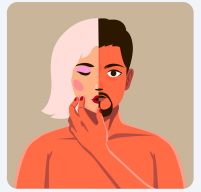


# Male Gaze

Name:

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## Introduction

In this worksheet you will learn what the Male Gaze is and how it influences our society.

 **Have you ever heard of the Male Gaze? Think about what this term could mean and write down your thoughts.**

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# Male Gaze

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## The Male Gaze: How the media shows the world from a male perspective

Have you ever noticed that women are often portrayed very differently to men in films, series or advertising? This is often due to the so-called male gaze. This term was coined by film scholar Laura Mulvey in 1975. It describes how women in visual media are often not shown as independent characters with their own plot, but rather as pretty objects - in other words, as something to be looked at. This is because many films and works of art are told from a male-dominated point of view. Men are usually shown as active heroes who act and make decisions, while women tend to take on a passive role and are often staged through their bodies. This can be seen, for example, in camera angles that emphasize certain parts of the body or portray women in such a way that they appear more decorative than driving the action.

This pattern is not new - it has existed in art and culture for centuries. It has shaped our visual behavior, often without us consciously noticing it. But if we look at it and question it, we can discover new, more diverse ways of telling stories. The more people become aware of how women and men are portrayed differently, the sooner things can change - towards stories in which everyone can act on an equal footing.

 **Explain in your own words what the Male Gaze is.**

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# Male Gaze

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## The Male Gaze in Comic Strips

The Male Gaze, a term coined by film critic Laura Mulvey, describes the way visual arts depict the world and women from a masculine, heterosexual perspective. In the realm of comic strips, this concept has deep roots and a significant impact on the portrayal of female characters.

Comic strips emerged in the early 20th century as a popular form of entertainment. From the beginning, the depiction of women in these comics was influenced by the predominantly male creators and audience. Early examples like Al Capp's "Li'l Abner," which ran from 1934 to 1977, showcased exaggerated female forms, often in provocative poses. Daisy Mae, a primary character in "Li'l Abner," epitomized the objectification prevalent in these comics. She was depicted with an exaggerated hourglass figure, scantily clad, and her character's main pursuit was to marry the titular character, Abner Yokum.

The function of these women in comic strips was multifaceted. On one level, they served to attract a male readership through their sexualized portrayals. On another, they reinforced traditional gender roles, where women were primarily seen in the context of their relationships with men. These depictions were not merely artistic choices but were driven by the demands of publishers and syndicates who understood the commercial appeal of such imagery.

Manufacturers and publishers played a crucial role in perpetuating these images. The comic strip industry, dominated by male editors and executives, supported and encouraged the use of the Male Gaze to boost sales and readership. Characters like Wonder Woman, while a feminist icon, were also drawn with a focus on physical attractiveness to cater to male readers.

The portrayal of women in comic strips as passive, decorative, and often helpless figures had lasting effects. It influenced subsequent generations of comics, where female characters continued to be depicted through a lens that prioritized their visual appeal over their narrative depth or agency. This trend can be seen in superhero comics of the mid-20th century, where female heroes often wore revealing costumes and were frequently placed in situations that required rescue by their male counterparts.

In summary, the Male Gaze in comic strips has its origins in the early days of the medium, driven by male creators and institutional pressures to attract a male audience. The resulting portrayal of women as objects of desire and their relegation to secondary roles have had a long-standing influence on the comic industry, shaping the representation of female characters for decades.

 **Research the character Daisy Mae from Al Capp's 'Li'l Abner' comic strip and describe her appearance and role in the series.**

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# Male Gaze

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✦ Here you will find information to help you recognize the characteristics of the Male Gaze. Use it for the next task.

## Exaggerated Female Forms

Women are often depicted with unrealistic, exaggerated body proportions, emphasizing their sexual appeal.

**Tip:** Look for characters with unnaturally small waists, large breasts, and pronounced hips.

## Provocative Poses

Female characters are frequently drawn in suggestive or revealing poses to attract male readers.

**Tip:** Notice if the poses focus on highlighting certain body parts or suggestive angles.

## Traditional Gender Roles

Women are often portrayed primarily in relation to men, emphasizing roles like love interests or damsels in distress.

**Tip:** Observe if the female character's storyline revolves around her relationship with a male character.

## Lack of Narrative Depth

Female characters may lack personal development or agency, serving more as visual elements than as integral parts of the story.

**Tip:** Check if the character has a background, motivations, or significant impact on the plot.

## Revealing Costumes

Women in comic strips are often dressed in skimpy or tight-fitting outfits that emphasize their physical appearance.

**Tip:** Look at the practicality of the costumes and whether they serve a functional purpose or merely highlight the character's body.



# Male Gaze

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## The Female Gaze in Comic Strips

The term "Female Gaze," rooted in feminist theory, refers to the perspective of the female spectator, character, or creator in artistic works. Unlike the Male Gaze, which objectifies women for a heterosexual male audience, the Female Gaze emphasizes women's agency and subjectivity. This perspective allows for the portrayal of women as complex individuals with their own desires, thoughts, and experiences. In the realm of comic strips, the Female Gaze would transform the portrayal of female characters. Rather than being depicted as passive, decorative figures designed to attract a male readership, women in comics would be shown as active protagonists with rich inner lives and personal agency. The focus would shift from their physical appearance to their narrative depth and character development.

Female creators and artists would bring authenticity to the representation of female experiences, avoiding stereotypical and sexualized imagery. Female characters could be depicted in a variety of roles, professions, and emotional states, reflecting the diversity of women's lives. Their relationships, whether romantic or platonic, would be portrayed with nuance and respect, highlighting mutual support and growth rather than dependency on male characters.

Additionally, the Female Gaze in comic strips would encourage the inclusion of women of different ages, body types, and backgrounds, celebrating their individuality and rejecting narrow beauty standards. This approach would not only enrich the storytelling but also resonate with a broader audience, fostering empathy and understanding.

In summary, applying the Female Gaze to comic strips would revolutionize the medium by presenting women as multifaceted individuals with their own stories, thereby challenging traditional gender norms and offering a more inclusive and realistic portrayal of female characters.

 **Can you think of any other characteristics that would correspond to female gaze instead of male gaze? Write down your ideas.**

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# Male Gaze

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 Create a drawing of the example from the perspective of the female gaze.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to draw their interpretation of the example from the perspective of the female gaze.

 Describe which features of the female gaze are included in your drawing and what effect they are intended to achieve.

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