Audience response: contemporary non-mainstream magazines

Apply Stuart Hall’s reception theory to the set magazine that you have studied. You should give specific examples from the magazine (front cover, contents, articles, advertising) when completing this exercise.

The target audience is potentially more likely to have a preferred reading of the text. Each of the contemporary non-mainstream magazines takes a clear ideological stance that can be related to contemporary contexts. These factors will have an influence on the response of the readers – if they agree with the ideological stance of the magazine they are more likely to have a preferred reading of the text.

The following pages are good starting place for analysing intended meanings and audience response in each magazine:

- **Huck** page 10 ‘Defiance’ intro
- **The Big Issue** page 6 Editor’s letter
- **Adbusters** page 36 ‘Save the Planet, Kill Yourself’ intro

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**Huck** is a counter-cultural magazine that challenges some dominant ideologies and this is reflected in the set edition, the ‘Defiance Issue’, linked to wide-ranging issues in differing global contexts, for example female freedom fighters and non-binary notions of gender. Defiance intro ‘But if... you choose to see things for yourself – admiring the strength of the outlier rather than the safety of the pack – defiance becomes a label you wear with pride’.

**The Big Issue** is a magazine sold by homeless people and takes a strong campaigning role in contemporary society in relation to issues such as poverty and homelessness, as well as broader social issues. The feature on *I, Daniel Blake* reinforces the concerns of the magazine for contemporary social and political issues. Editor’s letter: ‘We enjoy being a rogue element, a raised rebel voice that challenges orthodoxy and standardised received notions’.

**Adbusters** embodies an anti-capitalist, non-consumerist ideology that relates to economic contexts. The set edition of the magazine explores ideas relating to the ‘decadent’ West and environmental issues, reflecting current global socio-political issues. ‘Save the Planet, Kill Yourself’ intro ‘Around you is a systematic assault on the ecosphere’

**Preferred Reading** (dominant-hegemonic position – the intended meaning is accepted)
**Negotiated Reading** (the intended meaning is generally acknowledged but adapted to fit the reader’s experience or context)

**Oppositional Reading** (the intended message is understood but the reader disagrees with it)

Now, consider how actual responses to the magazines reflect preferred, negotiated or oppositional readings. Consider the author of the comments wherever possible to identify why they may have this particular reading.

Click on the hyperlinks below to read the reviews of the set magazine you have studied:

**Adbusters**
- [Yocum Library review](#) ‘Every page is eye-catching and provocative’
- [New Pages review](#) ‘mish-mash of advertisements, graphics, photographs…’

**Huck**
- [New York Times](#) ‘my initial scepticism ... turned into appreciation for all the waves I caught’
- [Stack Magazines video review](#)
- [Review comments on Huck website](#) ‘Cutting edge journalism’

**The Big Issue**
- [Andy Cowles](#) ‘The Big Issue may have a unique distribution method, but their editorial skill is universal. It talks to the reader one-to-one, it’s personal and it’s emotional’.

Reader responses can also be accessed on the magazine’s social media sites.