**An Introduction to Media language**

Definition: **Media language** is the way in which the story is interpreted and how the meaning of the story comes across to the audience.

This is where the terms **denotative** and **connotative** are important – see below.

For film and television **media language** includes the way meaning comes across through the pictures and not just from the words or dialogue. This is known as non verbal communication and includes the gestures, facial expressions, clothing and props in a film as well as where the character are placed in the frame – see shot size above.

Media language also includes the way the camera sees the scene.

**Camera Work**

Where the camera is placed is very important for how the audience understands a scene. The camera can take the position of a character and show his or her point of view – this is a **POV shot**, as we see the action through the eyes of that character. Look carefully at what the camera is doing. Does the camera move around a lot such as follow a chase over roof tops - see **Matt Damon** in ***The Bourne Ultimatum*** or **James Bond** in ***Casino Royale***.

Try and work out what is the purpose of the camerawork and the lighting – they go together. In a horror film the lighting will tend to show lots of shadows to create a spooky atmosphere. In a **romantic film** such as ***Notting Hill*** the camera may not move around much, but the size of the shot may change. What does this tell you about the meaning of the film.

The way the camerawork and the lighting create meaning in a film is known as the **cinematography**.

**Mise-en-scene**

A French phrase meaning ‘**putting on the stage**’. This term is used to mean ‘**everything in the scene**’. This includes the sets, location, costume, props and the period of the piece as well as shot size and the lighting and camerawork.

**Editing**

The way a film or television programme is edited is part of the **media language**. There are different editing styles for different **genres**.

In action and adventure films the editing is fast paced with many quick cuts to show the speed of the action. Look for **quick cutting** from one scene to another in a **James Bond** film.

In a **romantic comedy** there will be longer, steadier shots, so the editing style is more fluid, and may use dissolves or fades to go from one scene to another to create a romantic feel.

Look at the editing in a ***Harry Potter*** film where the pace of the editing changes according to what is happening – fast for action, slower for the magical sequences.

**Music**

The use of music, and sound effects and/or commentary, convey meaning to the audience and help the audience understand the story.

Notice how images and sound are combined to convey meaning. Often the hero has a theme, or music is used to heighten the emotion of a scene as in ***Titanic***.

**Denotative and Connotative Meanings**

There are two important words concerned with the way an audience understands the meaning of a media text. There are **denotative** and **connotative** levels of meaning. Make sure you know the difference.

**Denotation** means what is literally in the picture. In this picture there are three horses and three riders in a park setting.

**Connotation** – means different interpretations suggested by the text, often associated with values, meaning or ideology.