

Barbie

Product Details:

Released in 2023 by Warner Brothers Pictures

Directed by Greta Gerwig

Written by Greta Gerwig & Noah Baumbach

Based on *Barbie* by Mattel

Starring: Margot Robbie, Ryan Gosling, America Ferrara, Kate McKinnon,
Issa Rae, Rhea Perlman & Ariana Greenblatt

Budget: \$128 million

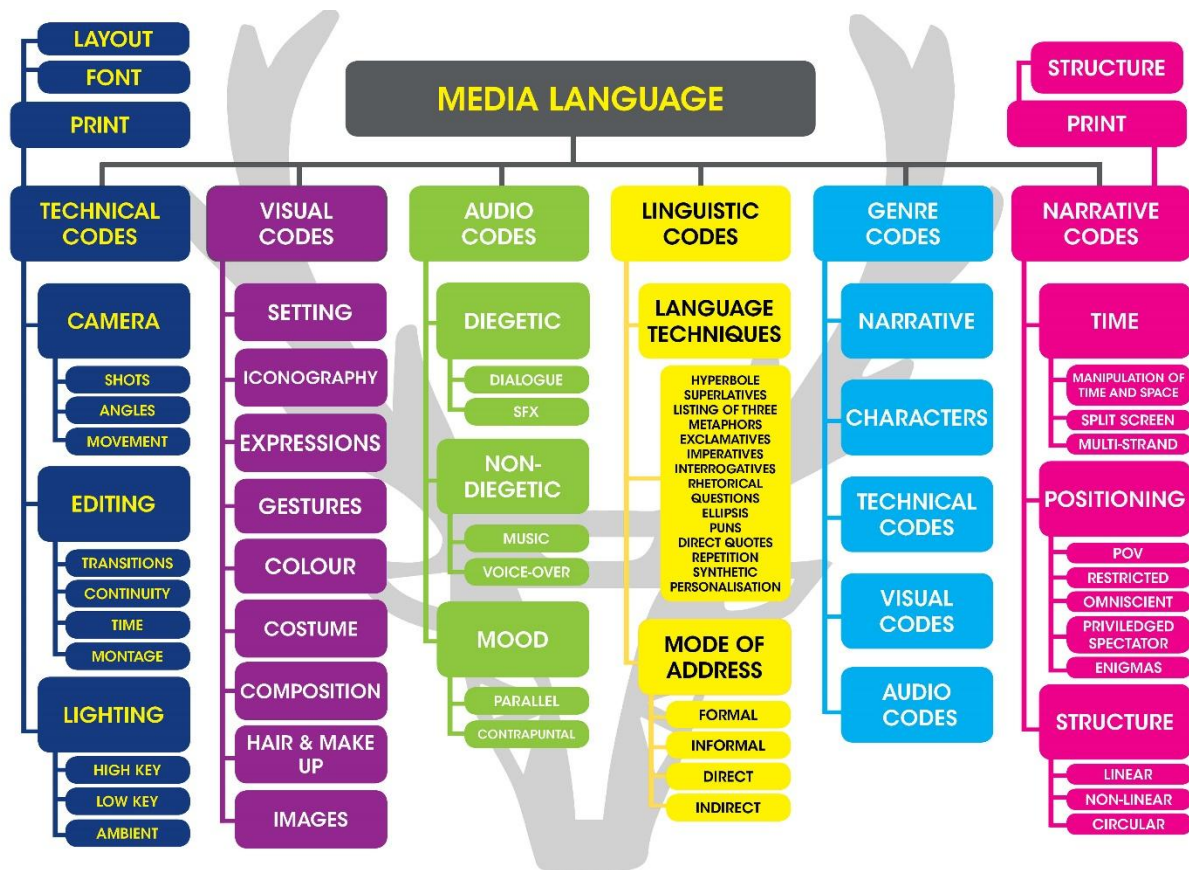
Box office (Global): \$1.446 billion

Product Context:

*Based on the toy line developed by Mattel in 1959, the film follows a Barbie (Robbie) as she decides to see what exists in the real world, only to be followed by a Ken (Gosling). Released in July 2023 in both the USA and the UK, the film went on to gross over \$1 billion dollars at the global box office. Released on the same day as Christopher Nolan's biopic *Oppenheimer*, the film created a social media storm, coining the term 'Barbenheimer', with audiences going to see both films on the same day, one after the other.*



