Media Literacy

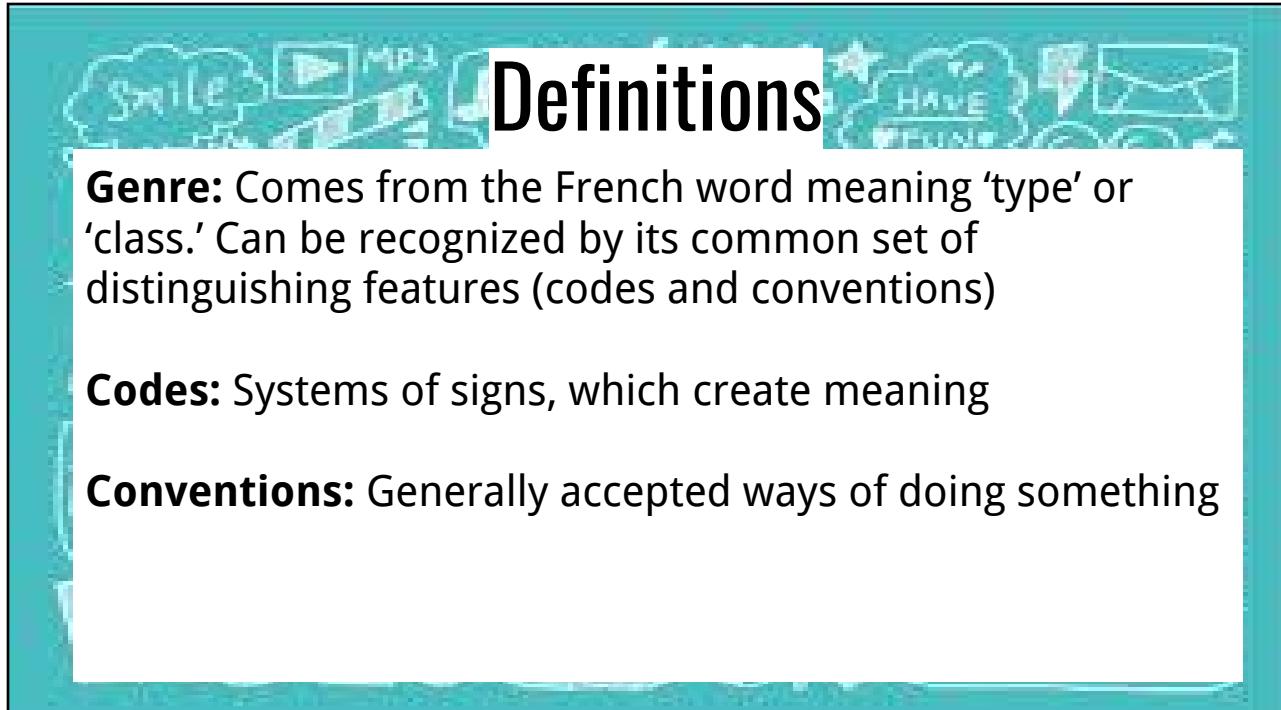## Understanding Codes & Conventions

ENG4U

Definitions

Genre: Comes from the French word meaning 'type' or 'class.' Can be recognized by its common set of distinguishing features (codes and conventions)

Codes: Systems of signs, which create meaning

Conventions: Generally accepted ways of doing something

There are 3 types of codes

1) Technical

2) Symbolic

3) Written

Technical Codes

The ways in which equipment is used to tell the story

Types:
Camera Work
Editing
Audio
Lighting

Technical Codes

Camera Work - can be broken down into 3 categories

1. Basic Shots (Extreme wide shot, wide shot, medium shot, medium Close-up, close-up, and extreme close-up)
2. Advanced (Two-shot, cutaway, over the shoulder, point of view, selective focus, and arc shot)
3. Camera Angles (Eye-level, high angle, low angle, bird's eye view, and slanted)

