

# The Effects of the Mass Media

## Summary of theoretical positions

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Name and date begun:

**Time allocation:**

3 lessons

**Learning objectives:**

- Students should understand that there are a variety of theoretical positions which can be applied to an understanding of audience
- The main theories are those of the Hypodermic Syringe, the Two-step flow, Uses and Gratifications and Cultural Effects
- Each of the theories offers something towards a full understanding but each one also has strengths and weaknesses. It is the role of the sociologist to understand those strengths and weaknesses when analysing a question.

**Key Concepts and vocabulary**

See your lesson notes for a list of ideologies and philosophies. These must be learned in addition to the following:

- Frankfurt School
- Two-step flow
- Uses and Gratifications
- Cultural effects theory
- Active audience theory
- Passive audience theory

**Additional reading and references**

Graeme Burton (1998) *Access to Sociology: Media and Popular Culture* Chapter 7.  
Learn this work.

Paul Trowler (1996) *Sociology in Action: Investigating the Mass Media (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*  
Chapter 2

## **Personal Development ideas**

- Ask parents for their views of the impact of the mass media on their children. Check too, what children are actually allowed to watch so that you understand something of the effectiveness (or not) of censorship and control mechanisms.
- Look up some of the more hysterical American sites which deal with the impact of the media on children. Some key search words such as sex and violence will not work on the School Internet so look for terms such as 'media morality' or 'moral and ethical media'.
- Collect articles from the newspapers which address the issue of media violence and sex.
- Have a quick look at some of the 'gutter press' and more notorious videos for a view of the context in which the debate is taking place. Do not do anything which you will find disturbing, but ensure that you have a clear view of the reality of what is actually produced.

## **Overview of the debate**

- Theoretical perspectives should be applied to a practical debate.
- Are children affected by what they see?

## **Revision tips**

- Learn the four theoretical perspectives carefully as this is a probable area of questioning.
- Ensure that your reading is up-to-date.

## **What you should have in your folder when this work has been completed correctly:**

- A clear explanation of each of the glossary terms
- Acceptable lesson notes.
- An overview of each of the theoretical perspectives

An essay to the title:

### **To what extent do audiences shape media production?**