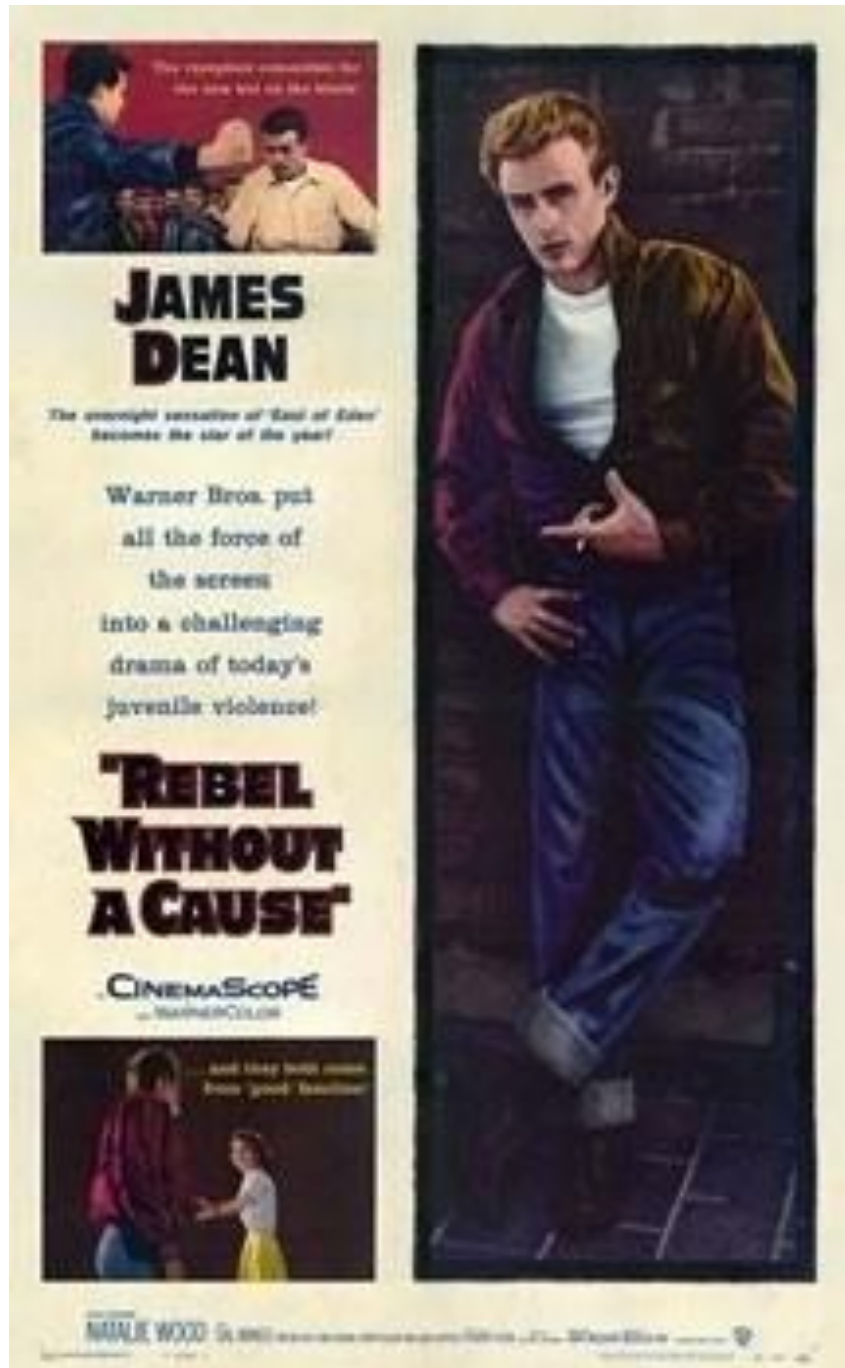


GCSE FILM STUDIES

Component One : Key Developments in US Film (1930 - 1960)

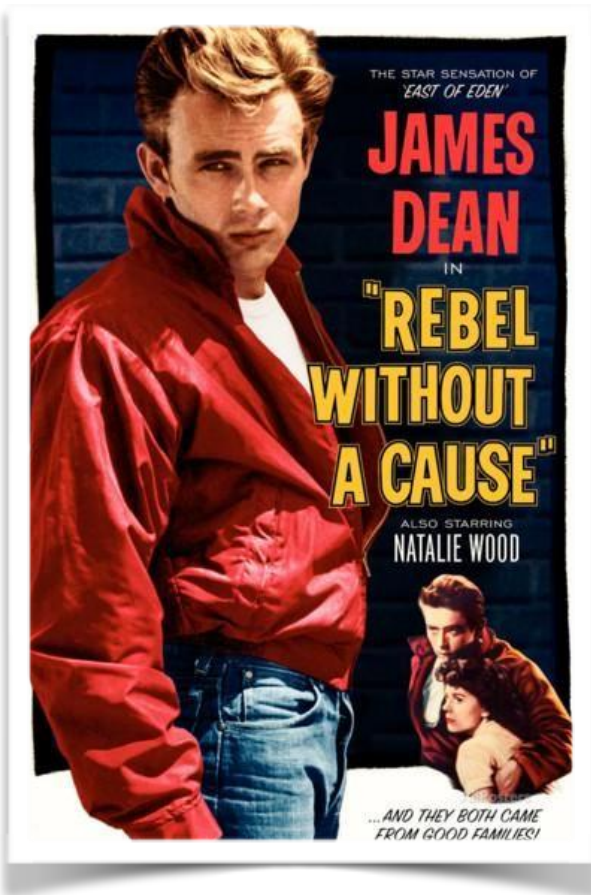
Revision Guide



Section A: *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955)

