

Subject:	WOMEN'S STUDIES	
Assessment Type:	TEXT ANALYSIS	
Name of Assessment:	Deconstruct, analyse and reconstruct a text or texts of your own choice.	

Task Description:

- Select, deconstruct and evaluate a text or texts of your choice for gender bias.
- Your text can be selected from advertisements, magazines, children's books, films, TV programs, newspaper articles, song lyrics, video clips, and electronic games, negotiated.
- Consider ways of effecting change through reconstructing the texts/texts to eliminate the original gender bias.
- Present your deconstruction, evaluation and reconstruction of the text/texts in either report form or a presentation to the class.

How to complete this task:

- Select text/texts that demonstrate gender bias
- Deconstruct the language, images and messages about femininity and masculinity in the texts/texts. (This means discuss how gender is constructed in the text/texts.)

To do this you will need to ask yourself the following questions:

How are women represented in the text?

What roles do they play?

What qualities do they display?

What language and images are used in the construction?

What messages are conveyed about women?

How does this representation demonstrate gender-bias?

- If the text features men compare the representation of masculinity.
- Use and refer to references and class handouts
- In reconstructing the text you will need to rewrite or reconstruct the text so that there is no gender bias.
- When discussing your reconstruction explain how you have eliminated gender bias

Your report or presentation should include an introduction and conclusion about the text genre and its representation of women in general terms.

OR

Select a children's book and answer the following questions:

1. What is the title of the book and what does the title make you think that the book will be about?
2. How many female characters feature in the story?

3. What roles are played by the female characters in this text?
4. What qualities of femininity are reinforced by this text?
5. How many male characters feature in the story?
6. What roles are played by the male characters in this text?
7. What qualities of masculinity are reinforced in this text?
8. Does the text demonstrate gender-bias? Explain your answer.
9. How could you reconstruct the text to eliminate the gender-bias?

Assessment Conditions:

DUE DATE:

1000 word maximum written response or 6 minute maximum oral presentation

Learning Requirements:

1. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the meaning of gender and its construction
3. Analyse representations of women for gender bias, and identify ways of effecting change to address gender bias

Assessment Design Criteria:

Knowledge and Understanding

KU1 Knowledge and understanding of the meaning of gender and its construction.

Gender Analysis

GA2 Analysis of representations of women for gender bias.

GA3 Identification of ways of effecting change to address gender bias.

Communication

C2 Use of the language of gender analysis.

Stage 2 Women's Studies

Text Analysis: Cultural texts and gender bias in Anime

Cultural texts are any form of text or media that characterises a society, which communicate messages to men and women about their gender role and construct ideas about femininity and masculinity. Anime¹ is a powerful cultural text specific to Japanese culture, however due to its popularity is viewed worldwide and influences a wide range of foreign audiences. The roles men and women play in these texts and the way males and females are represented contribute towards young people's perceptions and ideas about their role in society depending on their biological sex. In particular, several animes are characterised by content in which women and girls are underrepresented, objectified, degraded, sexualised, and their power trivialised. The following animes will be used to illustrate these forms of gender bias in anime: *Katekyo Hitman Reborn*, *Kaichou wa Maid-sama!*, *Bakuman*, and *High School of the Dead*².

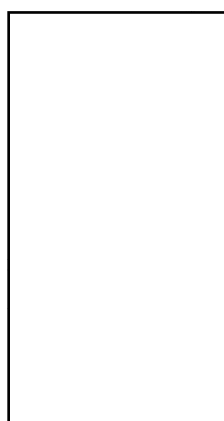


Figure 2: Chrome is psychologically disturbed and is a social outcast on the team

Underrepresentation is common in battle, sporting and martial arts³ animes where brave and powerful male characters are used to represent strength and superiority. Japanese culture enforces the idea that women should be timid and gentle or 'like a flower'⁴, and their lack of prominent roles in these animes means that the idea of a powerful, headstrong woman is not viewed as acceptable or desirable in Japan. For example, *Katekyo Hitman Reborn* stars several male protagonists. The only women are Kyoko and Haru whose roles are to 'support' the team by cooking the boy's meals and they also 'cheer them on' from the sidelines. Chrome and Bianchi, who are the only women with powerful roles, both have unnatural characters⁵. Bianchi's role enforces the stereotype of women's role as wives in the kitchen and cooking and her skill trivialises any power she actually holds in the story, and Chrome's character being abnormal represents the idea that women who take on powerful or prominent roles will not be accepted in society.



