

Media Studies

TRANSITION LESSON 2026

Starter

What's the story behind this script?

A: Hello.

B: Hello. What is that?

A: You don't need to know.

B: But it looks so...

A: Don't!

B: Why not?

A: You've changed everything!

B: I'm sorry.

- Who do you think the characters are?
- What ages are they?
- What relationship do they have with each other?
- Are they human?
- Where is it taking place?
- What do you think 'that' is?
- What does B do to make A say 'Don't!'?
- What happens next?
- What has been changed?
- What genre could this be? Comedy? Horror? Soap Opera?

Some media basics

- You will study FOUR areas: media LANGUAGE, media REPRESENTATIONS, media INDUSTRIES and media AUDIENCES
- You will study a range of texts: magazines, gaming, newspapers, TV drama, online media, music video, advertising, the film industry
- You will do coursework (aka the NEA, worth 30%)
- You will take two exams at the end of year 13 (Com 1 and Com 2)
- The exam board is EDUQAS if you want to look up the syllabus.

TODAY

Today I am going to teach you three **NARRATIVE** theories. Two of them appear on the A level syllabus for media studies, and one appears on the GCSE syllabus.

They all work brilliantly well together and, by teaching in this way, you will learn some important things about how to apply theory, a key part of the A level syllabus.

What is media theory?

- There are many different media theories. They might be theories linked to analysing texts, or they might be connected to the media industry.
- Media theories exist to provide analytical frameworks. Media theorists spend their time looking at media texts, and the industries that produce them, and spotting general patterns.
- If a theory is good, it will help **explain something**, it will **apply to a lot** of media texts or industries and it is **often accurate**.

NARRATIVE THEORY

- **Narrative** = plot + storytelling techniques
- All media texts try to tell a story of some kind – in other words, they all create narratives. Different narratives are driven by different forces. Some narratives rely on character, some on conflict, some on style, some on context, some on genre expectations and some on structure. I could go on...
- Our three narrative theories today focus on **character**, **conflict** and **structure**

1: PROPP'S NARRATIVE THEORY

Key words

- **Stock character** – a type of character in a story who is easily recognisable as they appear in many stories e.g. the moody teenager
- **Archetype** – a very typical example of a type of person e.g. ‘She was the archetypal teacher.’
- **Donor** – a person who donates or gives something
- **Dispatcher** – a person who sends something or someone to a particular place e.g. an ambulance dispatcher

Who was Propp?

- Vladimir Propp was a Russian scholar who suggested that every story contained a set of character types or ARCHETYPES
- He identified different character types that he argued could be found in some form in all narratives.
- He thought that each ARCHETYPE had a particular function or purpose which helped to move the story forward

What are Propp's CHARACTER TYPES?

- HERO or PROTAGANIST
- VILLAIN
- PRINCESS
- DISPATCHER
- HELPER (sometimes magical)
- DONOR
- FALSE HERO

TASK on worksheet

Match the character type to the correct description

Challenge: can you think of characters in films, books, or TV programmes that might match the descriptions?

How and why do Media Studies students use this theory?

- Media Studies students apply this theory to the texts they study
- Media Studies students also analyse how well the theory fits the text they are studying
- Media Studies students also explain why a narrative might not fit exactly with Propp's ideas
- Media Studies students use this theory to discover patterns and similarities between different media texts

Applying the theory: Star Wars



C3PO – The Helper



Han Solo – False Hero



Obi Wan Kenobi -
Donor



Princess Leia -
Princess



Darth Vader - Villain



Luke Skywalker - Hero



R2D2 – The Dispatcher

A completely different text: TV News

Task:

- Watch the following TV News clip. Can you find any of the character types in it?
- To help: remember that the character types might be things rather than people.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2h_JTW21Bnc

Question: why is it so easy to apply a theory to a news broadcast that is designed for FICTIONAL texts? The news is meant to be FACTUAL, right?

Challenge discussion

- Why do you think there needs to be different character types in a narrative?