Technical Codes

Examples of Basic Camera Shots

Basic Camera Shots

Extreme Wide Shot — Wide Shot — Medium Shot

Medium Close up — Close up — Extreme Close up
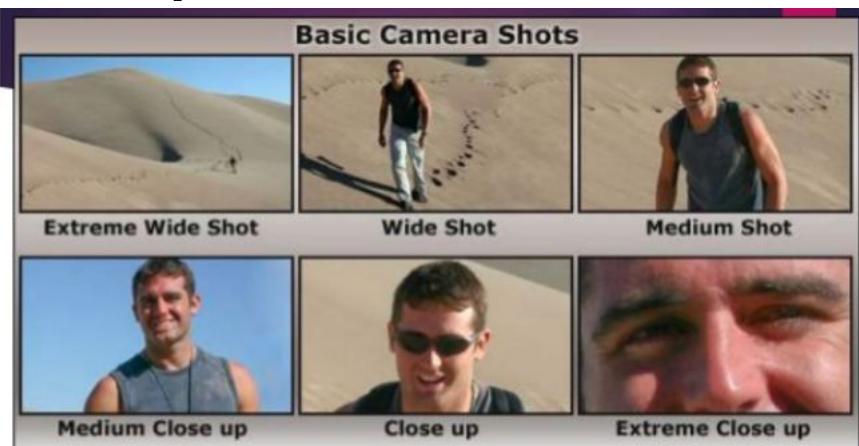
Technical Codes

Examples of Advanced Camera Shots

Two Shot

Cutaway

A cutaway is when the camera shoots the subject but there is someone in the shot as well. This is a example of a cutaway shot in The Descent, as you see there is someone in the shot as well.

Technical Codes

Examples of Camera Angles

Shot Angles

Low	Eye-level	High
Worm's eye	Canted	Bird's eye

Technical Codes

Editing - the process of choosing, manipulating, and arranging images and sound. Editing is generally done for four different reasons:

Graphic Edits
Rhythmic Edits
Spacial Edits
Temporal Edits

Technical Codes

Audio - the expressive or naturalistic use of sound. Audio can be diegetic or non-diegetic.

The three aspects of audio are:

Dialogue
Sound Effects
Music

Technical Codes

Lighting - The manipulation of natural or artificial light to selectively highlight specific elements of the scene. Elements of lighting include:

Quality
Direction
Source
Colour

Symbolic Codes

Symbolic codes show what is beneath the surface of what we see. They function as a universal language that everyone can understand.

<u>Types:</u>
Setting
Mise en Scene
Acting
Colour

Symbolic Codes

Setting - The time and place of the narrative. You can discuss setting as a whole, or as a part (e.g. a specific room). Setting can also be a created atmosphere or a frame of mind.

Take a look at all aspects of the scene and the objects within it. What message do they send to the audience?

Examine both the tangible (e.g. a stop sign) and the intangible (e.g. The name of the protagonist "Neo" in the Matrix.

Symbolic Codes

Mise en Scene - A French term that means 'everything within the frame.' In media terms, it means all of the objects within a frame and how they have been arranged. An analysis of mise en scene includes:

Set Design
Costume
Props
Staging and composition

Symbolic Codes

Acting - They contribute to character develop and create tension or advance the narrative. The actor portrays a character through:

Facial Expression
Body Language
Vocal Qualities
Movement
Body Contact

Written Codes

The formal written language used in media. Just like technical and symbolic codes, written codes can be used to advance a narrative, communication information about a character, issue, or theme in the media product.

Written codes include **printed language** (text you can visually see in the frame) and **spoken language**, which includes dialogue and song lyrics.

Your turn! Decode the following:

Watch the following two scenes from *The Walking Dead*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0OO9ICQ1x9Y

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkpwMKJptmg

▶ What codes are evident in this scene?

Your turn! Decode the following:

▶ What codes were used to compliment the brilliant acting of this actor?

➢ How did this scene convince the audience that it is possible for Glenn to survive under this garbage bin?

Your turn! Decode the following:

1. How did the director convince the viewer that the two characters in the first clip were in a dangerous situation and escaping from zombies was impossible?

2. How did the director use codes to make the audience think that Glenn died in the first clip? Do you think it was intentional to "suggest" or "mislead" the audience into thinking Glenn died? Why or why not?