Media Language- Visual and Language Codes



1915 1980 *R Barthes*

Roland Barthes
Semiotics

Media Language

- > The idea that texts communicate their meanings through a process of signification.
- > The idea that signs can function at the level of denotation, which involves the 'literal' or common-sense meaning of the sign, and at the level of connotation, which involves the meanings associated with or suggested by the sign.
- > The idea that constructed meanings can come to seem self-evident, achieving the status of myth through a process of naturalisation.

In a nutshell: - All elements of a media text are codes that need to be read. These can all be understood as the thing they are (denotative level) and the responses they create (connotative level).

Using the information on this page and the poster on the next page, answer the following question:

How does the poster for Barbie (2023) use media language to create meaning for the audience?

On the paper at the back of your booklet try to write at least 3 PEE paragraphs. Remember to support your points with evidence from the poster. Plan your answer first.

Margot
Robbie

She's everything.
He's just Ken.

Ryan
Gosling



Only In Cinemas
July 20

Media Language: Genre



1959
Steve Neale
Genre Theory

Media Language

- >The idea that genres may be dominated by repetition, but are also marked by difference, variation, and change.
- >The idea that genres change, develop, and vary, as they borrow from and overlap with one another.
- > The idea that genres exist within specific economic, institutional and industrial contexts.

In a nutshell: - Genre is recognisable but does change over time or borrow from other genres. Genre is important to institutions because it helps them to market texts.

Steve Neale’s theory is useful when we are considering films and television programmes. He believed that producers of films, TV and other forms of media use genre to not only ensure audiences get what they want to see but also that they can recognise what they’re seeing with stars, conventions as well as repetition—that’s why we see so many films of the same genre being made every year.

He also feels that genres develop over time and can borrow from one another to create new ‘hybrid’ genres as well as overlapping with one another, where a film or show will contain several different conventions we see in different genres, *Stranger Things* is a good example of this.

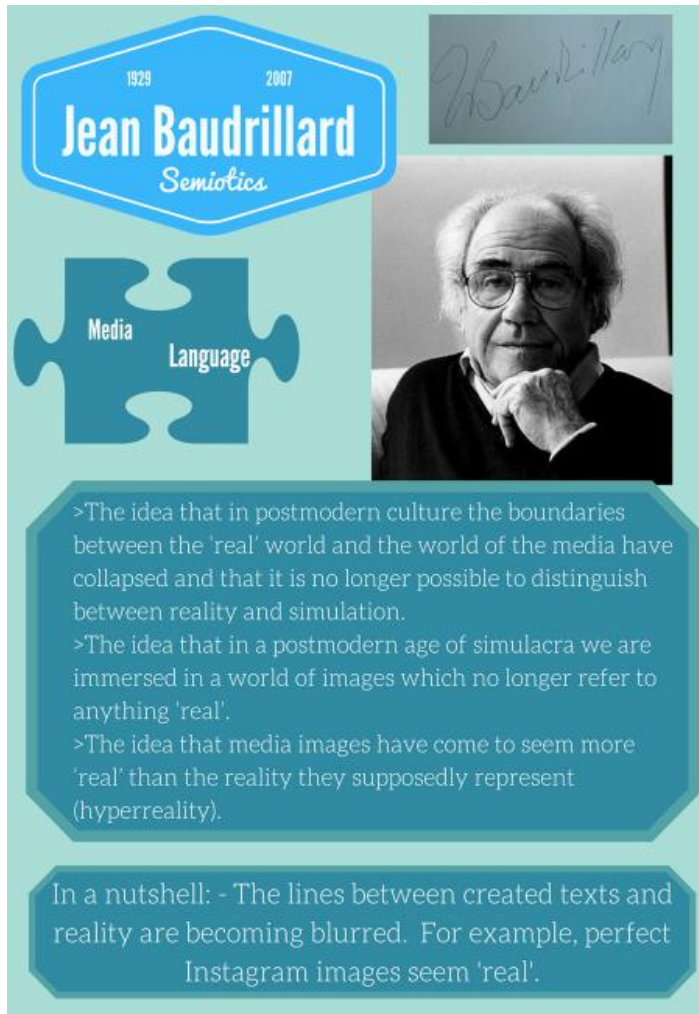
Finally, he believes that genres exist to also ensure a steady stream of profit to the studios by using genre as a guarantee to the audience-if they are popular, then they will keep making them!

