

Year 11 Media Knowledge Booklet

Term 3

Name:

Class:



Knowledge Organiser - GCSE Media Studies – Term 3

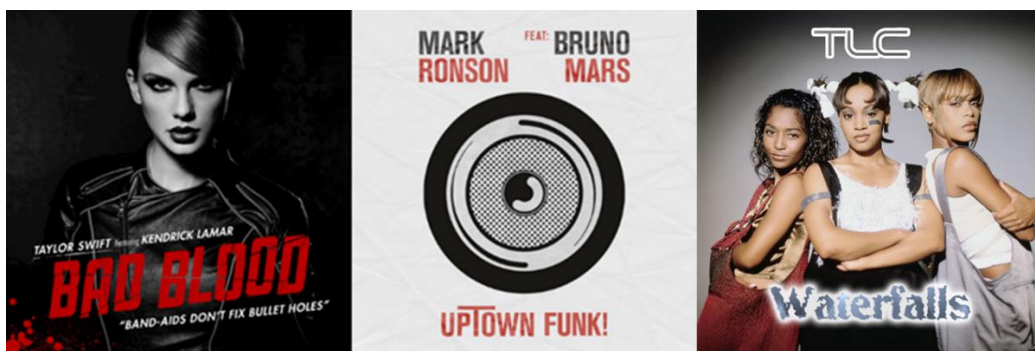
1. Music Videos and the Music Industry
2. Music Artist Websites

Big Questions

- What are the codes and conventions of the topic of Music Videos?
 - How can key concepts from the previous audio/visual/moving image topics be applied to the topic of Music Videos?
 - What function do music videos serve for the artist?
 - How are music videos constructed to target and gratify their audiences?
 - How can Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) be used to explain why audiences watch music videos?
 - How do music videos benefit the music industry?
 - How much control do artists have over their own representations?
 - How is narrative used in music videos?
 - How are age, gender, ethnicity, nationality and culture represented in music videos and how are stereotypes used?
 - How are music videos used in synergy with other types of promotion?
 - How does the music industry converge with other mainstream media?
 - What are the key elements of the history of music videos and the music industry and how do they help our understanding of social, cultural and technological contexts?
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- What are the production, industry and audience considerations for the set products?:
 - **SET PRODUCT 1: Taylor Swift, Bad Blood (2015)**
 - **SET PRODUCT 2: Bruno Mars, Uptown Funk (2014)**
 - **SET PRODUCT 3: TLC, Waterfalls (1994)**

and associated contemporary official websites:

www.taylorswift.com, www.brunomars.com



SET PRODUCT 1: BAD BLOOD, TAYLOR SWIFT (2015)



Homework 1: Read and Highlight

Due:

Product Context:

The music video accompanied the Taylor Swift single which was released on 17th May 2015. It was the fourth single to be released from the album *1989*. The single was remixed and featured the artist Kendrick Lamar. It was released on the label Republic Records. The video was directed by Korean American, Joseph Kahn who has created music videos for artists such as Britney Spears, Eminem and Katy Perry. The video won a Grammy Award for best music video and features a range of icons from popular culture such as Jessica Alba, Cara Delevingne and Cindy Crawford.

Industry Context:

Taylor Swift is a pop phenomenon worth upwards of \$250 million. Forbes included her in their list of the 100 Most Influential Women. A recipient of 10 Grammys and an Emmy, Swift has sold over 40 million albums and is one of the most followed celebrities on social media (83.5 million followers on Twitter). Swift has had a huge impact on the music industry. In 2015 Apple changed their music policy after she refused to allow them to stream her album without payment. She also withdrew her album from the streaming site Spotify, despite being one of their most popular artists, as a protest against payment practices.

