

FACTSHEET

IRON MAN 2



PRODUCT Details

- *Iron Man 2* was released in 2010 with a budget of \$200 000 000
- Duration 2hr 4m
- Based on the Marvel Comics
- Produced by Marvel Studios and Distributed by Paramount Pictures
- Box office to date – approx. \$623 000 000

PART 1: STARTING POINTS - Media language

Plot and Narrative

The film is the second in the Iron Man franchise following on from the initial film released in 2008. The narrative is based around Tony Stark and how the world is now aware of his new identity. As the film progresses we see Tony struggle with his health and his new enemy Ivan Vanko, a man seeking revenge for his father's legacy. With key scenes set in elaborate locations such as Monaco, we see a very typical narrative where the hero and the villain battle to survive.

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:

- **Title** of the film, *Iron Man 2*, gives the impression of a typical superhero film that will attract audiences of all ages. There is a clear sense that audiences will be given a blockbuster of a text 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 scenes in Monaco, fight scenes at the Stark house and also the Exposition of Stark enterprise where the final battle scene takes place with Vanko.

- Due to the number of elaborate locations, 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 concern Tony Stark has for his health at key points in the narrative. The **dialogue** used throughout is typical for a film of this genre but one example of **diegetic** sound which is slightly different is computer generated character of Jarvis.
- 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. will Tony Stark find a cure?
- Binary oppositions – Iron Man (good) v Vanko (Evil)
- Star Image: (Downey Jr., Samuel Jackson, Scarlett Johansson etc.)
- Humorous dialogue – key aspect of the appeal of the franchise.
- Introduction of new technology for younger audiences
- Technical codes – range of shots and high key lighting
- Dominant and somewhat typical representation of gender: male/female action hero. Mulvey's male gaze – Agent Romanoff
- Thrilling action sequences where the hero saves various people through a variety of non-realistic but apparently logical escapades – scene at Monaco and the Stark Exposition
- CHARACTERS & 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 - Rhodes, Hogan, Fury 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 heroic acts of Iron Man but due to his health issues and new adversary, we see the characters go on a journey of discovery but ultimately the structure adheres to the format of the hero saving the day in the end. 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.
- 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

Tony Stark

Tony Stark is represented as an arrogant wealthy individual who cares about stardom rather than anything else. His reluctance to acknowledge his health issues reinforces this. This arrogance is challenged when we see the first fight with Vanko where Stark is genuinely concerned with his destructive technology. It's following this scene and his argument with Pepper Potts do we see a more vulnerable side to Stark. It's true to say that during the film we see Tony Stark go on a journey of discovery that shows what he truly cares about.

There are various scenes from within the film that can be used to analyse these representations. Teacher can select suitable extracts as activities to deconstruct the construction of representation.

Areas of representation –

- **Gender** – presented with a variety of **stereotypical** representations of gender. Typical representations of gender include Tony Stark, Ivan Vanko, Pepper Potts, and Natasha Romanoff 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 representation 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 reinforce or challenge typical representations, but in some ways challenge the way some audiences view the representation of the gender in action films.
- We might 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 are targeted, consideration must be given to who the target audience are 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 Iron Man as a super hero.
- Many audiences will respond positively due to the level of entertainment that the film offers and the success of the comic books/brand.

