

Media Messages

Sociology skills

- Interpretation and analysis
- Evaluation

Key skills

- Communication

Stimulus materials

An extremely well known sociologist, Stuart Hall said that there are three ways in which we 'read' a media message.

Preferred reading - this is the meaning that the writer has for the message of the piece. The writer may not know that she or he has a preferred meaning, but it is often obvious because that person's values will show through what they write or create.
e.g. Young thugs murdered my mother. (**Preferred reading** - all young people are mindlessly violent)

Negotiated reading - this is the meaning that most people will see when they read the work. They will be uncritical and just take the message without thinking.
e.g. Young thugs murdered my mother. (**Negotiated reading** - yes, young people are more violent today and do go around murdering mothers)

Oppositional reading - this is the much rarer case of someone who stops to think about what they see and hear in order to build a personal view of events
e.g. Young thugs murdered my mother. (**Oppositional reading** - How sad! Still, lots of young people today are really nice so perhaps the newspaper thinks it will sell more copies if it creates a moral panic)

Understanding the stimulus

1. Which well-known sociologist said that there is more than one way to get a message from the media?
2. What is a preferred reading?
3. Who gives a piece of media reporting a preferred meaning?
4. What is a negotiated reading?
5. What does the word uncritical mean?
6. What is an oppositional reading?
7. Which sort of reading are you taught in school? Think about this question really carefully, it is a bit of a tricky one!

Development and Revision

1. What does the term mass media mean?
2. List a number of forms of mass media available to people today.