Focus Areas: Genre, Narrative and Context

Rebel Without a Cause



Rebel Without a Cause is a 1955 American drama film about emotionally confused suburban, middle-class teenagers. Filmed in the recently introduced CinemaScope format and directed by Nicholas Ray, it offered both social commentary and an alternative to previous films depicting delinquents in urban slum environments. The film was a groundbreaking attempt to portray the moral decay of American youth, criticise parental style, and explore the differences and conflicts between generations. The title was adopted from psychiatrist Robert M. Lindner's 1944 book, *Rebel Without a Cause: The Hypnoanalysis of a Criminal Psychopath*. The film, however, does not make any references to Lindner's book in any way. The film was in production from March 28 to May 25, 1955. When production began, Warner Bros. considered it a B-movie project, and Ray used black and white film stock. When Jack L. Warner realised James Dean was a rising star and a hot property, filming was switched to colour stock, and many scenes had to be reshot in colour. It was shot in the widescreen CinemaScope format, which had been introduced two years previously. With its densely expressive images, the film has been called a "landmark ... a quantum leap

forward in the artistic and technical evolution of a format." Warner Bros. released the film on October 27, 1955.

Over the years, the film has achieved landmark status for the acting of cultural icon Dean, fresh from his Oscar nominated role in *East of Eden* and who died before the film's release, in his most celebrated role. This was the only film during Dean's lifetime in which he received top billing. In 1990, *Rebel Without a Cause* was added to the Library of Congress's National Film Registry as being deemed "culturally, historically, and aesthetically significant".

Released	October 27th 1955
Directed by	Nicholas Ray
Produced by	David Weisbert
Screenplay by	Stewart Stern
Cinematography	Ernest Haller

The film was banned in New Zealand in 1955 by Chief Censor Gordon Mirams, out of fears that it would incite 'teenage delinquency', only to be released on appeal the following year with scenes cut. In Britain, the film was released with an X-rating (what we now term as an 18) with scenes cut

Cast	James Dean Natalie Wood Sal Mineo Jim Backus Ann Doran Corey Allen William Hopper
------	---

Plot



In Los Angeles, teenager Jim Stark is arrested and taken to the juvenile division of a police station for "plain drunkenness". At the station he meets John "Plato" Crawford, who was brought in for killing a litter of puppies, and Judy, who was brought in for curfew violation. The three each separately reveal their innermost frustrations to the officers; all three of them suffer from problems at home: Jim feels betrayed and anguished by his constantly bickering parents, Frank and Carol, but even more so by his father's milquetoast (mild, meek and timid) attitude

and failure to stand up to Carol. Judy is convinced that her father ignores her because she is no longer a little girl, so she dresses up in racy clothes to get attention, which only causes her father to call her a "dirty tramp". Plato's father abandoned his family when he was a toddler, and his mother is often away from home, leaving Plato in the care of his housekeeper.

On the way to his first day at Dawson High, Jim again meets Judy and offers her a ride. Seemingly unimpressed by Jim at first, she declines and is instead picked up by her "friends", a gang of delinquents led by "Buzz" Gunderson. Jim is shunned by the rest of the student body but is befriended by Plato, who comes to idolise Jim as a father figure. After a field trip to Griffith Observatory, Buzz provokes and challenges Jim to a knife fight. Jim bests Buzz in the knife fight, so to preserve his status as gang leader, Buzz suggests stealing some cars to have a "Chickie Run" at a seaside cliff. At home, Jim ambiguously asks his father for advice about defending one's honour in a dangerous situation, but Frank advises him against confrontation of any kind. That night, during the chickie run, Buzz plunges to his death when the strap on his jacket sleeve becomes entangled with his door-latch lever, preventing him from exiting the car in time. As police approach, the gang flees, leaving Judy behind, but Jim patiently persuades her to leave with him and Plato.

Jim later confides to his parents his involvement in the crash and considers turning himself in. When Carol declares they are moving again, Jim protests and pleads with Frank to stand up for him, but when Frank refuses Jim attacks him in frustration, then storms off to the police station to confess, but he is turned away by the desk sergeant. Jim

drives back home, and finds Judy waiting for him. She apologises for her prior treatment of him due to peer pressure, and the two begin to fall in love. Agreeing that they will never return to their respective homes, Jim suggests they visit an old deserted mansion Plato told him about.

