

NAME:

A level Media Studies - Set Product

# Kiss of the Vampire film poster

(1963)



This handout covers the following assessment objectives:

- Deconstruction of mise en scene
- Representation of Gender
- Audience Positioning and Response
- Historical, Social and Cultural Contexts

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## Reading: Glossary of Terms

Key Terms	Glossary number	Use this term in a sentence
Convention	26	
Genre	49	
Mise en Scene	74	
Connotation	25	
Denotation	32	
Encode	38	
Decode	38	
Selection	98	
Combination	98	
Hybrid Genre	54	
Mediation	73	
Anchorage	3	

## Reading: Theory Booklet

Theorist	Page	Apply this theory briefly to KOTV
Steve Neale: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Genre repetition, difference and hybrid</li></ul>	14	
Andrew Medhurst <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stereotypes</li></ul>	17	
Stuart Hall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Selection and Combination</li><li>• Encoding and Decoding</li><li>• Cultural Competence</li></ul>	21	
David Gauntlett <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identity</li></ul>	29	

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WE WILL IDENTIFY	TICK WHEN DONE
How to deconstruct mise en scene to find meaning	
How meaning is encoded and decoded to construct genre	
What is meant by "selection and combination"	
Why stereotypes are used and challenged by producers	
Why genre codes are important	
Why genres need to hybridise	
What cultural competence is	



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*The Kiss of the Vampire* is a 1963 British vampire film made by the film studio Hammer Film Productions.

## Plot

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Gerald and Marianne Harcourt, are a honeymooning couple in early 20th-century Bavaria who become caught up in a vampire cult led by Dr. Ravna and his two children, Carl and Sabena. The cult abducts Marianne, and try to make it appear that Harcourt was traveling alone and that his wife never existed. Harcourt gets help from hard-drinking savant Professor Zimmer who lost his daughter to the cult. He finally destroys the vampires through a ritual that releases a swarm of bats from hell.

## Main Cast

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- Clifford Evans as Professor Zimmer
- Noel Willman as Dr. Ravna
- Edward de Souza as Gerald Harcourt
- Jennifer Daniel as Marianne Harcourt
- Barry Warren as Carl Ravna
- Jacquie Wallis as Sabena Ravna

## Background

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Christopher Lee starred as Dracula in the very successful 1958 Hammer film, before leaving. Originally intended to be the third movie in Hammer's *Dracula* series, this film was an attempt by Hammer to make a *Dracula* sequel without Christopher Lee. The final script, by Anthony Hinds, makes no reference to "Dracula".

The film's climax, involving black magic and swarms of bats, was originally intended to be the ending of *The Brides of Dracula*, but the star of that film, Peter Cushing, objected that Van Helsing would never resort to black sorcery.

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## **THINK, PAIR, SHARE: GENRE CONVENTIONS**

1. Think of as many vampire conventions as you can (draft in your exercise book if you want)
2. Pair up with the person next to you and write your conventions below.
3. Share with the rest of the class. Add new conventions and connotations in a different colour



**“VAMPIRE”  
CONVENTIONS**

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## **DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION**

- Identifying individual conventions without saying what they mean is called “denotation”.
- When we show what we have learnt about a convention what it means to us, this is called “connotation”.
- In the table below, give the connotations of these vampire genre conventions.

<b>Denotation</b>	<b>Connotation within the genre</b>
The colour red	
Night time	
Bats	

## **“DECODING”**

**HOW MANY “VAMPIRE” CONVENTIONS CAN YOU SEE?**



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## **GENRE THEORY: STEVE NEALE**

Write your own definitions of these terms below

Repetition	
Difference	
Hybrid Genre	

### Steve Neale

- “Difference is absolutely essential to the economy of genre”
- Repetition – Genre codes are repeated so the audience understands the familiar codes
- Difference- Genre codes are refreshed and the audience likes to predict what the twist in the text will be.
- Hybrid- A mix of two or more genres to create something different.

**What codes would you expect to see in a vampire film poster?**

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## ENCODING

What vampire genre conventions are ENCODED in these posters?