Now, think about *Barbie*.

Complete the table below, considering all the elements of the theory above.

<p>What genre is the film? How can you tell from what you have seen?</p>	
<p>How does Barbie differ from other films based around intellectual properties?</p>	
<p>Why would a major studio make a film like Barbie?</p>	

Media Language: Postmodernism



Jean Baudrillard
Semiotics
1929 2007

Media Language

>The idea that in postmodern culture the boundaries between the 'real' world and the world of the media have collapsed and that it is no longer possible to distinguish between reality and simulation.

>The idea that in a postmodern age of simulacra we are immersed in a world of images which no longer refer to anything 'real'.

>The idea that media images have come to seem more 'real' than the reality they supposedly represent (hyperreality).

In a nutshell: - The lines between created texts and reality are becoming blurred. For example, perfect Instagram images seem 'real'.



Barbie deals with the collision of the 'real' and the 'hyperreal', where characters from a fantasy world enter a version of our 'reality'.

Baudrillard believed that because of the media, we can't tell the difference between the world the media creates and the world that is around us every day. He called these versions of reality '**simulacra**', versions of reality. Think of a reality TV show such as *Married at First Sight*: it may tell us it is happening in the real world but there are producers, lighting technicians and editors all working on the programme- the version we see on our screens is an edited version of real: hyperreality.

He also defined four other elements that make texts postmodern:

Intertextuality- where a text uses something from another to stimulate a response. For example, in *Stranger Things* Series 2, the characters dress up as the Ghostbusters. We understand that as we recognise the costumes from that film, therefore getting the reference and that reference serves the story and our understanding of it.

Bricolage- this is where a text is made up of different elements of different texts. So for example a film such as *Kingsman: The Golden Circle* is a bricolage of spy movies, action films and drama films.

Pastiche- this is where a specific element of a film or text is referenced but with respect to its original source- the makers don't make fun of it; they use it to construct a new story and build on our familiarity of the original source. For example, the film *Joker* is pastiche of 1970s crime dramas- it uses the same shooting style, colour scheme, sets, language and visual codes.

Parody- this is where our knowledge of a type of text or genre is used for laughs- it allows us to recognise scenes or moments from other films and TV series as they are made fun of: our knowledge of the originals and seeing their meaning subverted is where the comedy is. *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy* often parody existing films and TV shows.

Media Language: Postmodernism

Thinking about Barbie, complete the table with some ideas. Please use examples from the film to support your points.

<p>How is <i>Barbie</i> a postmodern film? Consider the theory breakdown above and list some examples from the film.</p>	
<p>Compare the two worlds of <i>Barbie</i>- the world in which Barbie lives and the real world. Are both hyperreal? Provide examples from the film.</p>	
<p>What elements of bricolage can you see in the film?</p>	
<p>The film is all about the blurring of lines between reality and hyper-reality. Thinking of the film, what does the film say about how we see the world and which world you feel is represented more positively?</p>	

REPRESENTATION

Representations of Gender



One of the most asked questions in both component exams can revolve around how gender is represented in each text. *Barbie* is a film that deals with gender roles quite explicitly, so thinking of the film and the marketing materials you have seen in the lesson, please attempt the questions below. Don't forget to use examples from the text in your examples.

How are men and women represented in *Barbie*? Consider how stereotypes are used positively and negatively as well as making conclusions as to how representations reflect social and cultural contexts. Try to make three points and use examples from the text and marketing materials.

REPRESENTATION

Representations of Gender- Lisbet Van Zoonen

The infographic features a portrait of Lisbet van Zoonen on the right. On the left, there is a green puzzle piece labeled 'Representation' and a green banner with the text 'Liesbet van Zoonen Feminist Theory' and the year '1959'. Below the puzzle piece, there are three bullet points in a green box, and at the bottom, a green box contains a summary in a nutshell.