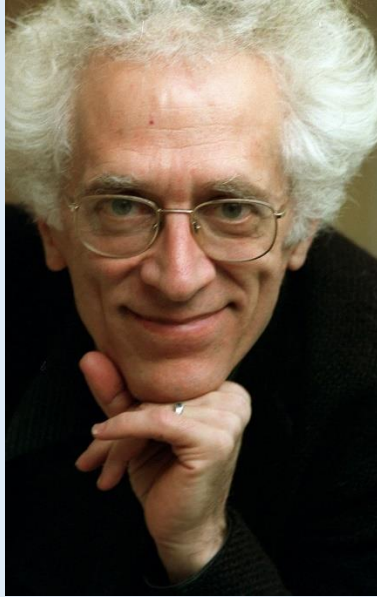
2: TODOROV'S THREE PART
STRUCTURE (NARRATOLOGY)
com 2 sec A

3: LEVI-STRAUSS AND BINARY
OPPOSITES
(STRUCTURALISM)

Key words

- **Binary opposite** – two things that are opposite to each other, for example, **light and dark** is a binary opposite.
- **Equilibrium** – a state of normality
- **Disequilibrium** – a state of abnormality
- **New Equilibrium** – a new state of normality

Who were Todorov and Levi-Strauss?



Todorov was a French-Bulgarian historian and literary critic. He died in February 2017



Claude Lévi-Strauss was a French anthropologist. He died in October 2009

Todorov vs Levi-Strauss – what are their theories?

Todorov

Todorov studied fairy tales and decided that all narratives follow a three part structure:

- Equilibrium
- Disequilibrium
- New Equilibrium



Levi-Strauss

Levi-Strauss decided that all narratives had to include opposites. He called these **BINARY OPPOSITES** and these could include:

- Good vs Evil
- Humans vs Nature
- Old vs Young
- Men vs Women

Applying the theory

Read the questions on the worksheet first and take notes as you watch. You will be shown both texts twice.

[Paddington trailer](#) – answer questions on binary opposites

[Sainsbury's advert](#) – identify equilibrium, disequilibrium, new equilibrium

You will then have 10 minutes to finish your answers.