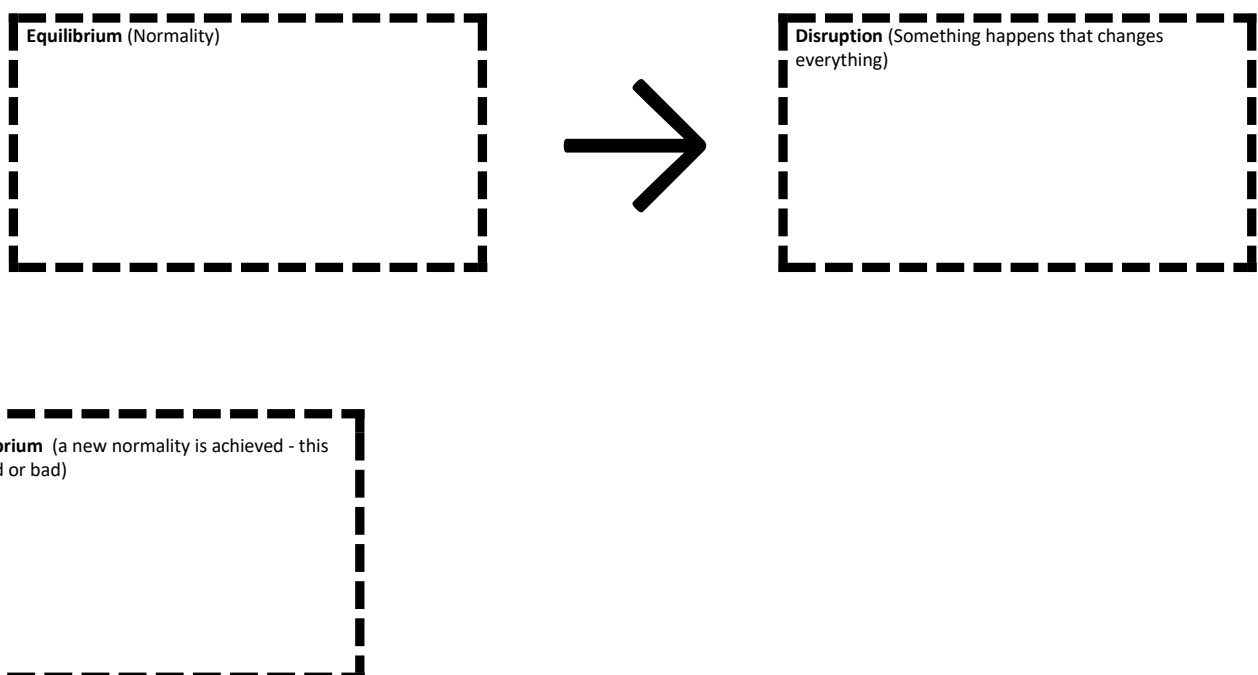
Meanwhile, Plato is intercepted by three members of Buzz's gang, who are convinced that Jim betrayed them to the police. They steal Plato's notebook and go off after Jim; Plato retrieves his mother's gun and leaves to warn Jim and Judy, where he finds them at the mansion. The three new friends act out a fantasy as a family. Plato then falls asleep, and Jim and Judy leave to explore the mansion, where they share their first kiss. Buzz's gang find and wake up Plato who, frightened and distraught, shoots and wounds one of the gang. When Jim returns, he attempts to restrain Plato, but he flees, accusing Jim of leaving him behind.

Plato runs to the observatory and barricades himself inside as more police converge including Fremick who, with Frank and Carol, was searching for Jim. Jim and Judy follow Plato into the observatory, where Jim persuades Plato to trade the gun for his red jacket; Jim quietly removes the ammunition before returning it, and then convinces Plato to come outside. But when the police notice that Plato still has the gun they shoot Plato down as he charges them, unaware that Jim had removed the bullets. Frank comforts his grieving son, vowing to be a stronger father. Now reconciled to his parents, Jim introduces them to Judy.

Narrative

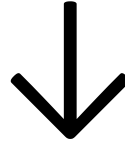
'The Outsider' is a typical narrative convention of teen genre: this trope allows the audience to experience the new school location & characters with the protagonist. It takes place over a 2 day period and is from a teenage point of view showing a mistrust of authority figures, while parents are overtly criticised for being too weak, or too dominant. In this film adults cannot win, but this message is clearly constructed to appeal to the teenage target audience.

Using Todorov's Equilibrium Theory plot out the main events from the film using Jim's perspective.





Todorov: Equilibrium Theory



Recognition (the hero realises nothing will ever be the same)

Name of Film: :



Attempt to Repair (the hero tries to put things right)

Binary Oppositions (Levi Strauss)

Binary oppositions are oppositions that create conflict, which then drive along the narrative. Make a list of binary oppositions in *Rebel Without a Cause*. They can be characters, places, ideas or events.

	V	
	V	
	V	
	V	
	V	
	V	

Characters

Characters	Describe them - who they are, where they live, age, gender personality type etc.	Are they a stereotype, countertype, flat or rounded character? Do they fulfil any of Propp's character types?

Jim Stark**Plato****Judy****Buzz****Frank Stark**



Carol Stark



Propp's Character Types

Vladimir Propp suggests that most stories are based on the same character types again and again. In some stories characters can fulfil more than one of Propp's types (like a mentor can also be a dispatcher etc.). Some may not necessarily be a person: for example 'the princess' may be an idea like 'truth' or 'justice' or 'peace'. Can you spot them in *Rebel Without a Cause*?

