

## CASE STUDY: The Hunger Games

*The Hunger Games* (Gary Ross:2012:USA)



## Section A: Producers and Audiences

What genre could the *The Hunger Games* be?

*Science Fiction?*

*Action/Adventure?*

*Romance?*

*Drama?*

*Fantasy?*

### Poster Analysis

Explore the posters...

*How are these posters 'selling' the film and who is their target audience?*

*Which genre codes do each rely on?*



*Are they using the same genre codes?*



## Section A: Producers and Audiences

### Science Fiction – The Repertoire of Elements (Johnston, 2011)

Special effects or spectacle.  
Special effects which tread the line between realism and fantasy.  
Futuristic set design and effects.  
New technology (robots and computers).  
Exploration of new (futuristic) spaces.  
Intertextual references to other science-fiction films.  
“Destruction as a central visual motif”.

### Action/Adventure – The Repertoire of Elements

12/15 certificate, maximising youth audiences  
Often hybridised with Sci Fi/Adventure/Romance  
Major Hollywood studio produced and distributed  
High production values including CGI SFX. Fast paced editing  
Classic Hollywood three act narrative structure  
Predictable chain of events – cause and effect  
Single stranded, linear, closed narrative  
Dramatic non-diegetic sound  
More narrative action codes than enigma codes  
Clear binary oppositions  
Romantic sub-plot, humorous dialogue  
Use of close up/Insert shots/High Key Lighting

Dominant representation of gender: male/female action hero. Mulvey's male gaze and Gamman and Marshmant's contemporary female gaze can apply...

Other genre stuff

The film style is interesting and, at times, **unconventional**. Ross has used lots of **hand-held camera** - with some scenes almost resembling a **social realist** film. Some dramatic scenes play out with little or no non-diegetic music to enhance the realism. This, perhaps comes from the influence of the Jason Bourne movies (Paul Greengrass, the director of the two Bourne sequels, has a background in documentary filmmaking, which influenced his 'realist' treatment of the genre). Many critics now refer to "post-Bourne" action films - is this one of them? Other action films have also adopted this more 'realist' style (e.g. Bond in *Casino Royale* and *Salt*)

## **Section A: Producers and Audiences**

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#### **The Interrelationship between Producers and Audiences: case studies**

It is recommended that case studies are used as the basis for study in this unit.

##### Section A: Producers and Audiences: Case studies

- Hollywood film producers and the institutional frameworks within which they operate (for example as part of large conglomerate business corporations).
- UK film producers and the institutional frameworks within which they operate (for example in relation to support from the British Film Institute and through co-production deals).
- The importance of genre and stars for US/UK producers and for audiences
- Film marketing (including specific marketing materials such as posters, dvd covers and 'official' internet sites)
- Film exhibition, including multiplexes and independent cinemas, as well as other types of venue, and online exhibition, including consideration of different kinds of film viewing experience
- The availability of independent low budget films, and foreign language films in the UK, including Bollywood films
- The social practice of participation in contemporary 'film culture' which includes cinema-going, online viewing, and home cinema – as well as ways in which the film experience is amplified through media convergence.
- Star images – both those put into circulation by the industry and by fans.
- Film reviews – both those produced by critics for circulation in other media and those produced by fans

#### **The Interrelationship between Producers and Audiences: case studies**

You should develop your own case studies as the basis for study in this unit (as well as those referred to in class).

Case studies should be selected to explore the interrelationship between producers and audiences – sometimes appearing to be supply-led, sometimes demand-led. The significance of the convergence of different media (mobile phone, internet, games console, etc.) in changing the nature of the producer - audience relationship could also be explored.

## Section A: Producers and Audiences

### Genre Information:

The film style is interesting and, at times, **unconventional**. Ross has used lots of **hand-held camera** - with some scenes almost resembling a **social realist** film. Some dramatic scenes play out with little or no non-diegetic music to enhance the realism. This, perhaps comes from the influence of the Jason Bourne movies (Paul Greengrass, the director of the two Bourne sequels, has a background in documentary filmmaking, which influenced his 'realist' treatment of the genre). Many critics now refer to "post-Bourne" action films - is this one of them? Other action films have also adopted this more 'realist' style (e.g. Bond in *Casino Royale* and *Salt*)

Some scenes make use of a **shallow depth of field**, with the camera's focus resembling a human eye. We see objects going in and out of focus, giving the film a spontaneous and realist feel. This seems at odds to the action/adventure's primary focus on narrative (rather than style).

