

Spectre



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Spectre

Component 1: Exploring the Media

Focus areas:

Media Language (poster)

Representation (poster)

Media Industries (cross-media study)

Media Contexts (poster and cross-media study)

PRODUCT CONTEXT

- *Spectre* is a James Bond film released on 26 October 2015, starring Daniel Craig as 007 in his fourth performance as the fictional MI6 agent.
- Based on a book by Ian Fleming, the film was produced by the British company Eon (Everything or Nothing) Productions and distributed by United Artists.
- The film was created with an estimated \$245 million budget making it the most expensive Bond film and one of the most expensive films ever made. It grossed over \$880 million at the worldwide box office.
- The poster was designed by Empire Designs, a British film promotion agency. The poster was released on 3 September 2015, as part of a wide global marketing campaign for the film.

PART 1: STARTING POINTS – Media language

Social and Cultural Context:

The masked man in the background is wearing a skeleton mask used to symbolise the Mexican festival of the ‘**Day of the Dead**’. The opening sequence to the film shows a ‘Day of the Dead’ parade in Mexico City, which isn’t something that actually took place in real life. However, the interest in the film, and the government’s determination to promote pre-Hispanic Mexican culture, meant that one year later the local authorities decided to organise such a parade (Dia de los Muertos) on October 29th 2016. It was a huge success and attended by 250,000 people.

The Tom Ford white tuxedo worn by Daniel Craig revived a fashion trend from the 1970s. Previous Bonds have worn a white tuxedo, and

John Travolta famously sported one in the film *Saturday Night Fever* in 1977. It has been argued that Daniel Craig initiated a fashion trend, as many celebrities including David Beckham and Benedict Cumberbatch were photographed wearing a white tuxedo around the time of the release of *Spectre* publicity, underlining the cultural significance of the Bond franchise.

Consider the codes and conventions of media language and how elements of media language influence meaning:

- The central **image** is a **long shot** of James Bond, smartly dressed, arms folded, with the gun pointing to his left. The dominance of his image suggests he is the film’s **protagonist** and so probably a ‘good guy’. According to Vladimir **Propp’s** theory, he would be considered the ‘**hero**’.
- This is reinforced by the use of **colour** – Bond’s white jacket connotes his heroic status, contrasting with the dark, shadowed antagonist in the background.
- Bond’s **clothing** connotes business and professionalism and the gun, an **iconic** part of Bond’s ‘uniform’, is a common **prop** used in the action/thriller **genre** and so audiences can expect violence, action and danger. The gun is casually pointed, connoting that Bond is never off duty, he is always alert and ready for action.
- The **tuxedo** is iconic of the Bond image, and the white tuxedo connotes luxury, wealth and sophistication, the ‘high life’ that off-duty Bond enjoys (linked to martinis, women, gambling etc.). The red carnation has connotations of romance and passion, but also of danger.
- By placing Bond in such a strong yet casual **pose**, the audience is reminded just how cool, calm and collected Bond is. He is a trained assassin and working for MI6; he is relaxed here, but in control, and we are reminded of his ability to keep his composure in any situation.
- Bond is **looking directly** at the audience, seemingly making eye contact. This is a common **convention** of film posters and helps to add to the more personal approach of this format. The

intensity of his stare and the lack of a smile could suggest how seriously he expects to be taken.

- A common **convention** for film posters is to have the **actor's name(s)** placed quite prominently as another way to entice the audience. However, this poster doesn't do that - his name is in a very small font in the upper left corner of the poster. This may be because the producers are confident that the audiences will all recognise him and any text may detract from the visuals. Craig's name also appears alongside many other names 'Albert R. Broccoli's EON Productions presents Daniel Craig as Ian Fleming's James Bond', reflecting the many iconic figures involved in creating the franchise.
- At the bottom of the poster, the **title** of the film appears along with the iconic 007 **logo**. The gold font connotes luxury, wealth, aspiration and exclusivity; the capitalised title suggests power and strength. The title *SPECTRE* relates to the organisation that is in opposition to Bond in the narrative, but also connotes a 'ghost' from Bond's past.
- Beneath this is another typical convention of film posters, the credit block. This gives industry information such as other star's names, directors and producers, and is much smaller and tucked away so as not to divert the audience away from the main image or the rest of the poster.



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Consider Intertextuality:

- The white tuxedo intertextually references earlier Bond films (previous Bonds, including Roger Moore, have worn the white tuxedo, however this poster specifically references Sean Connery in *Goldfinger*), providing a sense of familiarity, nostalgia and pleasure to fans who recognise the link.
- Bond films have often deliberately referenced earlier films in the franchise, for example the 'Bond girl' emerging from the sea (Ursula Andress in *Dr No* and Halle Berry in *Die Another Day*). Daniel Craig also emerged from the sea in *Casino Royale*, his first outing as Bond, however it was denied that this was a reference to the earlier films.

Consider narrative:

- In the **background**, behind Bond, there is an image of a man wearing a skeleton **mask and bone design on his jacket**. The skeleton has connotations of death and danger and the mask is covering up someone's identity, someone who wishes to remain hidden, someone lurking in the shadows.
 - » It is quite easy to guess that this character would be **Propp's villain** and his mask that is reminiscent of such holidays as Halloween or Day of the Dead means he is Bond's **antagonist** and no doubt wants to kill him.
 - » This acts as an **enigma code** for the audience (could reference Roland Barthes) as we want to find out who this character is and why he wants Bond.
 - » The skeleton also references the title of the film, *Spectre*, connoting a ghostly, haunting presence from Bond's past.