Historical Context

Released in 1955, the film is set during the America-led crusade against Communism. This crusade was otherwise known as the "Red Scare", with the large sections of the American population and media believing that Communism threatened the American way of life and that communists wanted to take over the world. This means that there was a *paranoia* as a recurring mood in many films of the 1950's and created an often a climate of fear created by the mass hysteria of the McCarthy 'witch hunts'.

Many people - especially families - moved out of city centres, to the 'suburbs' or to small towns, where new, more spacious houses suited growing families.

The story focuses on the suburbs of Los Angeles and how the youths of 1950s adjusted to this new way of life. These family homes were desirable, but cold and lifeless resulting in little affection.



Inequality and the importance of civil rights was an important political movement in this time, especially for young people who wanted to do the right thing and treat each other with civility and respect. The US had a post-war economic boom, becoming the wealthiest population in the world in the 1940s; many men left to fight in WWII. Women took many traditionally masculine jobs: mining, steel-working, farming, but also in banking, law and other areas. When the war ended, many women were now expected to return to domestic life. By the 1950s, it seemed that once again women were expected to take a traditionally feminine role such as nurse, teacher or secretary. By the 1960s, this frustration would help fuel the feminist movement. Scarred by war, mainstream America seemed to want to return to traditional values and gender roles, however children who reached adolescence during the 1950s felt these values were old-fashioned and they began to rebel against them. The idea of the rebellious teenager was born.

The Birth of the Teenager



Young people of America began to question and reject traditional beliefs, and generated a distrust for the authorities (government, FBI, police, army, even doctors and teachers). As films, fashion, TV and music sought to target this age group, young people found they had more power than ever before. This was considered to be the 'birth of the teenager'. It was a time of peace, so young men were not at war, a confusing era for young men who could not identify with their wartime fathers or have a war to fight and

prove themselves. Fashion aimed at teenagers became more prevalent as did the birth of rock n roll - a soundtrack for the new generation. This new social group was considered by some as threatening, unruly and out of control and the film reflected and responded to this concern. This film was a sympathetic representation of teenagers, blaming the parents for their delinquency. James Dean was a new kind of actor and became an icon, and the face of a generation. Dean appeared to be tormented and brooding, not the usual 'hero' type and he came to be seen as the 'poster boy' for the new social group. For the first time, young people had a disposable income; products such as music, film and fashion were targeted at this group. They were powerful consumers and therefore a powerful 'voice' in consumerist America.

In addition, education was perhaps better than ever before, which led young people to question the world, leading to highly political movements and a drive for equality. that was to culminate in the 1960s when civil rights, feminism and the sexual revolution gained momentum. The marketing of the film showed that films centred on teenagers could be from the teenagers point of view, and appeal to teens at the same time. However much like the rest of culture at the time, the film is from the male POV and, girls are quite passive figures. It would be another 30years until female lead teenage movies would become mainstream - despite the feminist movement becoming mainstream in the 1960s.

The focus of the film is a teenager who does not 'fit in' or 'belong'. This narrative convention of 'The Outsider' is a typical of the teen genre and this trope allows the audience to experience the new school

