

Sixth Form Summer Transition Work

Welcome to Arnewood Sixth! You are about to embark on a busy and important two years of sixth form study.

Sixth form life is very different. You are going to feel much more independent, empowered and responsible for your own learning. The expectation is that this journey is down to you. You need to commit and relish in the challenge of sixth form life; ambition, belief and commitment are essential for your success.

Below is a transition activity designed for you to complete over the late spring into summer in preparation for your chosen course. By completing the task, you will be better prepared for the start of your course. Your A level teachers will check the work in September. Your commitment starts now!

Subject	Media Studies	
Key Question	<p>How does Orson Welles’ 1938 radio broadcast of War of the Worlds demonstrate the impact the media might have on audiences?</p> <p>Consider the historical significance of the show, the impact the show had on its audience and the way the show might have been influential to future media productions.</p> <p>Can you compare the show to a contemporary piece of media?</p> <hr/> <p>Extension- can you research different Audience theories and apply them when considering the effects the show had on its audience? (e.g. Stuart Hall’s Reception Theory, Gerbner’s Cultivation theory or the Frankfurt School’s ‘Hypodermic Needle’ theory).</p>	
Resource List	<p>War of the Worlds broadcast</p> <p>An introduction to the impact of the show on its audience</p> <p>AQA outline of different ideas about audience</p> <p>Stuart Hall’s ideas about audience reception</p>	<p>https://archive.org/details/OrsonWellesMrBrun This broadcast can also be viewed on Youtube.</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4uL7gP94rl</p> <p>https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/media-studies/AQA-75711-TG-AUDIENCE.PDF</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xh9FjcQTWE</p>

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	Radio documentary on the production of War of the Worlds	https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/war-worlds
Your Task	<p>1. Before listening to the ‘War of the Worlds’ broadcast, give yourself a bit of an introduction to the show using the resources above and by reading the ‘additional resource’ below.</p> <p>2. Listen to the radio broadcast of ‘War of the Worlds’. This can be accessed using a number of sources- see above.</p> <p>As you listen to the broadcast, take notes on aspects of the show that might convince the audience that they are listening to a real event. In particular, consider the use of the conventions of a news broadcast.</p> <p>3. When you have listened to the broadcast and read the ‘additional resource’ below, you might want to complete the following smaller tasks before addressing the ‘key question’:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List aspects of the historical context that might have made the show seem more believable to its audience. • How were different devices used within the show to make it seem convincing? • How did the audience respond to the broadcast? Did the broadcast really produce panic or was this a myth? Can the supposed panic be explained in any other way? • How might the audience’s reception of the show be explained? • What has been the impact of the show on the media? Has the style of the show been emulated by other producers? <p>4. Consider your answers to these questions and return to the <u>key question</u> at the start of this document. Be ready to feedback your views when we encounter this ‘close-study product’ in the first term.</p>	

<p>Additional resources</p>	<p>The 'Media Insider' is an excellent resource on Youtube that addresses a number of subject areas that will be covered across the course. For newcomers to the subject, it would be really worth watching the video on the key concepts. Also, the videos on media language, camera and editing would be useful for the first half-term. Follow the link below: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGXfqzVEZrOXaZLWG3_HniA</p> <p>The following guides from AQA are worth using to cover some of the theories and topics covered in term 1: https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/media-studies/AQA-75711-TG-SEMIOTICS.PDF https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/media-studies/AQA-75711-TG-NARRATIVE.PDF https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/media-studies/AQA-75711-TG-GENRE.PDF</p>
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Summer Transition Work – Additional Resource

So many myths have arisen around this story of 'gullible' American audiences – sensationalised tales of mass hysteria, with armed mobs roaming city streets. There were stories of panicked drivers fleeing what they believed to be an alien invasion involved in fatal road crashes. As well as panic related deaths, there were stories of despairing suicides. Amid all of this were stories of the National Guard being called out to restore order.

None of it was true.

The war being waged was not between Martians and Earthlings but between two media platforms who had become locked in a bitter rivalry. And its cause was greed for advertising revenue.

The arrival of commercial radio in America during the 1920s had instigated a major battle between radio broadcasters and the existing media of newspapers. Over the ensuing 20 years the rivalry had grown ever-more intense. The main reason behind this was that newspapers had been losing significant amounts of advertising revenue to radio. As this coincided with the financial recession of the 1930s – *The Great Depression* – this loss was badly felt. By the end of the Thirties, the debilitating loss of revenue showed no signs of being stopping and newspapers remained fearful for their future.

Radio's power seemed unstoppable – its share of total US advertising spending had risen from an initial 1% in 1928 to 15% by the 1940s. One result of this was that the newspaper industry sought every and any opportunity to undermine radio as a reliable form of media and, more importantly, to attempt to prove to advertisers and regulators that the regulation and management of radio was both irresponsible and untrustworthy.

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Newspapers are said to have sensationalised the panic to discredit radio as a source of news. The day after the broadcast, **The New York Times** castigated **War of the Worlds** for using spoof newflashes “*offered in exactly the same manner that real news would have been given*”. The Federal Communications Commission, under pressure from the press campaign, investigated the broadcast.

In 1970, Welles told David Frost:

“I’d replaced Benedict Arnold as an American villain and that was because the newspapers, who’d been griping about radio taking away the advertising, finally found somebody to blame.”

Besides being one of the most famous works of Mass Media history, **War of the Worlds** was the subject of the first major analysis of audience reception. As such, the broadcast was key in legitimating the reliability of media research. **The Invasion From Mars: A Study in the Psychology of Panic** was written by Hadley Cantril, based on research by Cantril, Lazarsfeld, and Stanton. Their work became the basis for the Media Effects research for decades afterwards.

