

Representation and Stereotypes

Representation

This is the key idea that we all use 'visual shortcuts'. This means that we look at people and use what we see to be a way of knowing them as people. We all believe that the way someone looks tells us about them as people. Suggest your own examples of what we tend to think about:

- Pretty blonde girls
- Irish people
- Black men in big cars
- Older women in very short skirts

Common sense tells you that these things are not true, but the media still use these methods to tell you about character.

Some images are very positive.

- What are doctors like on television?
- What are small children like on television?

There are negative images which may put people in a bad light.

- Females are often shown as domestic and that is fine if that is what they want from their lives, but what of women who want careers? Other people will still see them as mothers!
- Men may have a caring nature but on television they are shown as he-man and macho.

Write down five words to describe each of these groups of people as you see them on television.

- Old people
- Young teenagers

Look at your favourite soap opera. How many common stereotypes such as blonde bimbo, boring housewife, nice doctor, tough business man and older gossiping woman can you find?