that you understand:

- ▶ the codes and conventions of film posters;
- ▶ how posters use narrative codes to sell the essence of a film;
- ▶ character roles within narratives;
- ▶ the use of star names and personas to create appeal;
- ▶ the range of strategies used to create audience appeal;
- ▶ the role of the film poster in 360 degree, cross- platform campaigns;
- ▶ how audiences are targeted.

In your own creative planning you will need to develop presentational skills showing understanding of what appeals to audiences and how your poster features are tailored to meet audience needs and expectations.

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Resource 1: Recap key areas

Digital resource

Screen 1:

In each box students should be encouraged to write everything they know about each key concept in relation to the topic area. This activity would be used after the teaching of film trailers in order to encourage the transference of knowledge and understanding to the creative planning area of this topic.

Resource 2: Identifying film posters

Digital resource

Screen 1:

This engagement activity provides a focus for the key learning points about film posters to follow. Many of the posters here will still be recognised by students despite the fact that some of them are over 40 years old. The most enduring posters are iconic. So iconic was the poster for *ET* [1982] that Spielberg used it as the logo for his production company Amblin. The *Jaws* poster [1975] apparently took 6 months to perfect and has probably become one of the most iconic/recognisable posters down to the hooked J on the title's typography. [For further research see <http://www.creativebloq.com/movies/iconic-movie-posters-712378>]

Posters chosen for use in the classroom can be used as a source of discussion regarding the essential elements of film posters and their purpose. Some discussion points here might be:

- ▶ *Raiders of the Lost Ark* uses the iconography of the action adventure film with the iconic hat of the main character and the stereotypical character roles.
- ▶ *Jaws*' font is iconic and is used for the titles of the film, on the posters, the trailers, book covers and merchandising as part of the films' marketing.
- ▶ *Captain America* uses the red, white and blue of the American flag.
- ▶ *Alien* uses colour to convey the genre and does not give too much away about the film's narrative, but it is the tag line *In space no one can hear you scream* that has captured audiences' imaginations.
- ▶ *Titanic* [which was the highest grossing film of all time from its 1997 cinema release until director James Cameron broke his own record with *Avatar*] is clearly packaged and sold here as a romance/tragedy – at the time its potential for commercial success was unknown as the stars were not huge, and the target market was specifically adults.

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Resource 3: Key terms – match definitions

Digital resource to develop students' understanding of the key terms.

Resource 4: Audience

Digital resource

Recap audience: it is important that students understand some key points. Every media text has a target audience – these audiences may be mainstream or niche [establishing key terms]. The media text will use different approaches to attract an audience and to create appeal [this leads in to a more specific study of what techniques are commonly used to create appeal].

Resource 5: Creating appeal

Digital resource

Screen 1:

Classwork – modelling approaches. Answers might include:

- ▶ star appeal – recognition acts as a quality marker;
- ▶ recognition of other actors – Simon Pegg whose appearance in this film will appeal to some audiences and fans of Simon Pegg;
- ▶ familiarity with franchise;
- ▶ visual codes promise action scenes – genre codes;
- ▶ the tag line creates an enigma and expectations of intense scenes;
- ▶ the film is in IMAX – promise of spectacle – a cinematic *experience*;
- ▶ the budget is presumed high – again a form of reassurance;
- ▶ the poster design is novel/unusual which creates a dynamic effect and echoes the promised intensity of the film.

Screen 2:

Answers might include those that appear on the screen and any other justified suggestions. This activity encourages students to make the link between the elements in the poster and the audience. [A similar approach will be essential to their own creative planning.]

Resource 6: Zooming in

Digital resource

Taking a closer look: here students need to comment more specifically on the purpose and effect of the specific elements. Discussions might revolve around the following points:

- ▶ Institutional features [reference to Marvel] act as a quality marker, suggesting a big-budget quality production. [*Guardians* was the highest-grossing superhero film of 2014 and was so successful, both commercially and critically, that a sequel is scheduled for

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release in 2017].

- ▶ Stars' names attract an established fan base and can draw disparate audience strands to a film. Here *Spy* is again another commercially successful film, making \$236 million at the box office against a relatively small budget of approx. \$65 million.
- ▶ IMAX promises audiences a film-viewing experience as the format allows for an immersion within the film's world.
- ▶ The Marvel logo is instantly recognisable and brands the film instantly – ask students what they associate with this logo.

This could be used as a front-of-class stimulus activity or as homework with students printing out the table and filling it in.

Resource 7: Poster codes and conventions

Digital and printable resource

Working as a group/in pairs. A group of pupils could work with one poster and then present their discussions/findings back to the class. Here students are now expected to draw their knowledge and understanding together.

Resource 8: Target audiences

Digital and printable resource

This could be used as a front-of-class stimulus activity or as homework with students printing out the table and filling it in or using the paper-based version.

Resource 9: Poster positioning

Digital and printable resource

One of the initial points about the purpose of film posters was that they need to make a connection with the audience – therefore positioning posters in different locations so that they meet the eye of the public and capture their interest is particularly important. For example, posters at bus stops will attract lots of passing viewers using public transport, and posters on the underground escalators will receive repeated exposure. Urban areas tend to have large digital screens on the side of tall buildings and billboards can dominate the city skyline. Magazines allow for longer engagement with readers while posters in cinema foyers are connecting with the regular cinema-going public.

This could be used as a front-of-class stimulus activity or as homework with students printing out the table and filling it in or using the paper-based version.

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Resource 10: Poster sizes and layouts

Printable resource to develop students' understanding of different poster formats.

Resource 11: Poster analysis

Digital resource

Screen 2:

This model of analysis can help students deconstruct an existing poster and can help as an evaluative model of their own poster designs.

Screen 3:

Prompt questions can support other students. After studying the poster watch the trailer and consider what further information/understanding the trailer gives to potential audiences. This reinforces the link between the film poster and other elements of a campaign.

Screen 4:

Watch the trailer and ask students to discuss what this adds to potential audiences' understanding of the film.

Resource 12: Film terms bingo

Digital and printable resource to reinforce students' understanding of the key terms.

Resource 13: Teaser posters

Digital resource

Screen 1:

A teaser poster is released at an early stage of a marketing campaign which can raise audiences' expectations and essentially whet the appetite. It usually contains a basic image or design and does not reveal too much information. The purpose is to raise awareness and generate interest for the film. Further research: <http://www.shortlist.com/entertainment/films/the-25-best-teaser-posters>

Screen 2:

Main posters are split into thirds.

Screen 3:

Despite its unusual slanted presentation this poster still follows the conventions of thirds.

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A photograph of rows of red cinema seats, viewed from the side, filling the top half of the page.

Resource 14: Creative task

Students are asked to create their own film poster. Other activities could include printing out the plot synopsis for existing films and in pairs/groups decide on the key elements that will need to be displayed on a poster. Students could be asked to remarket an older film to appeal to new audiences.