Their research found that although the broadcast purported to present an invasion by armed beings from Mars, only 10% of listeners interviewed had understood this storyline. Over 10% thought the invasion was by animal monsters, another 10% thought it was a natural catastrophe, and over 25% thought that it was an attack by the Germans.

When asked what made it so realistic, the overwhelming response was that the program’s introduction of well-known government officials and prominent scientists was persuasive. And more so the technical features of the broadcast, its appearance as an interruption of a dance program, the shifting of the news flashes from place to place, the gasping voice of the announcer, his muffled scream when he was about to break down, all contributed powerfully to the illusion.

The panic and subsequent research into the effects of the **War of the Worlds** broadcast indicated just how powerful Mass Media might be as a tool for propaganda. On the basis of the research, Lasswell and Seldes began to develop their media propaganda research. Frank Stanton realized that the demographic analysis he helped construct could also be used to predict likely audience reception in advance, instead of measuring responses after a broadcast. Whenever we talk about mass audience appeal or “niche audiences” we are building on Stanton’s post-**War of the Worlds** research development.

Our consideration of the **War of the Worlds** product focuses on (a) the broadcast as part of a larger struggle for power and (b) indicative of attitudes and concerns of the era - how contextual and ideological elements shape media products and how these in turn shape the wider understandings and ideas of their audience. To do this, we will focus on the theoretical model proposed by Stuart Hall called **Reception Theory**.

A media product - a newspaper, radio broadcast, film etc.- is not merely passively accepted by the audience that consumes it. The spectator-audience is involved in a complex process of interpreting the meanings of the text based on their own personal circumstances: gender, age, cultural background, and life experiences. In essence, the meaning of a media product is not inherent within the product itself, but is created within the relationship between the product and the spectator-audience.

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In this way, we can begin to understand that although responses are shaped by the general prevailing values and contexts of each era, these are refined by each individual. As such, each person may completely accept the meaning/response of the product, accept some of its values, or completely reject them.

The term was first used by the German theorist Hans-Robert Jauss in the late 1960s to analyse literature, and is now a key concept of PostModernism. Reception theory is based on the idea that the meaning of a text is located somewhere between the reader and the text and that each person will decode the text slightly differently depending on their background, cultural life experiences and the access they have to the frameworks of power that enable them to make informed judgements.

The cultural theorist Stuart Hall developed the use of the concept in the 1970s as a way of understanding wider ideas of cultural representation. Hall used reception theory to analyse how the British media misrepresented black communities living in Britain, but it is now a tool for analysing wider issues of the effect of media products on the understandings of audiences – the meaning/response issue.

Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model

The message is first created by the producer which is encoded with a multitude of signs to reinforce the hegemonic viewpoint of a particular culture. The message is then sent through a specific medium where it reaches a particular audience. From there, the message is decoded by the audience in one of three ways.

1. The dominant position where the viewer takes the meaning of the message the way the producer intended.
2. The negotiated position where the viewer accepts parts of the message but rejects others that don't fit their interests.
3. The oppositional reading where the reader decodes the message and rejects the entire message.

Each message is constructed by the producer containing a vast array of signs and symbols. These visual signs, arranged in specific ways by the producer, reinforce wider cultural ideologies. We know that signs are used to create meaning and their symbolic meaning is the structure created to reflect and communicate our ideas and interpretation of such signs.

In Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model, producers encode signs into a message that either knowingly or unknowingly reinforces the dominant social order. If their product did not do this there is every chance that it would not be successful as it would be out of step with the target audiences thinking and mental model of the world.

Hall argued that the audience in turn took the message that they were being exposed to and looked to make meaning out of it. Hall's view was that in order to make sense of a product – in his terms to read it – the audience must have the necessary semiotic language to be able to interpret the signs and their structure.

In Hall's model, this is where the variation in meaning takes place:

1. The message is constructed by the producer containing an arrangement of signs to reinforce the dominant hegemonic viewpoint.
2. The message was then sent through a specific medium with its own conventions of format.
3. The message is received by an audience who then decode it.

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Hall concluded the spectator-audience decode messages in one of three ways:

1. The message could be decoded as the dominant or preferred way. The spectator-audience takes the meaning in full - i.e. decodes the message in the same terms within which it was encoded.
2. The negotiated position. Here, the message is accepted on some terms whilst others are rejected. The spectator-audience may accept the dominant cultural order that the message presents but reject those parts of the message that the producer encoded that do not fit their own beliefs.
3. A message could be decoded is called the oppositional reading. This is when the viewer receives the message and immediately dismisses it because it is contrary to the viewers beliefs. The decoding stage further suggested that audiences had an active role in what they were viewing and accepting or rejecting.

Hall emphasized the importance of the spectator-audience ability to relate to the message being received as a crucial component in determining whether or not the viewer will accept or reject the message.

Hall states:

“the degrees of ‘understanding’ and ‘misunderstanding’ ...depend on the degrees of symmetry/asymmetry...established between...encoder-producer and decoder-receiver”

(Hall, 1977, p.510).

The importance of making the message, sent out by the producers, relatable to a wide audience will ensure their message is accepted by many people. As the **War of the Worlds** broadcast adapted some of the accepted conventions of radio news reporting to construct a hybrid drama/reality format that audiences were unfamiliar with, they read it in terms of the forms they were familiar with and did understand – actual news broadcasts.

Given that context and personal experience are key in understanding the meaning of a product we are quickly into the idea of para-text – the events and ideas surrounding a media product that influence the consumption of the product and decoding of its meaning.

This may be listening to the broadcast of **War of the Worlds** that depicts the battle against invasion in America of the late 1930s against newspaper and radio news coverage of the rise of Hitler and the threat of global war informed audience decoding and interpretation of the **War of the Worlds** broadcast.

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