1959
Liesbet van Zoonen
Feminist Theory

Representation

- >The idea that gender is constructed through discourse, and that its meaning varies according to cultural and historical context.
- >The idea that the display of women's bodies as objects to be looked at is a core element of western patriarchal culture.
- >The idea that in mainstream culture the visual and narrative codes that are used to construct the male body as spectacle differ from those used to objectify the female.

In a nutshell: -men and women are represented differently in the media. Women are objectified as a result of Western culture.

Van Zoonen's feminism theory looks at how texts need to be examined through discussion, especially around when those texts were made, as well as through the culture of that time. She also believes that men and women can be represented in very different ways: men tend to be seen as 'spectacle' and women can be objectified. She also believes that the way women are presented can reflect the idea that western patriarchal culture (media is often made by and controlled by men) can contribute to the way women are represented in a variety of texts.

Barbie is an interesting film in terms of its content and how it was marketed to audiences. The film is from 2023 but is based on a toy line that was first introduced in 1959.

Thinking about the film and the materials you've seen, have a go at the question below. You can complete it in the section at the back of the booklet. Try to write at least 3 points.

Lisbet Van Zoonen argues that the visual and narrative codes that are used to construct the male and female bodies are very different.

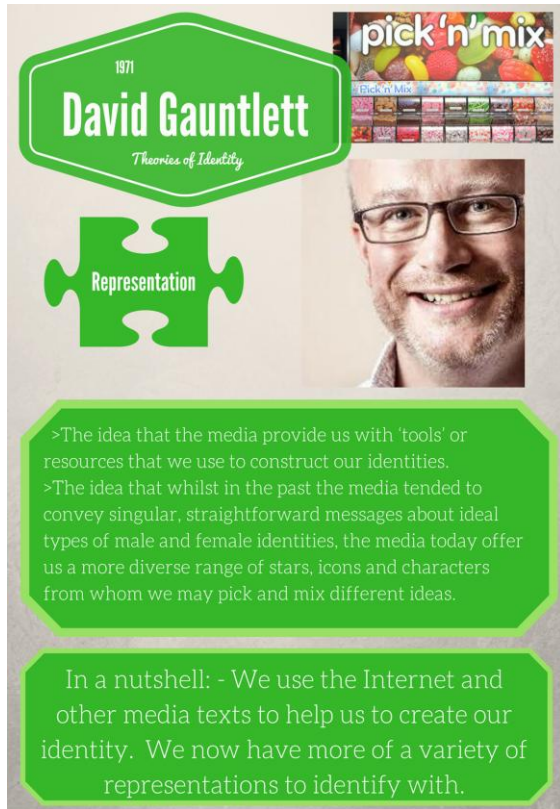
***Evaluate* this feminist theory. Use the film *Barbie* and the marketing materials to support your answer.**

WHEN PLANNING YOUR RESPONSES CONSIDER:

- Social and cultural contexts
- How men and women are represented in the film & supporting materials. How do these fit or go against the theory?
- Think of the differences in the two worlds: are men and women different in each of these? How so?
- Consider how Ken and Barbie are coded: consider how they dress and act. Are these stereotypical or do they subvert stereotypes? Consider the characters from the beginning to the end.

REPRESENTATION

David Gauntlett- Identity



1971
David Gauntlett
Theories of Identity

Representation

>The idea that the media provide us with 'tools' or resources that we use to construct our identities.
>The idea that whilst in the past the media tended to convey singular, straightforward messages about ideal types of male and female identities, the media today offer us a more diverse range of stars, icons and characters from whom we may pick and mix different ideas.

In a nutshell: - We use the Internet and other media texts to help us to create our identity. We now have more of a variety of representations to identify with.

David Gauntlett in his theory talks about how the media provide us with lots of 'tools' (forms of media) that we can use to construct our identities: not just the way we look but also the way we think or even our ideologies. He also talks about how now the way male and female identities are shown are very different. He believes this is because of the wide range of stars and characters from who we can 'pick and mix' different ideas. Think of it literally like a pick n mix at the cinema: we choose what we like and leave behind what we don't. We choose the best fit for us.