Media Language, Codes and Conventions:

The video fits the 'Pop' music genre and upholds some of the typical conventions. These include focus on the **performance** of the artist, **direct mode of address** and the clear representation of Swift's **star image**. Heavy use of a **close up** of Swift's **direct gaze** alongside **voyeuristic pans and tilts** of the female body creates a **male gaze**. This is stereotypical of modern pop videos. This is further reinforced through the sexualised **costume** choices of the characters. The video challenges the staple **high key** choreographed dance moves and love story narrative. Instead the narrative has **tropes** of the Action/Sci-fi genre. The video fits **Goodwin's** 'illustrative' format where the visuals illustrate the lyrics of the song. The codes and conventions are heavily influenced by those of the Superhero and Sci-fi genres. The opening **establishing shot** of a city scape pays homage to these genres and sets audience expectations. The **mise-en-scène** of the mundane office in the opening sequence juxtaposes the action as Swift and Selena Gomez fight anonymous henchmen for a silver 'McGuffin' brief case. This **intertextually references** many action film narratives. The characters are introduced through **direct address** and graphics that communicate their names using **puns** and **coined words**. **Iconography** of the action genre includes the **object codes** of various weaponry, the boxing ring and the CGI explosions.

Social/Cultural Context:

The music industry has long been criticised for its narrow representations of gender. The phrase 'sex sells' appears to resonate with record company bosses. Female artists are continually **hypersexualised** in their videos, to the point where it has become normalised. There are countless examples of passive, scantily clad females in the music industry. **Laura Mulvey's** concept of the '**Male Gaze**' dominates videos featuring both female and male artists.

The video has been viewed over a billion times on YouTube. The primary target audience is 16 -24 year old females. The **mode of address** is created through the **direct gaze** and the **intertextual references** to popular culture. The audience would be media savvy as the marketing for the video was largely conducted online from Swift's various social media accounts using the hashtag #BadBloodMusicVideo. She released teaser posters featuring the cameo stars of the video. The inclusion of Cindy Crawford and the nods to '*Kill Bill*' and '*Aliens*' suggests that a secondary older audience was also targeted. The video could also be said to target a male audience through the use of familiar Action film genre conventions.

Audiences:

The audience was targeted by the online marketing campaign. The 18 'A list' celebrities, models and artists were revealed by Swift over seven days before the video's premier at the Billboard Music Awards. The age **demographic** of the celebrities varied from 18 to 51 to appeal to a wide demographic. Rumours also circulated that the song was written about Swift's relationship with fellow pop artist Katy Perry. This was unconfirmed but did prompt Perry to comment on her Twitter account. This added to the video's appeal for audiences who enjoyed the voyeuristic nature of the controversy. The **intertextual** references create pleasure for the audience. Additionally, the video uses many **tropes** from the Superhero/Sci-Fi genres which would appeal to fans of those genres. The repetition of familiar conventions engages the audience. The video has **high production values** which influences audience expectations through use of CGI and visual effects.

Theory:

According to the **Uses and Gratifications Theory** the video could offer escapism, entertainment and possibly personal identification with the situation. According to **Stuart Hall's Reception Theory** the **preferred** reading of the video would be for the audience to accept the representation of Swift's **star persona**, that she is a strong independent female and an influential popular culture icon. A more **oppositional** viewpoint might be that the representations of females are overly sexualised. The **ideology** that Swift wants to present is one of girl power, shown through the dominance of the female characters and their physicality. However, the video has been criticised for its superficial understanding of feminism. It still supports the **body image ideology** that beautiful must equal slim, white and full chested. It distorts the image of emancipated femininity and creates something that is unachievable. **Gerbner's Cultivation Theory** would suggest the target audience has been cultivated to accept the sequences of violence, including when Swift is kicked through the window. This has become a typical convention of the Superhero genre. The portrayal of body image reinforces unrealistic **stereotypes**, with the majority of the characters being hyper-sexualised.



SET PRODUCT 2: UPTOWN FUNK, BRUNO MARS (2014)



Homework 2: Read and Highlight

Due:

Product Context:

Released 10th November, Mark Ronson, a British producer, collaborated with nationally recognised pop artist Bruno Mars (Peter Gene Hernandez) for vocals to produce the song Uptown Funk. The song became very popular across the globe, ranking as one of the most watched videos ever on Youtube. The pop song was in the top 40 charts across the world for an impressive 39 weeks making its mark in music history as well as 14 weeks in a row on the US Billboard Charts. Ronson has tried to restyle the 1980s Funk sound, thus proving the genre of Funk/Soul still culturally influences listeners today. Bruno Mars has received a massive 78 awards and has been nominated for a total of 251 awards! He is also known for big hits such as the 'Lazy Song' and 'Grenade'.

