

FACTSHEET

BATMAN V SUPERMAN



PRODUCT Details

- *Batman v Superman* was released on the March 25th 2016 with a budget of \$250 000 000
- Duration 2hr 31m
- Based on the DC Comics
- Produced by DC Entertainment and Distributed by Warner Bros. Pictures
- Box office to date – approx. \$873 000 000

PART 1: STARTING POINTS - Media language

Plot and Narrative

The film follows on from the *Superman* film with the narrative focused on Bruce Wayne (Batman) fearing that Superman and his actions are left unchecked. Batman decides to take on the Man of Steel. The narrative is focused on their battle with everyone unsure as to who is the hero. Batman is on a vengeful crusade and thrown into the mix is the manipulating Lex Luthor who himself wants to end the life of the Man of Steel.

The '**Uses and Gratifications Model**' suggests that audiences interact with texts for different reasons: social interaction and entertainment. With regards to the film it meets the criteria for each of these aspects which are what makes the film such an appealing **mainstream** film. Younger audiences will watch the film as a form of entertainment and also social interaction. The USP of this text is the star image and also the success of the comic book brand.

Consider how media language creates and communicates meaning:

- **The title** of the film, *Batman v Superman*, gives the impression of a typical superhero film that will attract audiences of all ages and fans of both previous film franchises. There is a clear sense that audiences will be given a blockbuster due to the significant use of CGI, star images and exciting **camera shots** and **visual codes**.
- During the course of the film, numerous sequences offer a range of **visual** which reinforce the genre. These include dark battle scenes in the city of Gotham and these scenes are far darker and

sinister than previous films featuring either superhero.

- Due to the importance of Gotham as a location we see a range of **establishing shots**. In addition, due to the fight sequences and other scenes we see numerous **long shots, mid shots and close ups**.
- **This allows for any scene to be selected for activities in class to be analysed, focusing on purpose and effect behind each shot.**
- The **non-diegetic audio code** in the film is used frequently to enhance the fight scene sequences, develop and build tension in key scenes but also to reinforce the reason as to why Batman wants to seek revenge. The **dialogue** used throughout is typical for a film of this genre but having seen both characters as heroes in previous films, seeing both in a position of conflict challenges audience expectations. Comic book enthusiasts would have prior expectation of this narrative.
- The film includes a range of conventions used in action/superhero films.
- Mixture of hybrid genres – Sci-fi/adventure.
- Produced and distributed by major Hollywood companies.

High production values including:

- Typical Hollywood 3 act structure
- Predictable scenarios, visual codes and events
- Single stranded, linear, closed narrative
- Significant use of dramatic non diegetic music
- Large number of narrative and enigma codes, e.g. who will win? Does Superman die?
- Binary oppositions – Superman (good) v Batman/Lex Luthor (Evil)
- Star Image: (Henry Cavill, Ben Affleck, Jesse Eisenberg, Amy Adams)
- Humorous dialogue on some occasions – Wonder Woman’s introduction – ‘Is she with you?’...
- Introduction of new technology for younger audiences – Batman’s weapons and aircraft
- Technical codes – range of shots and high key lighting (low key also)
- Dominant and somewhat typical representation of gender: male/female action hero. Mulvey’s male gaze – Wonder Woman - outfit
- Thrilling action sequences where the hero saves various people through a variety of non-realistic but apparently logical escapades – range of battle scenes
- Characters and locations
- These are not realistic films, although the characters must be believable.
- A main protagonist who develops superpowers – the Iron Man suit
- There are always helpers who are a team of innocent characters who happen to get caught up in the action – Alfred, Lois Lane etc.
- Exotic and elaborate locations
- The aim is to please the audience by keeping them on the edge of their seats through a series of mind-boggling chases, exotic locations and hair raising adventures
- Action & Adventure films are designed to create an action-filled, energetic experience for the audience who can live vicariously through the exotic locations, conquests, explorations, struggles and situations that confront the main characters

Consider how media language portrays aspects of reality, constructs points of view and conveys messages and values:

- The text is constructed to focus on the hatred Batman has for Superman and his determination to take revenge. We see two superheroes go head to head whilst Lex Luthor manipulates every situation in whichever way possible. Whilst the narrative and many of its aspects offer a sense of reality (characters relationships, conflict etc.) the genre is inevitably going to offer farfetched scenarios which enthrall audiences. This is clearly evident in the creation of the monster by Lex Luthor and Superman's super powers.
- Throughout the text, camera shots, visual codes and audio codes are carefully selected and organised so that the generic conventions are maximized for audience impact and only specific messages are delivered to the audience.
- **This again is in area where teachers can select various scenes and set activities based on camera shots, audio codes, character representation etc.**

Possible areas for further investigation and activities:

- **Genre: codes and conventions** of action adventure/superhero films: construction, use of technical, audio and visual codes. Genre conventions – fast passed sequences, stock characters, their narrative and appeal (**sub-genre – sci fi**).
- **Narrative** – how is the narrative of the text constructed to target audiences?
- The **function** of a blockbuster film – some people may argue that blockbusters are constructed using elaborate visual codes, big name actors and elaborate locations to attract large and make money without much consideration of narrative appeal. This depends entirely on the response of different audiences types.

PART 2: STARTING POINTS - Representation

Clark Kent/Superman

Clark is represented as a kind and gentle individual who cares for his job, colleagues and the people of the city. Superman has the same qualities but is represented as far more masculine and dominant than Clark. His dress codes and his physique emphasises a powerful individual. The way he speaks to people and confronts Batman again reinforces this representation. He is the typical superhero in every aspect.

Bruce Wayne/Batman

Unlike previous Batman films, he is represented as a vigilante. Whilst catching criminals and the interests of Gotham motivates his actions, his actions are misguided. He refuses to follow the law and does as he pleases. His vengeful quest to destroy Superman at all costs challenges the usual representation of a superhero. Bruce Wayne is represented in the usual fashion of a wealthy and successful businessman who controls others.

There are various scenes from within the film that can be used to analyse these representations. The teacher can select suitable extracts as activities to deconstruct the construction of representation. It can be focused on the characters Lois, Alfred and Lex.

Areas of representation –

- **Gender** – presented with a variety of **stereotypical** representations of gender. Typical representations of gender include Superman, Batman, Lois and Lex etc. There are typical representation of **masculinity and femininity** constructed through battle scenes, in addition to scenes which challenge these representations. Despite this genre being quite a **male-dominated** genre, there are more modern representations of women now emerging and these support modern dominant ideologies in society.

Possible areas for further investigation:

- **Theoretical perspectives** on representation (could reference theorists e.g. Stuart Hall) - stereotyping, selection and perhaps how, in some ways, the film seeks to reinforce or challenge typical representations, but in some ways challenge the way some audiences view the representation of the gender in action films.
- You may want to consider the **purpose and effect** of the way the text is constructed. What is the preferred reading the producer wants the audiences to achieve?

Audience targeting and response:

- Before considering how the audience is targeted, consideration must be given as to who the target audience is and why we think this.
- Factors to consider include age, gender, socio-economic status etc.
- How are audiences targeted? – Use of **technical** (range of camera shots), **audio** (dramatic music and dialogue) and **visual** codes (locations, CGI etc.). **Dress codes** – the significance of the visual impact of Batman and Superman as superheroes.
- Many audiences will respond positively due to the level of entertainment that the film offers and the success of the comic books/brand.