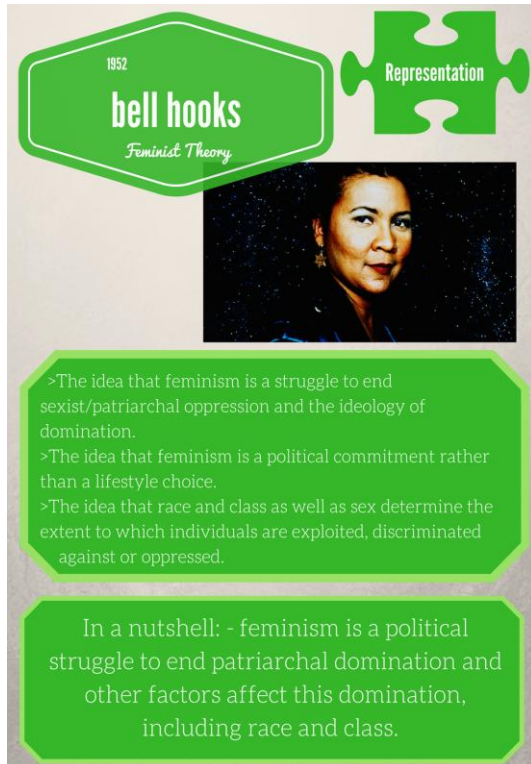
Thinking of the film and the materials you have seen, jot down some ideas below relating to this theory. Remember, it's always good to apply these theories to lots of different kinds of media you see, hear or read throughout your studies!

Think of the way men & women are represented in *Barbie*. What positives could an audience draw from these representations?

How does Barbie as a character and a product communicate positive identity messages to its core target audience?

Representation:

bell hooks-Feminism.



1952
bell hooks
Feminist Theory

Representation

>The idea that feminism is a struggle to end sexist/patriarchal oppression and the ideology of domination.
>The idea that feminism is a political commitment rather than a lifestyle choice.
>The idea that race and class as well as sex determine the extent to which individuals are exploited, discriminated against or oppressed.

In a nutshell: - feminism is a political struggle to end patriarchal domination and other factors affect this domination, including race and class.

“To be honest, when I found out the patriarchy wasn't about horses, I lost interest anyway”- Ken.

When we consider the theory that hooks developed, we must look a text and determine where ultimately the power lies in terms of representation. Hooks believes that patriarchal domination is always evident and needs to be ended, alongside that race, class and sex can determine how a person or person are discriminated against.

Let's consider the gender politics of *Barbie*. In this exercise I'd like you to think about hooks' theory and how well it can be applied to the film. Is the film critical of patriarchy? How is it shown throughout the film? How are the women of the film represented and do they possess enough power to determine how they are represented?

Imagine bell hooks has been to see *Barbie* at her local cinema.

Considering her theory, what do you think she would think of it?

Apply the theory to the film and marketing materials.

AUDIENCE

Who was it made for?



Barbie was made and distributed by Warner Brothers Pictures, one of the major Hollywood studios. It is based upon a well-known existing intellectual property (or IP) owned by toy company Mattel, which is well-established and known globally, a toy line which has sold, to date, over 1 billion dolls across the world.

Having seen the film, who do you feel is the film's target audience and why/ How does the film and the marketing material address and target that audience?

Using demographics and psychographics, construct an audience profile for the film.

AUDIENCE

Marketing and targeting audiences.

With over \$120 million dollars invested in the film, it is vital for the producers to ensure



that as many people as possible are aware of the film. As we saw with *Black Panther*, a 360-degree marketing approach was also used for *Barbie*. We have looked at some of the advertising used for *Barbie* and you have a copy of all the materials as well. We have defined the audience, so let us now look at the marketing and how it was used to reach a wide as possible audience.

Looking at the materials, PLAN a response to the following question:

Explain how media producers attract audiences.

Refer to Barbie in your answers.

