 Dominant and Resistant Readings

A critical study of texts means that we are considering a range of interpretations when we interrogate texts and composers’ motivations. People’s interpretations may differ according to their personal context, their historical and social context, and the particular values and attitudes that have shaped them.

Dominant reading: the meaning that is considered to be a mainstream interpretation of the text or the reading that those ‘in power’ would claim to be the main reading. Typically, the mainstream group is white Anglo male.

Resistant reading: this type of reading is not usually shared by the dominant or mainstream group. This type of reading is usually undertaken by social groups whose power may not clearly resonate. Social minorities, women and people of ethnicity can tend to read gaps and assumptions that are often looked by a mainstream reading.

View the trailers of each film and consider the dominant and resistant readings offered by each by considering the type of people who may react differently:

| Film | Dominant Reading | Resistant Reading |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Pretty Woman | Fairy tale appropriation | Reinforcement of Hispanic stereotypes |
| The Dictator | Satirical take on tyrants | Insensitive representation and trivialisation of the plight of people from the Middle East |
| Billy Elliot | Rite-of-passage film | Left wing advertisement for gay rights |

Activity: Students consider a film of their own choosing and write a brief dominant and resistant reading.