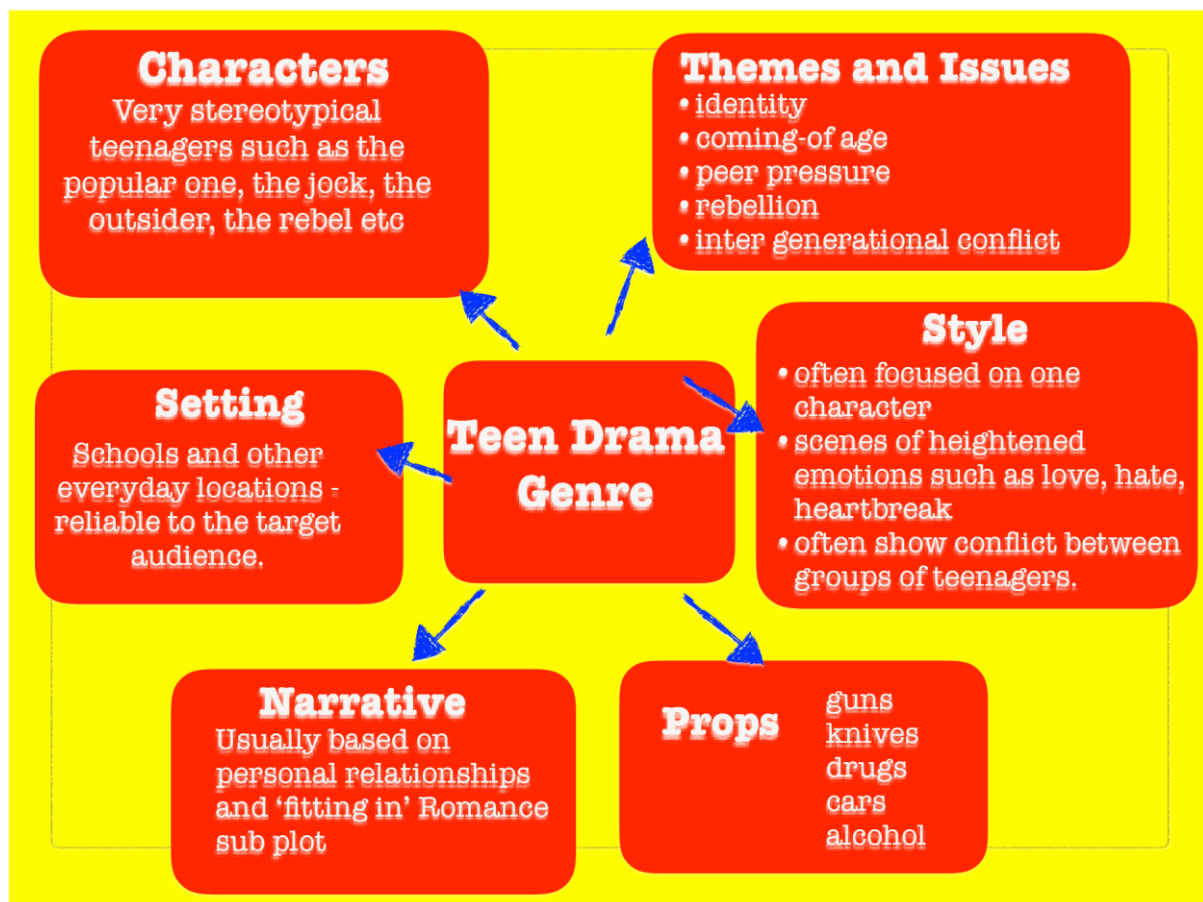
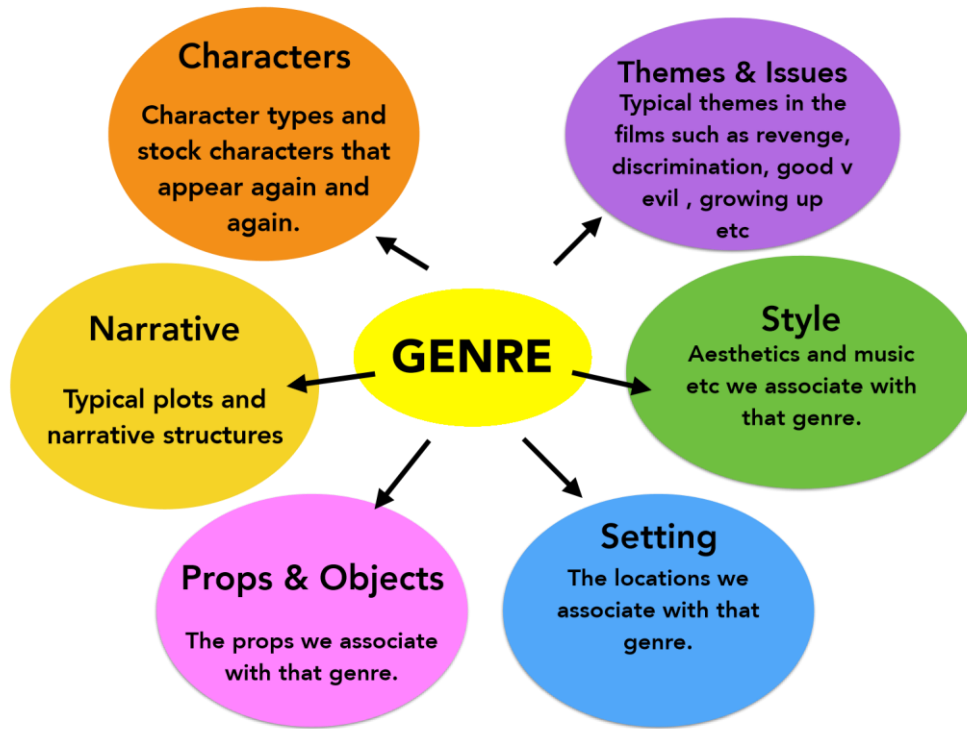
location & characters with the protagonist. James Dean is important to the film as he became a cultural icon and the face of a new generation who questioned authority and rebelled against expectations. He was a new type of male lead in Hollywood and his brooding face has become synonymous with teenage angst; it was his rising star power which lead Warner brothers to reshoot the film in the much more expensive colour film and upgrade it from a B movie.

Task: After reading the context section, answer the following questions on the context of *Rebel Without a Cause* (you may wish to do additional research.)

1. What were the main political issues of 1950s America?
2. How can we see this reflected in *Rebel Without a Cause*?
3. What do we mean by 'the birth of the teenager'?
4. How did events of the 1940s and 50s affect women's roles in society?
5. How did technological change affect the production of *Rebel Without a Cause*?
6. Why is James Dean important to the film?

Genre

Rebel Without a Cause is a teenage drama film. Genres rely on directors using recognisable elements again and again, so that the audience of a film can instantly know what the genre is from those elements. These are called the 'codes & conventions' - the rules of a specific genre that dictate typical narratives and representations.



TASK

Look at the typical codes and conventions of the teen drama, then in the table below describe how *Rebel Without a Cause* shows us these conventions.

Genre Convention	What is typical in Rebel Without a Cause?
------------------	---

Characters	
Themes and Issues	
Settings	
Style	
Props	
Narrative	

Genre - Why?

According to film theorist Steve Neale , film genre relies on the idea of *repetition* and *difference*. Films have to *repeat* the same codes and conventions, so that audiences are familiar and comfortable with what they are watching and are fairly confident before viewing that a film will contain some elements that they will enjoy (based on their experiences of watching other films of that genre') . However, a film must be *different* enough to engage them and show them something new or else they will become bored.

