

Superhero Key Words

Introduction

Film Language – the techniques used to create meaning in films

Film industry – the commercial aspects of making films – production, distribution and exhibition.

Identifying Genre

Codes/Conventions – The detailed ‘rules’ of the genre. The micro and macro aspects we come to expect when we hear a genre name.

Oppositions – where character personify two aspects of the same idea or two ‘sides of the same coin’, e.g. predator and prey

Binary opposite – a conflict between two opposing ideas or characters at the root of most popular narratives. This conflict is generally resolved at the end of the narrative.

Stock characters and stereotypes – simple characters that are only very superficial and depend on our knowledge of clichés to recognise them.

Macguffin – an object, the securing of which drives the narrative forward. The object in which the plot revolves around.

High concept pitch – a pitch for a film based on a very basic narrative idea. Film makers will often rely on special effects and stars to make the concept work.

Iconography

Iconography – objects, images, characters etc strongly associated with a particular genre

Style

Verisimilitude – the appearance of reality. The quality of a film that allows the audience to accept it could happen.

Narrative & Plot

Formulaic – where a film contains the same ingredients as others

Narrative - the story of a film and how it is constructed

Plot – the more detailed plan of how the story is constructed in the film

Omniscient narrative – a narrative which allows us to know more about the characters and their situations than they know themselves

Restricted narratives – a narrative that only allows us to know what the character knows

Flashback – where a character remembers past events in order to show the audience what happened

Parallel narratives – when two or more characters share different stories that centre on the same event.

Themes

Themes – ideas and stories that are associated with a particular genre

Ideology

Ideology – a system of values of beliefs or ideas that is common to specific group of people

Characters & Stars

Stereotypical representation – a simplistic way of representing people, places or social groups

Archetype – an instantly recognisable representation of a character that has been in use for a very long time

Representation – how people, groups, races or religions are portrayed in screen. The ideas and assumptions about who and what they are generally used.

Star – an actor who has their own audience beyond the parts they play. Their performance in a film may guarantee a good sized audience.

Star vehicle – a film marketed and made to 'show off' the qualities that made the particular star attractive to their target audience

Visual effects – images created in post-production using computer technology – CGI computer generated imagery.

Special effects – those traditional physical effects such as stunts and explosions.

Production

Production – activities involved in the actual making of the film

Distribution – deciding where a film will be shown and publicising it

Exhibition – where the film is shown – cinemas of varying types

Package – a deal put together by a producer that contains the main elements of a film: a property, director, star. They can then 'sell' this package to investors to secure finance.

Original screenplay – a script for a film not based on any other source. An original idea.

Property – any source of ideas that has been used to create a film

Film rights – the legal permission to use another party's copyrighted character(s) in a film

Franchise – where a film and its often planned sequels are part of a larger business entity.

Tie-ins – an individual piece of a franchise directly related to the film

Spin-offs – when a film leads to another related projects, e.g. computer games, TV shows, other films

Conglomerate – a large business made up of many smaller ones

Licence – the agreement that allows one company to use another's property. It will involve a fee and/or profit share.

Merchandise – products you can buy based on the film, many in number, ranging from toys through to souvenirs through clothing to expensive prop replicas

Rights – the legal permission that allows one person to use another's ideas.

Product placement – when a film features products and brands prominently in return for a fee or sponsorship.

BBFC – British Board of Film Certification. The UK film industry body responsible for classifying films and advising on the content of these classifications.

Distribution & Exhibition

Distribution – deciding where a film will be shown and publicising this

Exhibition - where the film is shown – cinemas of varying types.

Opening weekend – the money a film takes in its first weekend of release

Box office – the money a film generates in ticket sales. A reference to where people traditionally buy their tickets.

Loss Leader – a product sold at a loss by a business to promote the sale of its other products

Release pattern – how often and where a film will be shown. General release is as wide as possible, limited release may only be in London or specialist cinemas.

Marketing – the process of finding out what people want, developing a product to meet this desire and then selling it to them

USP – unique selling point. A marketing term for focusing on the feature of your product that sets it apart from its competitors.

Premier – the first screening of a film in a country. Typically it will take place in the capital or a major city. The stars will be present and much publicity is generated from their trip down the red carpet.

Viral marketing – internet-based promotion that depends on the audience ‘passing it on’ and getting involved for its effectiveness.

Audience – a group of people with similar tastes and/or characteristics.

Disposable income – the money a person has ‘left over’ for non-essential spending after paying their living expenses.

Mainstream – the general public, the large audience who visits the multiplex and is drawn there by big-budget American productions.

Fans – the audience that has a greater level of involvement or interest in a film than the average spectator.