Applying all the theories: Propp, Levi-Strauss and Todorov

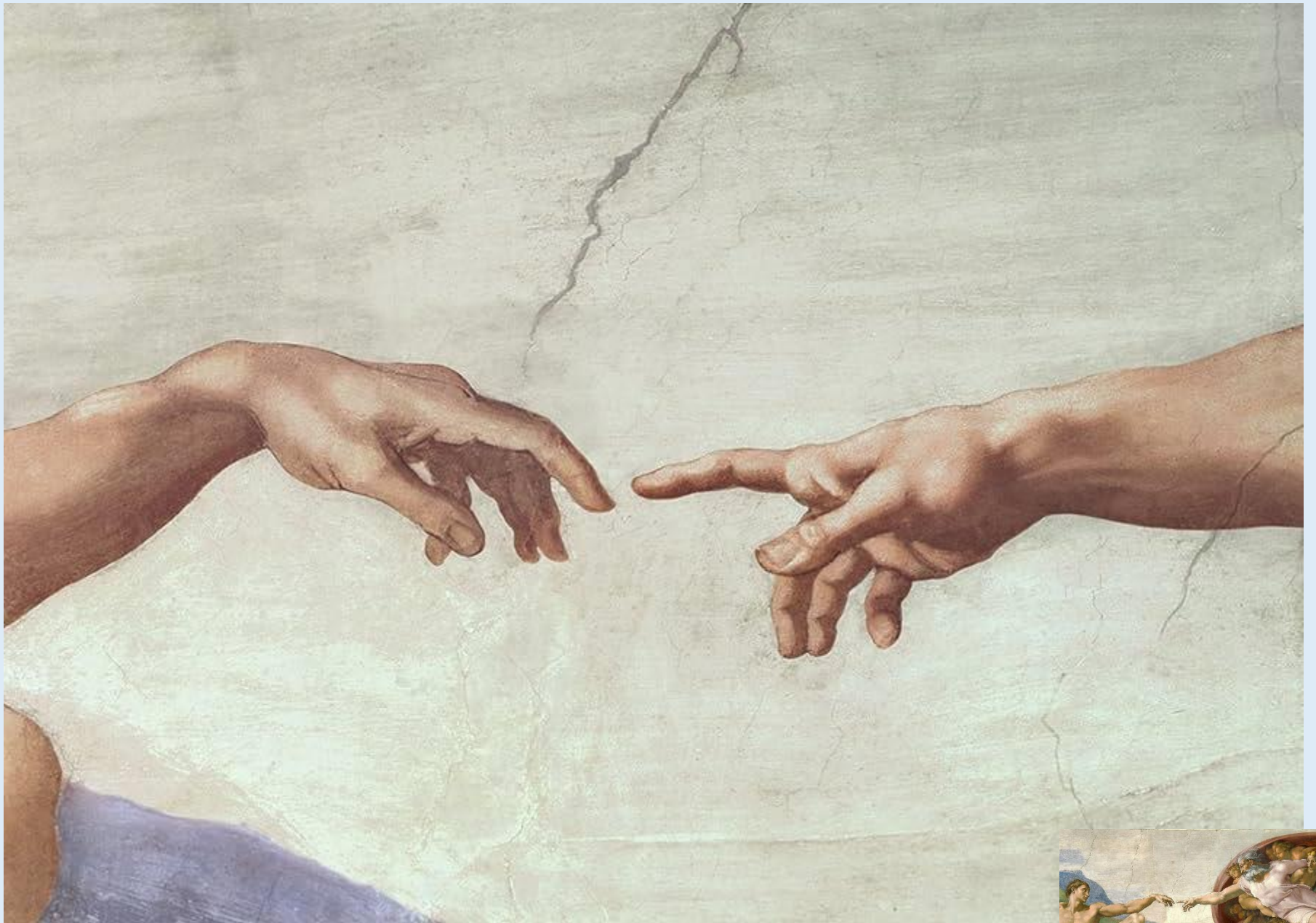
- Revise Propp
- Watch [Room 8](#)
- Watch again, this time taking notes on the chart provided on your worksheet.

How to take better notes:

- *You will show **understanding** of Propp's, Todorov's and Levi-Strauss's theories and be able to **identify** them in a narrative*

OR

- *You will **explain the function** of Propp's, Todorov's and Levi-Strauss's theories, **giving examples**.*



Discuss

- Which theory worked best for this film?
- Why?

Be prepared to feed back to the rest of the class

Remember the starter?



- **Room 8** was the winning short film in a competition.
- The only brief that the entrants got was a skeleton script
- Your holiday work is to use the skeleton script I provided at the start of the lesson to create your own short film.

Holiday work

- Use this script to create a film
- You can either create a storyboard (research how to do this)
- Or you can do this as an actual film
- It should be no longer than 2 mins 30 seconds
- You can add in extra dialogue if needed, but don't take anything away

- **Challenge:** use editing software (canva, clipchamp etc.) to add in music, credits etc.
- **Optional task:** apply the three narrative theories to your own work – what do you notice?

Bring your work (storyboard or film, or maybe both) to the first lesson back in September

A: Hello.

B: Hello. What is that?

A: You don't need to know.

B: But it looks so...

A: Don't!

B: Why not?

A: You've changed everything!

B: I'm sorry.

This is the script for Room 8

Hi

What are you doing?

Nothing. What's that?

Nothing. Stop.

Why?

Don't open it.

Why not?

Because you might regret it.

I'll take my chances.

Fine. Go ahead. Open it. You happy now?

Yes. No. Why didn't you say something?

Would you have believed me? Where are you going?

Isn't it obvious?

- [Crab](#)
- [Concrete – YouTube](#)
- [Water Song - YouTube](#)