When analysing moving image texts, you need to identify the genre of the text. Genre is a French word meaning ‘type’, so recognising genre is about deciding what type of moving image text you are looking at. You will do this by considering its main features, known as genre conventions. These conventions include themes, setting, characters, plotlines, narrative structure, mood, props or significant objects.

The genres that are likely to be set for assessment in this unit include science fiction, comic book, comedy, action, romantic comedy, rites of passage, fairytale, period or historical drama, documentary, musical, crime and superhero.

You can often tell from watching just a few seconds of a film or film trailer what genre that film belongs to. What film genre do the following words suggest?

• Explosions
• Car chases
• A tense challenge to defuse a bomb

You probably thought ‘action’ before you even read the second word!

Choose three of the following genres: comic book, comedy, action, romantic comedy, rites of passage, fairytale, period or historical drama, documentary, musical, crime and superhero.

For each genre you have selected, create a table like the one below to show its characteristics. Use this example of the characteristics of the science fiction genre to help you.

1. For each genre you have selected, create a table like the one below to show its characteristics. Use this example of the characteristics of the science fiction genre to help you.
2. Share your answers with the class. Add any good ideas that you may have missed to your table.

Look closely at the two film posters below.

Identify the genre of each film.
What are the key genre conventions that helped you decide what genre each film belongs to?
What would audiences expect to experience within each of the genres represented by these posters?
Film-makers rely on people’s ability to recognise genre when they promote new films to arouse viewers’ interest, expectation and anticipation. This means that exploring the ways in which genre conventions are used to impact on audiences is very important.

### Activity 3

1. Working on your own, write down your two favourite films. What made you like them?
2. Working as a class, combine your chosen films into a list. Look closely at the class choices.
   a) Do the same genres of film appear regularly in the lists of favourite films?
   b) Were the same genres of film popular with both boys and girls?
3. What can you identify about what different audiences get out of different genres? Use this example of an action film to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film genre</th>
<th>Impact on the audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action film</strong></td>
<td>Excitement, the thrill of a chase, the adrenalin rush of an explosion that the hero narrowly escapes from, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Challenging genre

Film-makers sometimes make choices that surprise the audience, as they do not always fit the genre conventions the audience expects. One way they do this is to combine more than one set of genre conventions to attract the widest possible **target audience**. These films are known as **cross-genres**. Audiences enjoy the complexity of cross-genres, and like to make predictions about plot and characters based on their understanding of the different genre conventions. For example, Cloverfield (2008), which revolves around a monster attack on New York and is shown from the perspective of a small group of people, seems to be aimed at fans of the action genre. However, it also uses the genre conventions of:
- science fiction – the largely unseen threat is an alien monster
- documentary – the footage is shot using a documentary-style hand-held camera
- teen horror movie – the characters are all young people who face unexpected and tense threats.

### Activity 4

Choose an example of a cross-genre film you have watched.
1. Identify the different genre conventions used in the film.
2. What impact do these genre conventions have on the audience?

### Intertextuality

When watching a film, have you ever recognised a reference to another film or television programme? This type of link between two texts is known as an **intertextual reference**. Films like Date Movie (2006), Toy Story and Shrek all allude to other films. The film The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (2003) uses intertextual references to many literary novels. Can you name any of the intertextual references used in these films?

Do you recognise the phrase “I’ll be back”? Where have you heard it? It is used in the Terminator films, but it has also been used intertextually in other films such as Last Action Hero (1993) when Arnold Schwarzenegger says “I’ll be back... Ha! Bet you didn’t expect me to say that!”

### Activity 5

1. What other phrases have been used intertextually in films or television programmes? List three examples.
2. Why do you think these phrases were used? What effect will they have on the audience?

Intertextual references can also be visual. In Toy Story 2 (1999), the toys are riding around Al’s Toy Barn in a Barbie tour guide car and Rex the dinosaur is running behind them, his reflection clearly seen in the wing mirror. This is an intertextual reference to the scene in Jurassic Park (1993) when the T-Rex can be seen in the wing mirror chasing the tour guide vehicle.

The story of Bridget Jones’s Diary (2001) is full of intertextual references to Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice. Although the settings and the characters of the heroines are very different, the basic storyline is similar: girl meets and hates boy but after many mishaps falls in love with him and marries him.

Audiences enjoy intertextuality because when they recognise a reference to another text they feel involved in the film and able to appreciate what they are watching on more than one level. Intertextuality may be used for humour, or as a way for a director to pay tribute to another director.

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**Key Terms**

- Intertextuality: when one media text mimics or refers to another media text in a way that many consumers will recognise.
Comedy genres

One film genre that is popular with teenagers is comedy. Comedy, although often male-centred, appeals to both sexes. The humour is often based on a plausible situation that is taken to extremes, often with embarrassing consequences. Teenagers are very sensitive to the embarrassing situation as it is something they actively avoid at all costs!

Within the comedy genre there are sub-genres that are based on different types of humour.

Key Terms
Sub-genre: a division of a genre. For example, romantic comedy is a sub-genre of the drama genre.

