

Episode 4: Texts

Welcome to Popular Culture and Theory. Joining you from the unceded lands of the Palawa People in which we now call Hobart. I want to extend my respect to Indigenous Elders past, present, and emerging, and extend my respect to all Indigenous individuals present today. I'm your host, Ashley Reminga, a PhD candidate at the University of Tasmania. Welcome.

So this week we'll be discussing what a text is. And this week is going to be particularly interesting as I want to begin by just providing some behind the scenes context on how this podcast is constructed to lay down the groundworks for this week. Each week, I try to construct an understanding of a concept based on a sole existing academic who is significant to a field or consult a variety of academic publications to find a common definition of a particular concept. And why this is so important to understand is that there is a variety of interpretations and understandings and definitions as to what constitutes being a text and what does not. So when we think of a text, you may think of Shakespeare, a novel, or some subject textbook.

And, yes, these are all texts, but texts are not limited to these simple forms. So with all that preamble aside, what is a text? In a traditional sense, it's a written form of communication. So when texts were first defined, it was used to refer to things such as novels, written publications, the Bible, and so on. It then expanded to also include letters and correspondence.

So it became to be associated with written works as a whole, yet it is generally accepted that this narrow interpretation is outdated. And some suggest a better interpretation is any audio, visual, or written form of communication. I personally like the interpretation Alan McKee proposes in his book, *Textual Analysis, a beginner's guide*. He suggests whenever we produce

an interpretation of something's meaning, whether it's a book, television program, film, magazine, t shirt, kilt, piece of furniture, or ornament, we treat it as a text. To continue to use these words, a text is something we can make meanings from, and this can be found on page 4 of his book.

So with this in mind, we can see texts include an array of things beyond simply words, plays, or cinema. Some of the alternative forms of text include video games or board games. But in saying video games or board games, it's not exclusive to story heavy text like JRPGs, visual novels, or role playing games like Dungeons and Dragons. It includes games with little to no storyline, video games like Pong, board games like Monopoly or Twister. These are alternate forms of text and are all valid interpretations of being a text.

Further, by this account, we can also define a text as things like toys or collectibles, such as Lego, trading cards, perhaps warhammer or gunpla. So these forms of mediums can also be a text. If you create a mock setting, we consider it also a text. But it's not even just toys that we associate with having a lot of meanings. We can also look at a plushie that a child might be playing with.

These toys that children play with have characters, histories, and so much more. They have legacies. So these toys can be regarded as text in their own right. So with this in mind, theoretically, anything could be considered a text provided we can derive meaning from it. So with that in mind, going forward in this podcast, whenever we explore key theories via a piece of popular culture, we will likely refer to that piece of popular culture as a text.

Finally, I do wanna just put up a little bit of a warning and say that I have opted to interpret this as a very broad interpretation. Other scholars, your tutors, your teachers, your lecturers may

take a much more narrow interpretation. So if you are planning on writing about your washing machine as text, just know you may not get a very high mark. So just be aware of that. And yeah, that's where we're going to leave it for this week.

If you like this podcast please share it around, give it a like, and subscribe. And I hope you've learnt something, and we'll see you again next week.