Point	What evidence can you provide?	How does this link to your point?
1		
2		
3		

Audience

Hall- Reception Theory

Reading	Why?
Preferred	
Negotiated	
Oppositional	

The graphic features a dark red background with a repeating geometric pattern. At the top left, a yellow hexagonal badge contains the years '1932' and '2014' at the top corners, 'Stuart Hall' in large bold letters in the center, and 'Reception Theory' in a smaller font below. To the right of this badge is a yellow puzzle piece with the word 'Audience' written on it. Below the badge is a small diagram showing a book icon, a plus sign, a person reading icon, an equals sign, and a lightbulb icon. Underneath this diagram is a white box with the text 'TEXT + READER = MEANING' in red. To the right of the diagram is a portrait of Stuart Hall. At the bottom, there are two yellow rounded rectangular boxes containing text.

1932 2014

Stuart Hall
Reception Theory

Audience

TEXT + READER = MEANING

> The idea that communication is a process involving encoding by producers and decoding by audiences.
>The idea that there are three hypothetical positions from which messages and meanings may be decoded: the preferred reading, the negotiated reading or the oppositional reading.
> The preferred reading is the producer's intended message, the negotiated is when the audience understand the message but adapt it to suit their own values and the oppositional is where the audience disagrees with the preferred meaning.

In a nutshell: - Producers want audiences to respond in a particular way to a text. Some audiences do (preferred reading), some audiences don't (oppositional reading) and some are in the middle (negotiated reading).

INDUSTRY

One of the Majors- Warner Brothers Pictures



As we have already discussed, Barbie is a mainstream tentpole film from a major studio. In this section, and using your phones or a computer, I'd like you to research the company that created the film.

Design a mind map around the logo, listing around it who owns the company, what other media industries are they involved in, what are some of their biggest successes and what are the intellectual properties and franchises that Warner Brothers create are. Also, provide a little history as to when they were founded and any other interesting facts you can discover about this major player in Hollywood.



INDUSTRY

Power and Control- Curran and Seaton



Curran and Seaton
Power and Media Industries

Media Institutions

Power Without Responsibility
James Curran and Jean Seaton

>The idea that the media is controlled by a small number of companies primarily driven by the logic of profit and power.
>The idea that media concentration generally limits or inhibits variety, creativity and quality.
>The idea that more socially diverse patterns of ownership help to create the conditions for more varied and adventurous media productions.

In a nutshell: - If we had more of a variety of media companies, we'd have more of a variety of texts.

Curran & Seaton's theory deals with how so much of the media is controlled by so few companies. They believe that this level of control and power can limit the freedom to create more adventurous products, alongside the masses of profit that they can gain through this control of the marketplace.

Barbie is a product of Warner Brothers. Using your mind map & Barbie as a product, have a go at jotting down some ideas below as we apply this theory to the film & its producer.

How is *Barbie* made to generate profit for Warner Brothers?

Consider the film, its producer, its budget and its marketing.

Would you say that *Barbie* demonstrates a lack of creativity, variety and quality?

Given that this is a major studio film, do you feel it agrees with or goes against the last part of the theory?

INDUSTRY

David Hesmondhalgh-Cultural Industries

1963
David Hesmondhalgh
Cultural Industries

the
CULTURAL
INDUSTRIES

Media
Institutions

> The idea that cultural industry companies try to minimise risk and maximise audiences through vertical and horizontal integration, and by formatting their cultural products (e.g. through the use of stars, genres, and serials).
>The idea that the largest companies or conglomerates now operate across a number of different cultural industries
>The idea that the radical potential of the internet has been contained to some extent by its partial incorporation into a large, profit-orientated set of cultural industries.

In a nutshell: - Industry uses tried and tested strategies to appeal to us - but we should be concerned that only a few companies hold a lot of power.

Hesmondhalgh in his theory discusses how cultural industries (film, tv, newspapers and others) operate to create profit, ensure their products are desired by the audience and that they work across several industries to again maximise their reach.

Below, you're going to explain the theory in your own words, applying it to Barbie: the film, the studio and the marketing you've seen.

Explain David Hesmondhalgh's theory of cultural industries.

Use *Barbie* in your responses.

Write your response on the paper at the back of this booklet.

Be sure to plan your answers!

A series of 25 horizontal dashed lines, evenly spaced, intended for handwriting practice.