Figure 1: Bianchi is famous in the mafia world as an assassin who kills with her poisonous cooking

Knowledge and Understanding 1
An in-depth knowledge and understanding of the meaning of gender and its construction is evident.

Trivialisation of power is not an uncommon feature of several animes, and carries many indirect messages about how it is inappropriate or undesirable for women to dominate over men or wield a significant amount of power or influence. *Kaichou wa maid-sama!*'s plot demonstrates this, where the heroine is brutally strict and headstrong, and thought of as a tyrant and dictator; boys in the school observe that she is not romantically desirable because of her forceful nature. Misaki secretly

¹ Japanese animation

² See **Appendix A** for anime synopses and character descriptions

³ Animes which focus on fighting or power, a particular sport or a martial art

⁴ The perfect Japanese woman is referred to as "Yamato Nadeshiko", a nadeshiko being a pink carnation

⁵ See Figures 1 and 2

works in a maid cafe⁶ and this is seen as her weakness; when it is discovered by some boys, they change their views of her and she becomes an object of lust, because “After all, she’s still a girl”. This casts a critical view of women in positions of power and does not endorse wilful or outspoken qualities as traits of femininity. The anime also carries the message that women in lower corporate roles can be exploited and viewed as a sexual object; femininity is also portrayed as a sign of weakness.

Communication 2
Perceptive use of the language of gender analysis.

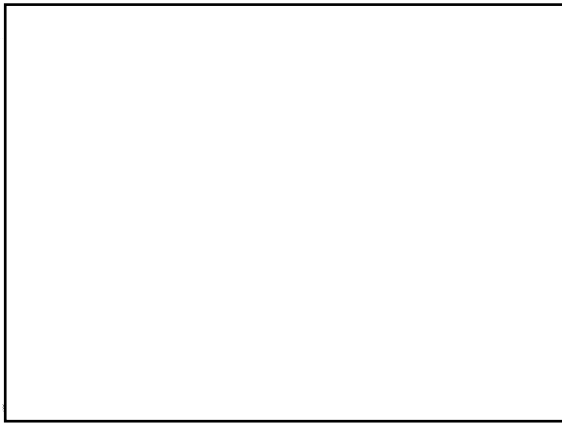


Figure 4: In this frivolous bathing scene the female characters all frolic in the bath and discuss breast size while the male characters seriously consider weaponry and their strategic situation

The subordination of women in anime also serves to undermine what authority and confidence women come to believe they should hold, and the same occurs when women in animes are objectified, degraded or sexualised. Many women’s roles in animes are purely for “fan-service”⁷, and it is not uncommon for women to frequently appear in a story for panty-shots⁸ or the size of their breasts. The representation of women in *High School of the Dead*⁹ is disempowering as it criticises women’s level of

Gender Analysis 2
Perceptive analysis of representations of women for gender bias.

intellect, and illustrates that girls do not play significant roles in important decision-making and serious discussion. It also objectifies women by depicting them only as sexual objects for the audience’s pleasure and amusement. In another anime, *Bakuman*, Kaya Miyoshi marries Takagi when he becomes a mangaka¹⁰, and aids Mashiro and Takagi by cleaning their workplace, bringing them meals on New Year’s Day and Christmas, and sometimes helping out as an assistant artist. The other female protagonist is loved for her gentle nature and beauty. This text reinforces the stereotype of women’s value in domestic roles, and supports the gender-biased notion of timid women as being desirable..



Figure 3: The school nurse Ms. Shizuka is a ditzy, air-headed character..

These animes can be reconstructed in several ways to convey equal representations of women without gender bias. This would mean equality in their power roles and level of representation in stories, where female protagonists are granted the same level of power as males, and stereotypes play no role in influencing the skills they have. *Soul Eater* and *Naruto*¹¹ are examples of animes which have minimal gender bias. Even though the animes are named after a male protagonist, *Soul Eater* has equal representations of male and female characters and *Naruto* also equally represents girls and boys in support roles. Females are not sexualised in any way and often hold significant roles of power; in *Naruto* a woman becomes head of the nation, and Sakura is a medical ninja who holds a

Gender Analysis 3
Discerning identification of ways of effecting change to address gender bias.