Why do film producers like genre?

Film producers like genre films as they can be almost certain that there is an audience for their film, based on the success of previous films of that genre. Films are very expensive to produce and distribute therefore a genre film can help guarantee some success.

Why do audiences like genre?

Genres help audiences pick films that they will enjoy. This is based on an audience's previous enjoyment of films of the same genre.



Quotes - Jim Stark - teenage angst!

"You're tearing me apart"

"If I had one day when I didn't have to be all confused and I didn't have to feel that I was ashamed of everything. If I felt that I belonged someplace. You know?"

"I don't know what to do anymore. Except maybe die."

Scene Analysis One		Scene:
	Technique (name it and describe it)	What does it tell the audience/what are its connotation.
Mise-en-scene (3 elements) costume/props/ setting/ hair & make up/body language		
Sound (2 examples) diegetic/non diegetic/dialogue/ music		
Cinematography (3 examples) shot/angle/ movement		
Editing (2 examples) style/pace/ speed		

- 1) Which part of the narrative is the scene?
- 2) How do the aesthetics reflect the mood of the scene?
- 3) What representations are offered in the scene?
- 4) What genre conventions are shown?
- 5) How does the scene develop major characters?

Scene Analysis Two		Scene:
	Technique (name it and describe it)	What does it tell the audience/what are its connotation.
Mise-en-scene (3 elements) costume/props/ setting/ hair & make up/body language		
Sound (2 examples) diegetic/non diegetic/ dialogue/music		
Cinematograph y (3 examples) shot/angle/ movement		
Editing (2 examples) style/pace/ speed		

6) How are the messages and values of the film shown in the scene?

- 1) What part in the narrative does the scene play?
- 2) How do the aesthetics reflect the mood of the scene?
- 3) What representations are offered in the scene?
- 4) What genre conventions are shown?
- 5) How does the scene develop major characters?

Scene Analysis Three

Scene:

Technique (name it and describe it)

What does it tell the audience/what are its connotation.

Mise-en-scene
(3 elements)
costume/props/
setting/ hair &
make up/body
language

Sound
(2 examples)
diegetic/non
diegetic/dialogue/
music

Cinematography
(3 examples)
shot/angle/
movement

Editing
(2 examples)
style/pace/
speed

scene?

- 1) What part in the narrative does the scene play?
- 2) How do the aesthetics reflect the mood of the scene?
- 3) What representations are offered in the scene?
- 4) What genre conventions are shown?
- 5) How does the scene develop major characters?

GCSE FILM STUDIES: KEY TERMS

REMEMBER marks in the exam come from your ability to use these words and apply them to analyse your focus films - **SO GET THEM IN YOUR ANSWERS!**

Film FORM

CINEMATOGRAPHY: REFERS TO THE CHOICE OF SHOT, THE ANGLE AND HOW THE CAMERA MOVES

Camera Shots

Close Up shot (CU)	A shot that is close to its subject, e.g the head and shoulders of a subject to show facial expression or to focus on a prop. Extreme close ups are just the face or part of the face (or prop). Close ups are used to emphasise someone or something.
Medium Shot (MS)	Contains a figure from around the knees upwards and part of the setting. Normally used for dialogue.
Long shot (LS)	This is a complete view of a character or characters (with costume) and sometimes their setting; we can gain a full sense of <u>who</u> and <u>where</u> they are, as well as the relationships between characters.
Extreme Long shot (ELS)	A shot from distance that shows us <u>where</u> (and when) we are. If this is at the beginning of a film, it is called an Establishing Shot .

Camera Angles

Low Angle	A shot taken from close to the ground looking up at the character or action, thus making it look larger and/or more powerful.
High Angle	A shot taken from higher up looking down on the character or action, thus making it look smaller/more vulnerable.
Canted Angle	A shot on a skewed or uneven angle which is used to create a sense of confusion or replicate adrenaline rush in something like a fight sequence.
Crane Shot	A shot from a camera mounted on a large structure, capable of achieving high wide shots and great scales of movement. This is used to exaggerate movements and pace of the action (often used in action or chase sequences).
Aerial Shot	A shot usually from a helicopter looking down on the setting or the action; this is sometimes called a bird's eye view shot and is used when creating a sense of scale or spectacle.

Camera Movement

Steadicam Shot	A smooth hand held shot, achieved by mounting the camera onto a harness, which absorbs most of the shocks and stutters as the operator moves through the action, allows the audience to feel close to the action without confusing them.
-----------------------	--

6) How are the messages and values of the film shown in the scene?