Add conventions from other genres in a different colour.

Consider:

- Colour
- Costume
- Props
- Body language
- Anchorage
- Language
- Mode of address

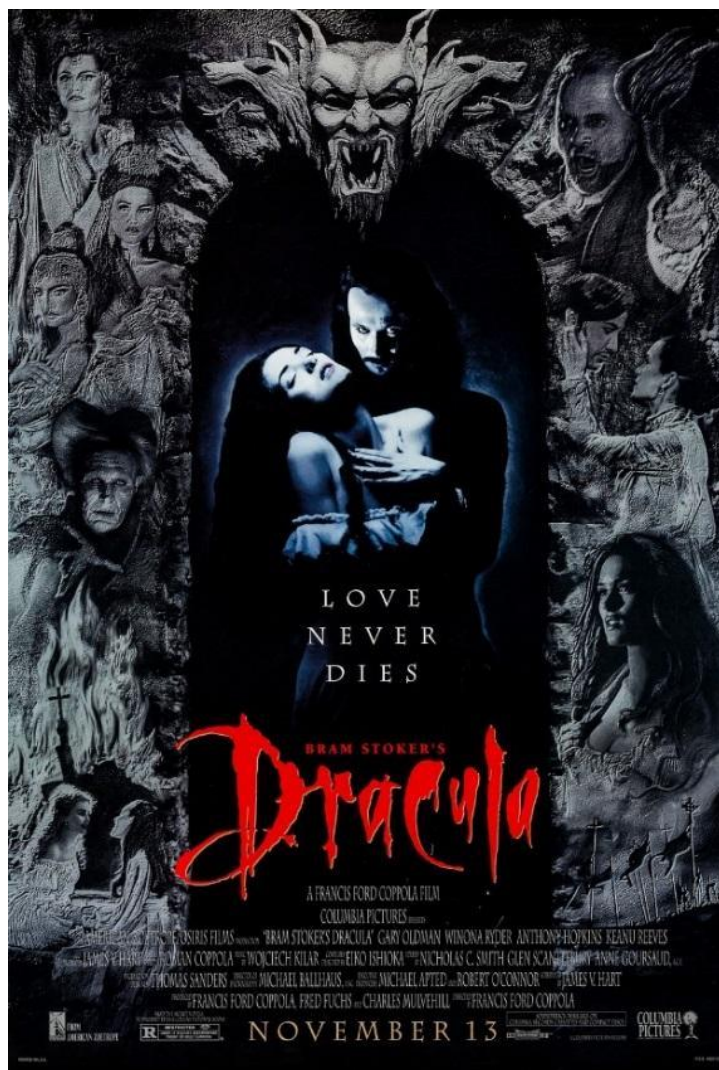
### **Dracula (1958)**





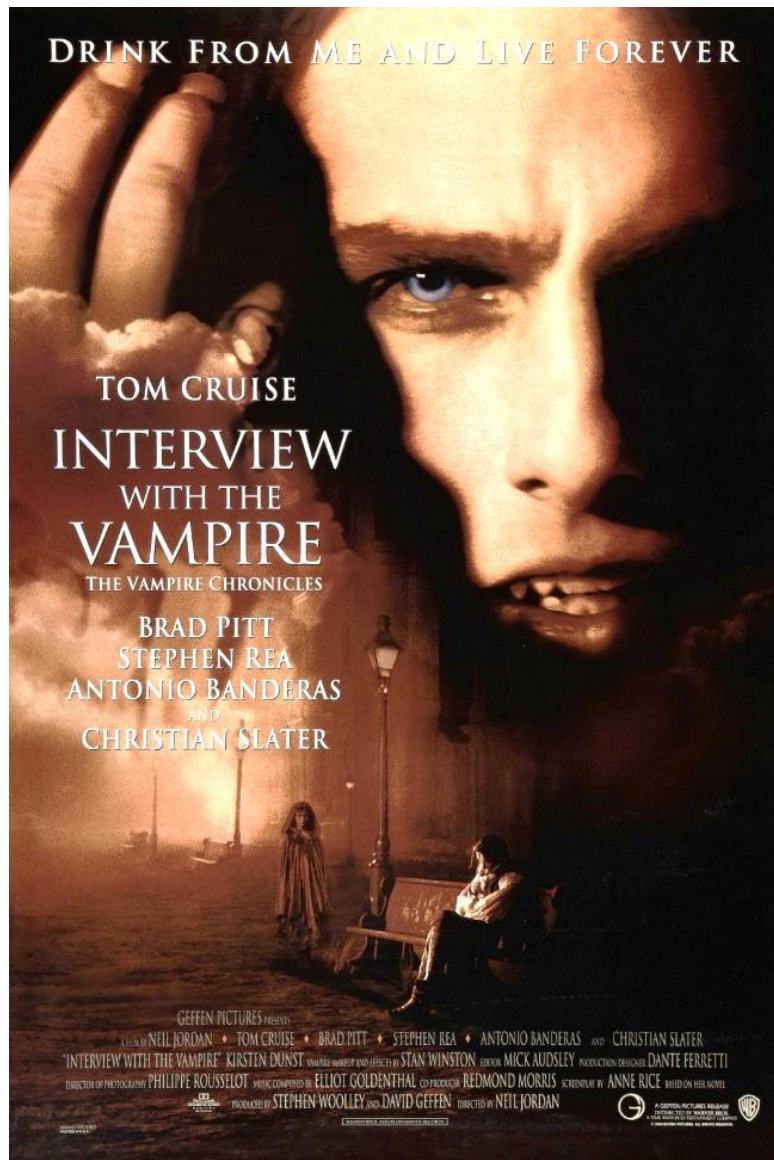
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## Bram Stoker's Dracula (1992)



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## Interview With The Vampire (1994)



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Van Helsing (2004)

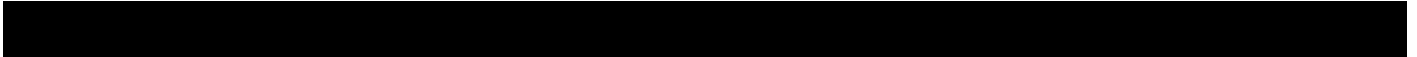


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Twilight (2008)



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Which conventions are *repeated* in **more than two** of the posters? Minimum of four points

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Have any of the posters *hybridised* with other genres? Why does Steve Neale say this happens?

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**Choose a 15 mark question to complete**

**Q1 (EASY) How did vampire film posters change between 1958-1963? (Give examples from the posters)**


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**Q2 (MEDIUM) Why did the posters change? (Steve Neale)**