Examples of popular comedy sub-genres include:

- **Slapstick comedy** – this is one of the oldest sub-genres of comedy. Its main conventions include situations where characters fall, are tripped up, are injured (although not really hurt) or have extended fights. A good example of slapstick comedy is found in the 1984 film *Ghostbusters* when Slimer rushes straight through Bill Murray’s character, knocking him to the floor and covering him with green ‘goo’. A more classic example of slapstick comedy is *Laurel and Hardy*. Why do you think the audience finds it funny when people fall over or experience embarrassing situations?

- **Teenage comedy** – this sub-genre has become very popular with teenage audiences in the last twenty years, with films such as *Superbad* (2007). Its main conventions include situations that teenagers might relate to, including relationships with parents and members of the opposite sex, school and the difficulties of becoming an adult. It could be said that teenage comedies are only successful if they reflect the situations that teenagers really face in life. Do you agree?

- **Spoof** – a spoof is a comedy that takes the genre conventions of a type of film but makes gentle fun of them. Conventions include a combination of the original genre, adding the comedy of exaggerated and unbelievable situations. A good example is *Hot Fuzz* (2007) which takes the crime/police genre and makes it funny by using over the top violence, ridiculously exaggerated villains and a ‘straight man’ (played by Simon Pegg) who does not see the funny side of situations. A good spoof requires its audience to understand genre quite well. Why do you think this might be?

- **Cross-genre comedy** – in recent years, many comedy films have incorporated other genre conventions. *Rush Hour* (1998), for example, includes the conventions of an action film and a comedy, with an unlikely partnership between an American and a Hong Kong martial arts expert.

Conduct a film ‘comedy survey’. What are the most popular comedies in your class? Can you explain why you find these the most funny?

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Section A: Close textual analysis

Responses to Section A should be based on a detailed study of the following sequence from the DVD.

In point: Shot of a spacecraft approaching a planet.
Out point: After the aliens close the blast doors and say “That will hold them!”

In this sequence from the film, what does the audience learn about the two Ambassadors?

Section B: Analysing moving image

Choose a short sequence of about 2–3 minutes from Star Wars: The Phantom Menace which has a sense of excitement.

In this sequence, how are moving image techniques used by the director to create a sense of excitement?

In your response, you must:

- identify moving image techniques used by the director
- select appropriate examples of where these techniques are used
- comment on the effects of these techniques on the audience.

Section C: Understanding genre

(i) In what ways does Star Wars: The Phantom Menace conform to, or challenge, the conventions of the Science Fiction genre?

(ii) Choose one other moving image text from the Science Fiction genre. Explore how the director of your chosen moving image text uses the conventions of the Science Fiction genre.
Section A: Close textual analysis
Responses to Section A should be based on a detailed study of the following sequence from the DVD.

Examiner summary
This part of the answer is typical of grade C performance. The choice of the example, when the helmet is opened, does support the point being made about the character Buzz Lightyear. However, other examples would have allowed for a stronger comment; for example, Buzz’s serious response to Woody. The student’s comments show understanding of impact but they need to go into more detail to improve the answer.

Student 2 – Extract typical of a grade A answer
The director of the film is using Buzz Lightyear as a foil for Woody’s humour in this sequence. Buzz is portrayed as deluded as he believes he is the real Buzz Lightyear. He has bought so much into his role that even thinks he might choke if his helmet is removed. The seriousness with which he speaks to Woody and his straight-faced concern over the alien acts as a perfect contrast to Woody, making the sequence funnier.

Examiner summary
This part of the answer is typical of grade A performance. The student makes an insightful point about Buzz’s role in this scene, pointing out that Buzz’s seriousness and delusion is a means of creating humour in this scene. This point is well developed and the example of the alien is particularly well chosen.

Section B: Analysing moving image
Choose a short sequence of about 2-3 minutes from Toy Story in which humour is created. In your response, you must:
• identify moving image techniques used by the director to create humour
• select appropriate examples of where these techniques are used
• comment on the effects of these techniques on the audience.

Examiner summary
This part of the answer is typical of grade C performance. The examples selected (the use of the close up and the music) are appropriate and help to back up the point being made. The comments on the impact are good, but the student believes they have made the connection between the examples selected and the idea of calling on a different type of film. To improve this answer the student needs to make this link more obvious.

Student 2 – Extract typical of a grade A answer
The director cleverly uses allusion to other films to bring comedy to the film. When the neighbourhood boy is torturing Woody there is music similar to that found on Star Wars and the boy’s dialogue refers to “rebels”. This is exaggerated in Toy Story, parodying the good guy/bad guy dynamic of the Star Wars films. There is also reference to The Wizard of Oz when Woody hysterically repeats “there is no place like home” on the way down the stairs. This allusion adds humour to the film because the audience laugh at the way the director has parodied the original film by exaggerating it in this situation. It also adds interest to the film as the audience are constantly linking to the original film.

Examiner summary
This part of the answer is typical of grade A performance. The student has made a very insightful point about allusions to other films. The level of detail that the student has included is important in achieving a higher mark. Specific reference to lines from the film demonstrates a very effective use of relevant examples.