⁶ A café where the waitresses are outfitted in maid uniforms and ‘serve’ the customers, calling them “Master”
⁷ When a scene, line or character is present only to please the viewers, often in a sexual way
⁸ Unnecessary flashes or full views of a woman’s or girl’s underwear
⁹ See Figures 3 and 4, and **Appendix B**
¹⁰ Professional manga artists and authors; manga is the Japanese version of comics/cartoons, and are often converted into animes
¹¹ See **Appendix C** for synopses and character descriptions

key role in every team. In Soul Eater, Maka is Soul's wielder and the other female characters have equal relationships with the male characters. In this way, children and teenagers are instead given the message that women are able to embrace roles of power in society and can have equal give-and-take relationships with the men in their lives without being dominated, without being in danger of being seen as a sexual object, being degraded, or having their power trivialised.

Word count: 1,000

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Additional Comments

This work is illustrative of an A+ grade.

Performance Standards for Stage 2 Women’s Studies

	Knowledge and Understanding	Gender Analysis	Investigation and Evaluation	Communication
A	In-depth knowledge and understanding of the meaning of gender and its construction.	Astute and detailed analysis of social implications of gender relations for a diversity of women across contexts, times, and cultures. Perceptive analysis of representations of women for gender bias. Discerning identification of ways of effecting change to address gender bias.	In-depth investigation and evaluation of the ways in which various social structures, cultural practices, and ways of thinking disempower women. Perceptive and insightful evaluation of a range of strategies for empowerment.	Perceptive and coherent communication of informed ideas about the diversity of women’s experiences. Perceptive use of the language of gender analysis. Discerning use of highly appropriate forms, including persuasive writing, and with clear acknowledgment of sources.
B	Some depth in knowledge and understanding of the meaning of gender and its construction.	Detailed analysis of social implications of gender relations for a diversity of women across contexts, times, and cultures. Well-considered analysis of representations of women for gender bias. Clear identification of ways of effecting change to address gender bias.	Some depth in investigation and evaluation of the ways in which various social structures, cultural practices, and ways of thinking disempower women. Well-considered evaluation of strategies for empowerment.	Mostly clear and convincing communication of informed ideas about the diversity of women’s experiences. Thoughtful use of the language of gender analysis. Well-considered use of appropriate forms, including persuasive writing, and with clear acknowledgment of sources.
C	Considered knowledge and understanding of the meaning of gender and its construction.	Generally competent analysis of social implications of gender relations for a diversity of women across contexts, times, and cultures. Considered analysis of representations of women for gender bias. Competent identification of ways of effecting change to address gender bias.	Competent investigation and evaluation of the ways in which various social structures, cultural practices, and ways of thinking disempower women. Considered evaluation of strategies for empowerment.	Generally clear communication of informed ideas about the diversity of women’s experiences. Generally competent use of the language of gender analysis. Considered use of mostly appropriate forms, including persuasive writing, and with generally clear acknowledgment of sources.
D	Recognition and some awareness of the meaning of gender and its construction.	Some attempted analysis, with mostly description , of social implications of gender relations for women. Some consideration of representations of women for gender bias. Identification and some description of one or more ways of effecting change to address gender bias.	Consideration of one or more ways in which social structures, cultural practices, and ways of thinking disempower women. Some description of strategies for empowerment.	Some endeavour to communicate basic ideas about the diversity of women’s experiences. Some use of the language of gender analysis. Some use of one or more forms that may be appropriate , and with limited acknowledgment of sources.
E	Emerging awareness of the meaning of gender and its construction.	Brief description of one or more social implications of gender relations for women. Limited consideration of representations of women for gender bias. Identification of a way of effecting change to address gender bias.	Attempted description of a way in which social structures, cultural practices, or ways of thinking disempower women. Identification of elements of a strategy for empowerment.	Limited attempt to communicate basic ideas about the diversity of women’s experiences. Emerging use of the language of gender analysis. Attempted use of one or more forms, with limited appropriateness, and limited acknowledgment of sources.