PART 2: STARTING POINTS – Representation

Social and Cultural Context:

James Bond is an action hero who, since the 1960s, has been constructed to embody many masculine stereotypes of strength, independence, sexual prowess etc. The representation of women in the franchise has traditionally been similarly stereotypical: the 'Bond Girl' who is the beautiful 'love interest' for Bond (Propp's princess), insignificant to the narrative and ultimately disposable. The representation of gender in the Bond franchise has evolved over time - to an extent - to reflect the changing social context. It would be useful to consider the poster for *The Man With The*

Golden Gun here. Craig's Bond is not as sexist and overtly stereotypical as the earlier incarnations and reflects some contemporary notions of masculinity as his Bond is older, more thoughtful and shows signs of vulnerability. Interestingly, the poster does not reflect this development and represents Bond as the familiar action hero to 'sell' the film.

Consider representations of gender

- Bond provides an image of **masculinity** that connotes bravery, intelligence and strength:
 - » Bond's **posture** is strong and dominant, his arms are folded in a stereotypically masculine stance. This closed body language connotes his lack of emotion, his independence, and also his professional role as a rational, ruthless assassin.
 - » The use of the **key light** on Bond is stark and highlights his chiselled features, constructing a representation of tough, inscrutable masculinity.
 - » The **gun** suggests danger but his posture connotes confidence with a relaxed attitude toward such dangers.
 - » This '**hero**' archetype is typical of the action genre and audiences are led to believe, through this representation, that this is how a man should be.
- The **villain** in the background is also male, reflecting the male-dominated nature of the franchise – the main protagonist and antagonist who drive the narrative are both male.

Possible areas for further investigation:

Feminist theoretical perspectives

- The absence of female characters on this poster reflects a **feminist perspective**, as women are still under-represented within action film franchises. There are stronger female characters in *Spectre*, however this poster does not feature them and so we can infer that much of the marketing prioritises Bond as an iconic figure who will appeal to audiences.

PART 3: STARTING POINTS – Industry

Historical Context

Hollywood is the oldest **film industry** in the world, originating in the 1890s. The first motion pictures were less than a minute long, due to the limitations of technology, and sound was not introduced into films until 1927. **Hollywood** is considered the 'film factory' of the world and exports its products to most countries.

Consider the nature of media production, including by large organisations, who own the products they produce, and by individuals and groups:

- Film production consists of five major stages: development, pre-production, production, post-production and distribution.
 - » **Development** – ideas are created, if necessary rights are bought, screenplay is written and financing is sought.
 - » **Pre-Production** – Cast and film crew are found, locations chosen and sets are built.
 - » **Production** – The film is shot
 - » **Post-production** – The recorded film is edited. Crew work on the sound, images and visual effects
 - » **Distribution** – Finished film is distributed. It is screened at the cinema and released for home viewing.

While the poster above is set for Section A, and does not need to be analysed textually for Section B, it can be used as a starting point for exploring the industry issues:

Company names: MGM, EON, Columbia, Sony can be researched in terms of production and distribution, ownership issues, including conglomerates.

Names of actors – exploration of previous roles, 'star' appeal.

Director, writers, other crew e.g. DOP, Costume Designer – exploration of these roles and their importance in the production process.

IMAX – role of technology in exhibition/ circulation of products.

Hashtag, website – role of new technology and social media in marketing film products.

Soundtrack on Decca Records – synergy and convergence of different platforms to promote the film.

Consider the effect of ownership and control of media organisations, including conglomerate ownership, diversification and vertical integration:

- The James Bond series is **produced** by Eon productions, a British film production company based in London, Sony Pictures and MGM. The video rights of all of Eon's films are owned by MGM Home Entertainment and are controlled by MGM's **distributor** 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment.

- On April 9th 2010, a year and a half into the making of the 23rd Bond film (subsequently titled *Skyfall*), the **producers** decided to suspend production due to MGM spiralling towards bankruptcy. It wasn't until the end of 2010 when the new owners of MGM were able to secure a \$500 million revolving credit line that the film could continue. Luckily, it made \$1.1 billion at the global box office, more than any other Bond film. This allowed the Bond **franchise** to continue.
- Bond has always been well known for its exotic **locations** across the globe and *Spectre* was no exception. Bouyed on by the success of *Skyfall*, *Spectre* used Pinewood studios in London as its base, but then was also shot in Mexico City, Rome, Sölden, Morocco and Austria.

Consider the functions and types of regulation of the media:

- Film and video releases in Britain are amongst the most tightly regulated in the Western world. Age restrictions are placed on all commercially released films by the **BBFC** and some are even expected to make cuts or alter the film in some way to conform to the guidelines.
- Sony had to cut some violence from *Spectre* in order to secure a **12A UK rating** instead of the 15 classification the BBFC originally recommended. This may seem like a sensible decision in order to secure a much wider audience, however, it could be argued that it is no longer the original movie that Sam Mendes, director, wanted the audience to see.

Consider how the media operate as commercial industries on a global scale and reach both large and specialised audiences:

- The long-running Bond **franchise** has an established fan-base and *Spectre*, a US/UK co-production, received **global distribution** (theatrically and on DVD/Blu-ray) to reach a very **large audience**.
- Unlike many media products, it is difficult to specify a specific **target audience** for Bond. The reason for this being that it has spanned so many decades, so many leads and so many directors. However, it is clearly intended for **mass audiences** and has great **commercial appeal**:
 - » Bond is iconic and has **universal appeal** – he is charming, suave, good looking and, most importantly, always catches the 'bad guys'. Arguably, men want to be him and women want to be with him, providing a

form of **escapism** from their everyday lives.

- » Bond also provides a **narrative** we feel comfortable with ('bad guy' does something wrong, 'good guy' catches him and wins the day) and reinforces dominant **messages and values** about 'good' and 'bad'.