**Q3 (HARD) What is the purpose of hybrid genre texts? (Apply Steve Neale)**


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## **Political and Social context**

- The 1960s is often seen as the start of women's sexual liberation, aided by events such as the introduction of the contraceptive pill in 1960.
- More women than ever were entering the paid workforce and sixties feminists were campaigning for equal pay, an end to sexual harassment and more equality between men and women in wider society.
- In America, equal pay legislation was passed in 1963.
- 'Older' **stereotypes** of women as passive victims of men and more modern 'male fears' of women challenging male dominance could both be seen to be encoded in this film poster.

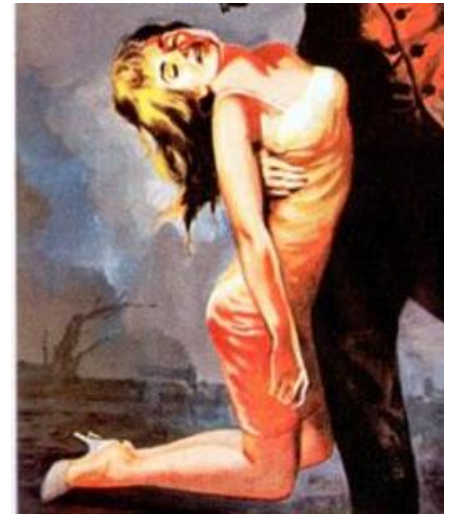
## **How are the political and social contexts constructed?**

- Both women wear pale dresses made of light materials and these **dress codes** serve to reinforce their femininity by highlighting the curves of their bodies and revealing the flesh of their upper chests and arms.