Track	A smooth shot which moves through the action, usually following the movements of a character, may also highlight the pace at which things are happen
Pan	A camera movement where the camera head swivels in a horizontal or flat motion
Shallow Focus	a depth of shot in which the actions in the background are blurred, to focus the audience on events in the foreground

Pull Focus	A shot in which distant objects or action is brought to the foreground, or vice versa
SOUND	
Diegetic Sound	These are sounds that are meant to be naturally occurring in the scene, such as punches, traffic sounds, footsteps etc. Sometimes these diegetic sounds are amplified to exaggerate the effect they have; i.e. amplified punching sounds make a fight seem more brutal.
Non-Diegetic Sound	These are added sounds usually music or a voice over that are over the top of the scene. These are sounds that the characters are not meant to hear, only the audience.
Dialogue	The words spoken by the actors
Voiceover	Spoken words over the film by a character who is not necessarily on screen
Soundtrack	This means ANY kind of sound on the film. It is made up of four parts 1) Dialogue (human voice) 2) Sound effects 3) Music 4) Silence
Soundscape	The combination of sounds used to create a particular environment or atmosphere.
Pleonastic Sound	Exaggerated sounds that help create genre e.g. the light sabers in Star Wars or the bangs and crashes in superhero films.
Contrapuntal	When what we see does not match what we hearing in either mood or tone. This is very disorientating for the audience.

EDITING: This refers to the ways the camera shots are pieced together into a sequence, or anything that happens to the footage in the editing suite, such as special effects

Cross-cutting	This is cutting between two or more storylines, that are perhaps linked, to show they are happening at the same time.
Shot-reverseshot	This style shows one character interacting with another who is off screen, then cuts to the other character then back to the first character again; is used to show a conflict or alternatively to show a relationship.
Fast Paced Cuts	This style pieces lots of shots/ quick cuts placed together in a fast sequence to create a sense of urgency, hurry, panic, adrenaline etc
CGI	Computer Generated Images , added special effects which add a sense of spectacle, wonder, amazement etc
Slow Motion	Where events look to happen slowly for added drama and suspense

MISE-EN-SCENE: This means everything placed in the frame (what we can see in each shot).

Props	The objects that are in the scene
Setting	Where we are can tell us a lot about the mood or atmosphere a director wants to create. A tiny room is claustrophobic. A desert can be isolating. A large urban setting in a Superhero film shows us that there is lots of potential for destruction.
Costume	Sometimes called Dress Codes . What the characters are wearing and what meanings (connotations) we can take from them.
NVC	None Verbal Communication includes body language, movement, positioning within the frame, facial expressions and the way two or more characters are placed in relation to each other. A huge part of human communication is by body and facial language so we pick up lots of information and meanings (connotations) from this aspect of the mise-en-scene.
Colour	Also called colour codes . These can relate much of the mood or atmosphere the director is trying to create as certain colours have distinct connotations . The range of colours in a scene is sometimes called the colour palette .
Lighting	High key lighting - when a scene is lit from many sources to create a natural lit environment. Low Key Lighting - when light is from a few sources so we get areas of light and lots of shadow.
Make up and hairstyles	These can tell us lots about the characters such as where in time/place they are from or other information.
Film Meaning	
Aesthetics	The distinctive visual style of the film. can be made up of cinematography, lighting, mis-en-scene and effects of editing.
Representation	The way in which people, and social groups are 're-presented' to the audience. in the world of the film. Social groups include: gender, class, disability, sexuality, culture and ethnicity,. Stereotype : A standardised version of a social group (often very narrow) Countertype : A positive version of a previously negative representation of a social group e.g Hit Girl is a countertype to the usually sexualised female superhero.
Flat Characters	Characters that are very stereotyped and show little development during the film. Koobus from <i>District 9</i> could be seen like this.
Rounded Characters	Characters that grow and develop during a film.
Themes and Issues	The messages that are passed on through film texts such as good always triumphs over evil or one person can make a difference. Other ones that are often in superhero films are 'technology and its power'.

Genre	The type of film. This information is relayed to the audience through every part of the film's micro and macro language. Sometimes a film may mix together elements from two or more genres; this is called a hybrid genre.
Plot	The story of the film
Narrative	How the plot is told.
Linear Narrative	A narrative that unfolds in chronological order. <i>Cause and Effect</i> usually propel the narrative forward.

Film Meaning	
Three Act Structure	A very simple way of organising a narrative Act 1: Exposition is the beginning; Act 2: Development is the rising action and tension in the narrative. Act 3: Denouement is the ending.
Equilibrium Theory	Todorov's idea that narratives work their way through a cycle: equilibrium, disruption, recognition, attempt to repair and new equilibrium.
Binary Oppositions	Two oppositional forces that can be identified in a text e.g light/dark, good/evil, life/death, female/male etc The tension between them helps to drive the narrative or suggest what is going to happen.
Hero's Journey	Also called the monomyth. A type of narrative that is focused on the development of a central character as they make the journey from ordinary to extra ordinary - District 9 and Spirited away are examples of this but also Attach the Block (Moses) and Tsotsi could be seen in these terms.
Character Types	Characters that fall into easily identified roles in the narrative such as hero, villain, sidekick, mentor, love interest etc Vladimir Propp suggested that there are seven basic character types.
Action Codes	Easily identified pieces of narrative or set scenes in a film that tell the audience what genre the film is such as a car chase sequence in an action film.
Enigma Codes	Questions posed in a film text that make the audience want to watch or keep watching to find the answers out such as 'who is the killer?', "will they get together?" etc
Iconography	Visual clues that give the audience cause to what genre the film is; for example, mask, capes, badges etc are all part of the <i>iconography</i> of Superhero films.
Codes and Conventions	A regularly used element or feature that has become typical of the genre.
Connotation:	The suggested meanings of a colour, image, word etc, ie, red has connotations of blood, danger, violence, but also love, romance and nobility.
Versimilitude	The way that a film convinces the audience that what they are seeing is 'real'.

