

### Stuart Hall's Audience Positioning Theory

At a basic level, he suggested an active relationship between producers, message and audience. Hall considered the role of audience positioning in the interpretation of media texts by social groups. He suggested that every media text has a preferred message which a producer wants to get across (encode) and that there are three ways in which the audience might be positioned to receive (decode) that reading.

These are:

- **dominant reading** - receiver fully accepts preferred reading, reading it in the way the author intended, making the code natural and transparent
- **negotiated reading** - receiver partly believes the code and broadly accepts the preferred reading, but interprets it in a way which reflects in its own position, experiences and interests
- **oppositional reading** - receiver's social situation is placed in an oppositional position to the dominant code, thus they reject the reading.

All media products seek to position their audience, some more explicitly than others, and understanding what the preferred reading is can be an essential part of understanding why a product is designed in a particular way and why a varied audience response might be a result.

A **passive** audience is one that enters a film and simply seeks out the film for entertainment. They see no deeper meaning or intended meaning from the director, with regards to the text. The film literally washes over them. For example, when you walk out of a film and say "Wow, the action was great in that film!"

An **active** audience will look deeper into how the film is constructed. They will most likely know a substantial amount about how the film was made, other films in the franchise, the director's previous work, the genre to which the film belongs to. They will look more at socio/political and historical contexts of the film and not simply see the film as a product made for mass consumption. For example, "Did you notice the homages made to previous films in Jurassic World? I like how the film made reference to the previous films in the genre, yet stayed original".

### Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratifications theory

At the core of UGT is the concept that the audience is complex and mixed, selecting media products based on social, cultural and personal factors (their "needs"). For example, an audience might choose to read a particular magazine because it gives them pleasure (gratification). They might watch a particular news programme because it provides information they can then pass on to others or interpret themselves (use). Broadly, UGT outlines four main uses audiences have for the media.

**Diversion** - media products allow audiences to escape, be entertained and relax. (for example, getting "lost" in the world of Lara Croft Go or in the adventures of Ian, Barbara, Susan and the Doctor).

**Surveillance** - media products provide information about the world. The information audiences receive from the media offers knowledge which gives them an advantage in a range of contexts (for example, both The Times and The Mirror offer a subjective account of current events).

**Personal relationships** - humans require interaction with other people. The media provide a range of personal relationships: with fictional characters (for example, the characters in Doctor Who and Class), with fictionalised versions of real people (such as the avatar of Kim Kardashian in Kim Kardashian Hollywood) or even with real people (for example, Zoella, who utilises audience interaction as a key component of her presentation).

**Personal identity** - humans have a need to define both personal identity and a sense of self, based on choices, judgements and opinions. Choices made about media consumption provide one aspect of this - what audiences watch, read, listen to and who they admire allows expression of identity. The media also offer value reinforcement - audiences choose to access media products which support beliefs and ideas they already have. The media we consume all contribute to and reinforce our sense of self and our place in the world ie newspapers we read, films we watch