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- The **gesture code** of this woman is that of the **stereotypical** passive victim of the 'monster', his power highlighted by the fact that he's holding her by just one arm.



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David Gauntlett  
**Identity is mediated**

- Identity is now consciously constructed, and the media provides some of the tools to help us construct our identities. The media contains a huge number of messages about identity and acceptable lifestyles. At the same time the public have their own diverse set of feelings. The media and media consumers are engaged in a dialogue.

What messages about female identity is this woman sending?



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What **alternative** messages is this woman sending?



- Baring her teeth and with her arm raised almost fist-like as she's being bitten by the bat, the second woman's **gesture codes** are more aggressive, and the submissive pose of her male 'victim' (including being on his knees with his head back and throat exposed) **represent** her in a **non-stereotypically** dominant way.
- **David Gauntlett's theory of identity** – perhaps the female vampire acts as a **role model** for women struggling against male oppression or desperate to be seen as the equals of men, whatever the narrative or environment

**QUESTION: What stereotypes of masculinity would the audience expect to see in this poster?**

Try to use Medhurst and Gauntlett to explain your answers.

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- The vampire himself seems uncharacteristically fearful in his **gesture codes** with his arm thrown across his body in a defensive gesture, perhaps protecting himself from the female vampire.

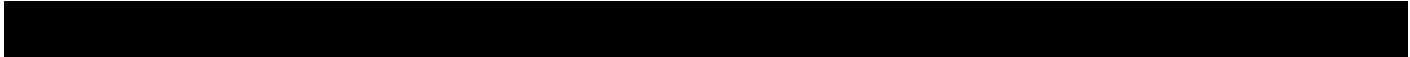


## Andrew Medhurst: “Stereotypes as shorthand”

TERM	DEFINITION
Stereotype	
Conform	
Subvert	

- Medhurst says that producers use stereotypes to get their point across quickly.
- He states that audiences have grown up with stereotypes and understand them within their culture.
- Stereotypes are a good way of drawing audiences to a text as they feel like they will understand and enjoy the text.
- However some audiences may want to watch stereotypes being challenged or subverted as they oppose the dominant ideologies of their culture

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**Choose a 15 mark question to complete**

**Q1 (EASY)**

**Which stereotypes of women are CONFORMED to in KOTV? (Give examples from the poster)**


**Q2 (MEDIUM)**

**How are stereotypes of women SUBVERTED in KOTV? (Give examples from the poster)**


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**Q3 (HARD)**

**Why are stereotypes of men SUBVERTED in KOTV?**


**Stuart Hall - Audience Positioning**

Hall stated that producers could use the following three methods to control the audience's response:

- Selection
- Omission
- Mediation

He also stated that audience responses fall into one of three categories:

- Dominant
- Oppositional
- Negotiated

And that these responses are governed by factors such as gender/sex, age, religion, upbringing and ideology

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## **Cultural Competence**

Hall coined this term to describe how and why we understand things. This is your understanding of the world based on:

- Your environment
- The media you choose to consume
- Your chosen role models
- Your personal ideologies



**This is the poster for the modern masterpiece, Twilight.**

**Do you have a dominant, oppositional or negotiated response to this text?**

**Explain which factors have led to your response. (This is your cultural competence)**

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## **Creative Task**

In groups of 4, create the poster for a new, original vampire film.

Your poster must have:

- At least four established conventions of the vampire genre (Neale)
- You can hybridize with other genres (Neale)
- A title
- Tagline that positions the audience (Hall)
- Stars that either conform to or subvert stereotypes of gender (Medhurst and Gauntlett)
- Release date

You will have:

- One lesson to plan and arrange costumes
- One lesson to shoot your photos
- Two lessons to Photoshop your poster

You will then pitch your film poster to the rest of the class. They will be testing how successfully you have applied Neale, Medhurst, Gauntlett and Hall.