Sample Questions

US film 1930-60

Answer **question 1** in relation to the film produced between **1930 and 1960** from your chosen comparative study films:

- *King Solomon's Mines* (1950)
- *Singin' in the Rain* (1952)
- *Rear Window* (1954)
- *Rebel without a Cause* (1955)
- *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956).

1. (a) Identify **one** genre convention used in your chosen film. [1]
- (b) Briefly outline why conventions are used in genre films. [4]
- (c) Explore how the convention you have identified is used in **one** sequence from your chosen film. In your answer, refer to at least **one** key element of film (e.g. cinematography, mise-en-scène, editing or sound). [10]

Answer **question 1** in relation to the film produced between **1930 and 1960** from your chosen comparative study films:

- *King Solomon's Mines* (1950)
- *Singin' in the Rain* (1952)
- *Rebel without a Cause* (1955)
- *Rear Window* (1954)
- *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956).

- 1 1 Identify **one** male character from your chosen film. [1]
- 1 2 Briefly outline the costume of this character. [4]
- 1 3 Explore how this character is represented in a sequence from your chosen film. [10]

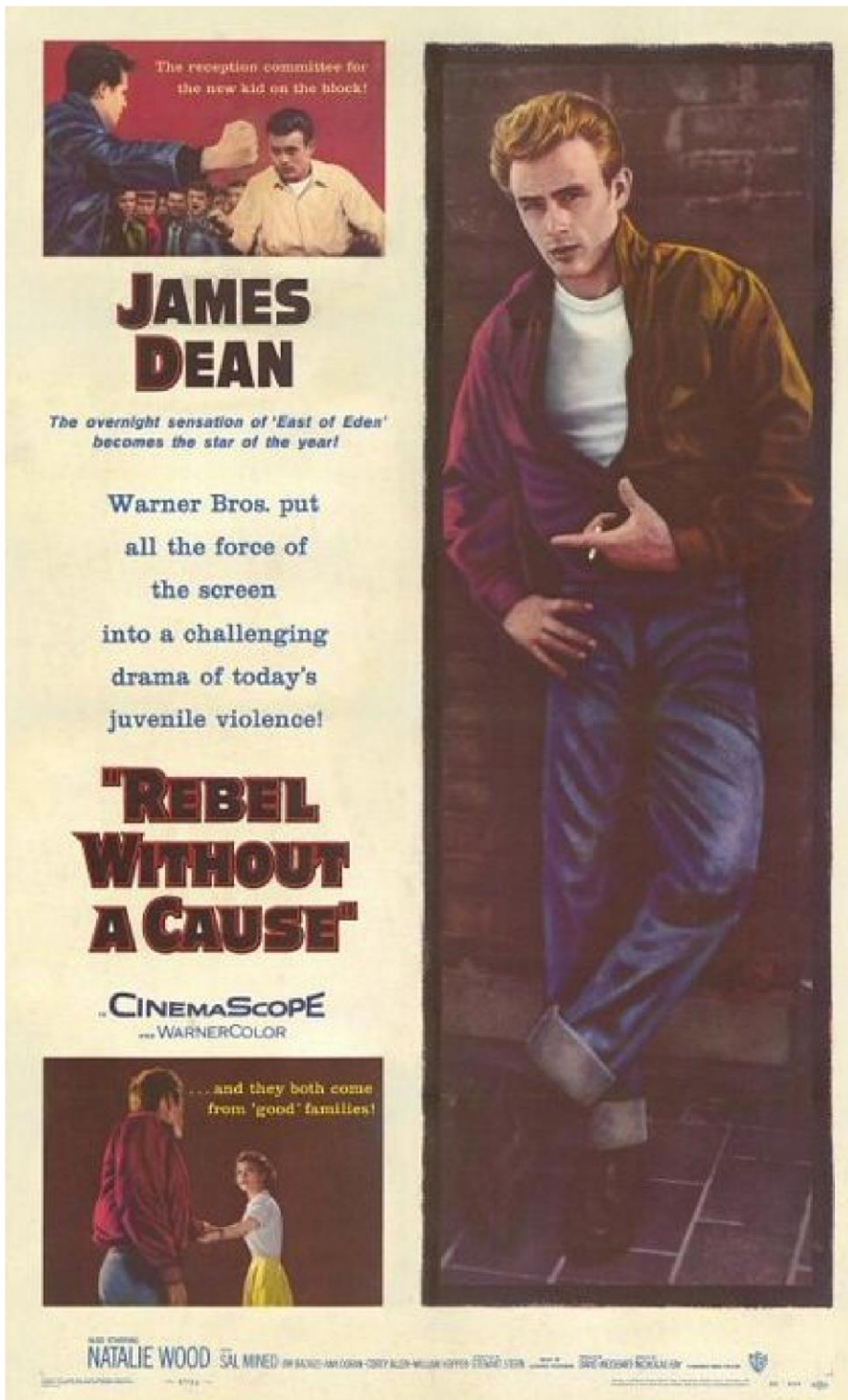
Task

Annotate the posters from *Rebel Without a Cause* to show how the images, written codes and layout connote the genre and them of the film.



Images/layout

Text



Images/layout

Text