

## Understanding the Concept of Representation:

How can we define the notion of representation?

The dictionary says:

... representation is... the portrayal of someone or something in a particular way: the *representation of women in politics as few and far between*...

The dictionary is a sound start; however, we can go further.

The ATAR syllabus says:

... representation is '... the ways people, events, issues or subjects are presented in a text.

... they are constructions of 'reality'. These constructions are partially shaped through the... use of conventions and techniques.

What can we say about representation?

- a) It is the writer's/producer's version of reality (reality is imitated for a particular purpose)
- b) Representations are a kind of **social commentary**
- c) They are always **imbued** with values and attitudes
- d) They emphasise or privilege particular ways of seeing the world
- e) They are complicated
- f) They are constructed through conventions and techniques
- g) We can look at patterns of **privileging, marginalising** and **subverting** and **naturalisation**

How we can study representations?

- a) We need to identify exactly what is represented – take your time because there can be layers of representation
- b) We can examine the view of the world reflected in the text
- c) We can look at ways of a group, an idea, an aspect of daily life, a role, an ideology, a discourse '..... and ..... is represented in a text.'
- d) We can look for patterns in a text
- e) We can look for stereotypes and archetypes
- f) We can consider what/who is privileged, marginalised and subverted and naturalised
- g) We can look at expectations and values and attitudes
- h) We can consider how a text is constructed or selected to represent the above

What are some general ways that we can discuss/write about representation?

1. Representations in texts can reflect or challenge the values and attitudes of a society
2. Representations are a version of reality
3. They change over time
4. They are controversial or designed to reinforce what we already know and understand
5. Representations will be viewed differently depending on what viewers and readers bring to a text
6. Different genres will emphasise particular types of representation
7. They are constructed – we must explain how a representation is constructed and what it might achieve