

Story Selling

Written by mImoment

Thursday, 18 August 2011 12:15 - Last Updated Friday, 31 March 2017 11:39

In the realm of literature, alluding to other stories within the main story is a sign of the author's virtuosity and skill. In the world of popular media, telling several stories within a single story is a means for multiplying the potential appeal of a media product to audiences. But it doesn't just end there. Music, games, and toys can all be linked together within the same story to attract audiences. The formal term for this is "trans-media narration." In other words, media producers tell stories across multiple formats and genres to sell their product.

In this MediaLit Moment, your students will learn to recognize this storytelling technique in popular media, and explore the ways in which these techniques attract and hold their attention. Ask students to list and discuss all the stories, products and characters which are alluded to in a movie trailer.

AHA!: The producer tried to grab my attention with this trailer by throwing in everything viewers my age like!

Key Question #2: What techniques are used to attract my attention?

Core Concept #2: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules

Key Question #5: Why is this message being sent?

Core Concept #5: Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power

Grade Level: 10-12

Materials: Computer, data projector, projection screen, high speed internet connection

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Activity: Ask students to tell you what they know about toys and games that have been ‘turned into’ movies. Next load and play the trailer for “Battleship,” a movie based on the Hasbro game of the same name, available at www.battleshipmovie.com Please note: this movie was unrated at the time of publication. Prior review recommended.

Ask, what do they like about turning this game into a movie? You may want to discuss references to the game within the trailer (e.g., a patrol boat, one of the five types of ships in the game, is sent out to investigate the unknown vessel; at the end of the trailer, someone asks “which weapons” should be fired). The Hasbro game is no longer just a board game, but is available online, and as a smartphone game application, so students are likely to have some familiarity with the game concept.

For a little more background on the film, you may want to read this Yahoo blog post. It’s short enough for you to share with your students as well: <http://movies.yahoo.com/blogs/movie-talk/battleship-changes-game-first-trailer-premiere-162012802.html>

Play the trailer two or three more times, and ask students to write down any movies, TV shows, and even toys or other products that the trailer might remind them of. Here are some possible leads: Who is the actor playing Alex Hopper, the main character, and what kind of character has he played before? (Taylor Kitsch, who played ‘bad boy’ Tim Riggins on “Friday Night Lights”) Does the alien ship remind you of anything else you’ve seen? (It moves like it’s jumping out of the water, and could be a reference to the Transformers, another Hasbro product, but that’s not certain). Does the global view of the action, in which a white light shoots up and creates a bubble around the battle scene, remind you of anything else you’ve seen? What does it seem to be telling the audience? (global threat, aliens vs humanity, etc.)

As you discuss the references that students came up with, ask them why those references might attract them to the film. Continue to review Key Questions 2 and 5 with students.

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