

Media representation

Definition

Representation is how the media presents the 'real world' to an **audience**. A media text re – presents aspects of the world to help an audience make sense of the world about us. Start by thinking about a media text such as a film.

Mean Girls is an interesting film to start discussing media representations.

Discuss who is being represented in this film?

Teenage girls are the main people you see in the film. Are they like your friends? Why not? What else can you say about the young people in this film – describe them.

Do they represent a variety of sizes, shapes and ethnic backgrounds? How are they different? Are there any stereotypes?

Definition

A **stereotype** is a widely circulated idea or assumption about a particular group of people. E.g. all French people have a beret on their head, eat garlic and wear a striped T shirt.

Look at a TV series like *Scrubs* and the representation of doctors and nurses and other medical staff, and patients.

Questions to ask about these representations:

In what way are the people being represented? Are they: funny, authoritarian, traditional, stupid, bullying, intolerant, happy, anti-establishment, heroic, caring, loving, creative, nerdy?

From your experience, are the representations realistic? Have you ever met people like this?

Are the representations fair and accurate?

Why is the main character being represented in this way?

When studying representations avoid studying large groups like ethnic minorities, or women or gangsters. It is better to consider smaller more defined groupings such as teenagers, young men, or young women. Some groups are well represented in a number of different media.

For example, there are many different examples of **homosexuals** on television (*Queer as Folk*) and in films (*Brokeback Mountain*) which offer opportunities to compare and link with historical contexts.

Another well represented group is the modern family – TV: *The Family*, and film: *Little Miss Sunshine*.

When considering representation, ask yourself if the text suggests any social or political meaning.

Discuss who is deciding the representation – this links to **Institution**.

Discuss if the representation can be seen to be fair and accurate? Who judges this and how? From your own point of view can you say if it is a fair

and accurate representation?

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