Industry Context:

During the 60s, soul started to become popular with the sounds of "Motown". Artists including Marvin Gaye, The Temptations, Stevie Wonder and many more artists helped to promote this genre during the 60s. During this particular decade, times in American culture were changing however, it wasn't just the culture of American history changing, it was the music as well. Motown was the first record company owned by African Americans. Without this sound music would have branched off to other genres such as funk and soul. James Brown, known as the founding father of Funk, or grandfather to Soul, had an outspoken voice in Soul music and had a groove that would be proven to be the future of Funk music (New Funk Order). The genre of Funk can be described as those songs with feel good vibes that make you want to dance. The genre Motown was known for producing multiple tracks during a week.

Soul music began post war with artist such as Ray Charles, Sam Cook and James Brown who turned gospel songs into art. It could be described as secularised gospel. These artists were known as founding fathers of soul music and this style was very much a race music. However it ended up being one of the first successes of the civil rights movement as their songs were enjoyed by more than the 'black' race that it was originally intended for. It was classed as funky, energetic, deep, jazzy, churchy, upbeat, religious and relaxing to name but a few.

Although Motown was a record label, the Motown style (a subgenre of soul) broke down barrier and brought together a nation of black and white Americans. It is known as the sound that changed America. The music of these artists including the Supremes, Stevie Wonder, the Jackson 5, Diana Ross to name but a few communicated to a nation and brought together a nation divided by segregation and race.

Media Language, Codes and Conventions:

The video starts with a medium tracking shot of a woman's feet, immediately grabbing the audience's attention. The music is introduced straight away building up tempo. This cuts to a slow motion shot of Bruno having a handshake with another person for a second until it cuts back to the original shot. The continuous shot reverse shot builds up the pace during the instrumental and excites the audience. During this montage of clips we see Bruno is wearing a pink a pink tailored blazer and gold coloured accessories condoning wealth and power. Furthermore as the camera tilts up the female actress's body we see she is wearing a fur jacket which also suggests wealth as it is seen as a luxury item.

The shot transitions to a close up of Ronson's face through quick flashes, which disorientated the audience. This effect acts like strobe lighting which we associate with nightclubs or partying. Additionally Ronson's facial expression looks like he is screaming. The next shot is introduced through a wipe/sliding motion which takes us to a medium close up of Bruno and others. Bruno is positioned in the middle highlighting his importance and is the centre of our focus. In one shot Bruno looks directly down the camera lens breaking the fourth wall between him and the audience. This makes the viewer seem more involved as the atmosphere is more playful now. During the verse leading up to the first chorus the camera cuts between a low angle shot and an eye line shot. The low angle shot makes it more intimate and personal for the audience. The eye line match shots show of the choreography and gradually build up a pace leading up to the chorus. This follows the common codes and conventions of a pop music video as we expect to see dancing. Throughout, the lighting remains natural as the majority of the shots are filmed outside on the streets in Los Angeles. In the last minute of the video the vibe completely changes - neon lights are used to create a more modern party feel as well as smoke machines. The technology has upgraded in these shots suggesting a new era as the musicians have electric pianos and guitars. Again lots of close ups are used to highlight their enthusiastic facial expressions and make the audience enjoy it more as you can see how much fun they are having.