The film's use of mise-en-scene in scenes outside the Capitol (the futuristic centre of the imagined state of Panem) are distinctly 'realist' in that District 12 resembles America during the Great Depression - and the games themselves take place in a woodland. Again, giving the film a sense of **verisimilitude** (realism) beyond average science fiction.

However science fiction tropes are also apparent, e.g. use of CGI, a focus on futuristic technology and fashion.

### **Key Genre Terms (add to your key terms sheets):**

- Repertoire of elements
- Codes and conventions
- Tropes
- Mise-en-scene
- Iconography
- Hybrid genre (or hybridity)

### **Other related key terms**

- Audiences
- Producers
- Distributors
- P & A
- Marketing
- Brand image/Branding
- Star persona
- Fanbase

## Section A: Producers and Audiences

### Marketing:

How does the trailer persuade an audience to watch the film?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4S9a5V9ODuY>

Remember those micro element skills?

Watch.

Watch and take notes

Watch and take notes

***Say something smart.***

The production company, Lionsgate marketed the film, themselves, spending an estimated \$45 million dollars, with a staff of 21 people. And although this was one of the largest marketing campaigns Lionsgate had conducted, it was small in comparison to other major films, which can spend approximately \$100 million on advertising and a staff team of over 100 people.

Lionsgate made use of traditional marketing techniques prior to release, for instance giving away 80,000 posters, securing 50 magazine cover stories as well as advertising on thousands of billboards and bus shelters around the world.

<https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=the+hunger+games&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=TxWbUr68DZOVhQevvYCIBQ&sqi=2&ved=0CI0BELAE&biw=1280&bih=654> -  
[q=the+hunger+games+magazine+cover&tbm=isch](https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=the+hunger+games+magazine+cover&tbm=isch)

The posters sold the film as being many genres: action/adventure/fantasy/drama to maximise **audience appeal**.

To avoid criticism of a film featuring kids killing kids, the trailer didn't show the games at all and focussed on the build up to them. This created an enigma code (what would the games actually be like?) which encouraged audiences to see the film out of curiosity (look over your notes analysing the trailer to see what other techniques it used).

However, they quickly realised that the best way to reach their target audience (teenagers) was through digital advertising, which is relatively inexpensive.

The marketing campaign made good use of Twitter and Facebook, created a YouTube channel and a Tumblr blog, iPhone games and live Yahoo streaming from the premiere.

Marketing Links:

<http://www.thecapitol.pn/site>

<https://www.facebook.com/thehungergamesbook>

<http://www.thehungergames.co.uk/>

<http://www.youtube.com/user/TheHungerGamesMovie>

## Section A: Producers and Audiences

<https://twitter.com/HungerGames>

<http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/the-hunger-games-blog>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKCFCKEowBc> (iphone/ipad app)

[http://thehungergames.wikia.com/wiki/The\\_Hunger\\_Games\\_Wiki](http://thehungergames.wikia.com/wiki/The_Hunger_Games_Wiki)

### Twitter Hunt:

For more active fans, the marketing team organised a Twitter treasure hunt, which hid pieces of an image over different parts of the web - encouraging fans to find them and piece them together.

As well as this, the film's website invited fans to register as official citizens of Panem - enabling them to immerse themselves in the world it created. This fed the desire for what Henry Jenkins has termed a **participation culture**. As well as this, fan fiction and quizzes were also widely used.

The iconography of fire and burning was used consistently - creating a sense of intensity - and worked very well online - where fire could be simulated as part of the logo.

As well as this, a new cover for the book was created (with images from the film) and re-stocked in bookshops, causing an increase in book sales as well.

Being an action-adventure film, *The Hunger Games* had significant global appeal (as action translates more easily into different languages and the narrative works more through action and visual codes than subtleties of script). The film's online campaign therefore was quite easy to translate online (and cheap to promote overseas).

**Prep:** In your journal, develop this case study by exploring the franchise.

- Look at the production, distribution and exhibition of 'The Hunger Games; Catching Fire' (Lawrence, 2013, USA).
  - How was this marketed?
  - How was it received by audiences and critics?
- You could develop your research further by also looking at 'The Hunger Games; Mockingjay – Part 1' (Lawrence, 2014, USA). What do we already know about it? How is the relationship between producers and audiences being driven?
- Find out about Lionsgate (Is it part of one of the major Hollywood Studios? Look at it's current slate of films and any significant films in its back catalogue)
- How is Jennifer Lawrence's star persona being constructed and developed?

Due Date: **Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2014**