SET PRODUCT 3: WATERFALLS, TLC (1994)



Homework 3: Read and Highlight

Due:

Product Context:

TLC are a girl group from Atlanta, Georgia comprised of three members; T-Boz, Chilli and Lisa 'left-eye' Lopes. They scored nine top-ten hits on the Billboard hot 100 including four number one singles, 'Creep', 'Waterfalls', 'No Scrubs' and 'Unpretty.' The group also recorded four multi-platinum albums including *CrazySexyCool* (1994) which received a diamond certification from the Record Industry Association of America (RIAA). TLC also became the first R and B group to receive Million certification from the RIAJ (Record Industry Association of Japan) for *FanMail* (1999). The group were dedicated to social change and were the voice of issues such as HIV/AIDS, abuse and women's rights. The video had a budget of 1 million dollars. The group had previously been incredibly successful and were the best-selling girl group in America and second globally (Spice Girls claim the top spot!). 'Waterfalls' is from TLC's second album *CrazySexyCool* (1994) released on May 29, 1995 in the USA, followed by a release in the UK on August 5th 1995. Jarret E. Nolan of BMG noted that *Waterfalls* was the first number one song to ever openly reference AIDS in one of its verses. Directed by F. Gary Grey, the video won four awards at the 1995 MTV Video Music Awards; Video of the year, best group video, best R and B video and the Viewer's choice award. Tionne 'T-Boz' Watkins said the video 'spoke for a whole epidemic.' TLC became the first black act to win the MTV Video Music Award for the Video of the Year. VH1 ranked TLC as the greatest female group, placing them at number 12 on the list of 100 greatest women in music. Lisa 'Left-Eye' Lopes died in 2002. The group decided to continue as a duo rather than replace her. Lopes died in a car crash whilst filming a documentary. The documentary was later shown on VH-1 named 'The Last Days of Left Eye' in 2007. At the 17th Annual MOBO (Music of black origin) awards (2012), TLC were awarded with the Outstanding Contribution to Music Award.

Media Language, Codes and Conventions:

TLC's 'Waterfalls' video uses a stereotype of a young black male living in an urban location to communicate the idea of criminality, specifically drug dealing. The narrative of the video includes this young male who is exposed to drug misuse and drug dealing. Audiences see a mid shot of both the young male and his frustrated mother in the window, used to show the despair his mother is feeling due to his poor choices. However, as the narrative progresses, we see the mother appear as a ghost like figure in front of him. This challenges the stereotype of the boy as an aggressive and thoughtless criminal by using the vision of his mother to represent his conscience. This links to the clear ideological stance of the group TLC who are outspoken in their views and often use their music as a vehicle for change in this case, referring to criminality in the United States of America and further on in the video, referencing the HIV and Aids crisis. Therefore, the stereotype may be used to get the attention of a younger American male audience, but its underlying messages are deeper.

The second scene and verse references the AIDS epidemic as we see a young girl discourage her lover from using a condom. The man looks at himself in the mirror and seems to waste away. Pictures of them both fade away. This was intended as a warning to all young people to take the risk of HIV and

AIDS seriously.

Cultural Context:

With the launch of MTV, a 24-hour music channel, each song came with a popular promotional video. The popularity of these videos helped make MTV famous and artists used it as a platform to demonstrate their talents. TLC broke barriers and brought a difficult subject into the public arena. This song came about around the same time as The Civil Rights Act of 1991.

EXAM STYLE QUESTIONS:

1. Use the two set music videos you have studied from those listed below in your answer:

Bad Blood, Taylor Swift (2015) **and** *Waterfalls*, TLC (1994)

'Music videos are a promotional tool, designed to represent the artist in the best light.'
How far is this true of the two music videos you have studied? [20]

In your response, you must:

- Explore representations of the artist in the two music videos you have studied
- Refer to relevant media contexts such as social or cultural
- Consider whether you agree or disagree with the statement

2. Use the two set music videos you have studied from those listed below in your answer:

Uptown Funk, Bruno Mars (2014) **and** *Waterfalls*, TLC (1994)

'Music videos reinforce stereotypes of ethnicity.' **How far is this true of the two music videos you have studied? [20]**

In your response, you must:

- Explore representations of ethnicity in the **two** music videos you have studied
- Refer to relevant media contexts, such as social or cultural
- Consider whether you agree or disagree with the statement

3. **Explain why websites are important to the music industry.** Refer to the official *Taylor Swift* website to support your response. [10]