

Gravity (Cuaron, USA/UK, 2013)

Production, Distribution and Exhibition: the media conglomeration story

Arrival activity (Digital Resource 2a)

What does the following logo mean to you?



Task 1

The majority of *Gravity*'s budget comes from Warner Brothers. What this means is that 'Warner Bros.', as the studio is known, controls the production budget and then markets, promotes and 'distributes' the film to cinemas (since 2013, in digital form). Warner Bros. therefore gets a fee for supplying a film to an exhibitor. Up to a few years ago, they also owned a cinema chain, Warner Village, but they sold that to what became Vue cinemas. In fact, TimeWarner – originally a merger between Time Magazine and its vast publishing empire and Warner Bros. – have streamlined what they own now to three major divisions as you'll see after you've completed some research. Although not now reflected in the company's name, since June 2014, Time magazine and its publishing division have been sold off.

Look at the graphic representations of Warner Bros.' parent company TimeWarner, which show what media 'companies' TimeWarner owns.

- How would you describe the main 'interests' of each of the 'divisions', Warner Bros., HBO and Turner Broadcasting Systems Inc.?
- Why do you think Time magazine's publishing empire was sold off in June 2014?

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**Consists of three divisions:
Warner Brothers, HBO and Turner Broadcasting Systems**



This long established business' media concerns range from feature film and television to home entertainment and includes the following **Warner Bros. Pictures, Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment, Warner Bros. Television, Warner Bros. Animation, Warner Home Video, New Line Cinema, Castle Rock Entertainment, theWB.com, and DC Entertainment.**



HBO operates the **HBO channel** in over **70 countries** with **127 million subscribers**. HBO programmes are licensed to other television networks in over **150 countries**. HBO has won more **Emmy** awards than any other network.



Turner Broadcasting Systems Inc. operates international news, entertainment, animation and young adult / children's media networks. Turner brands include CNN, Cartoon Network, TCM. Their brands are both US and international with 150 channels in 36 languages in more than 200 countries world-wide.

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Overview: TimeWarner in 2013, the year of Gravity's release

TimeWarner

- HBO and Turner's international businesses generated **\$3 billion in revenue**.
- **Time Inc. brands** – notably its flagship magazine title, Time, part of TimeWarner in 2013 – reached almost half of US adults each month.
- **Warner Brothers' digital sites**, led by its entertainment and celebrity gossip site set up in 2005, TMZ.com, reached more than 24 million unique visitors in 2013.
- Time Inc.'s US sites attracted more than 50 million average unique visitors in 2013.
- **Ultraviolet** supported by Warner Brothers gives consumers easy access to digital copies of their movie collections from any device. This grew substantially in 2013 when UV accounts grew by 65% to over **15 million accounts**.
- Warner Brothers' domestic (North American) revenue in 2013 was **\$1.9 billion**, while its overseas haul was **\$3.14 billion**, totaling **\$5.04 billion**, up from \$4.25 billion in 2012.
- The studio's performance was fueled by a varied menu of films, led by Superman reboot *Man of Steel* (\$662.8 million, *Gravity* (\$653.3) – perhaps the biggest surprise of the year – and *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*, which has earned \$633.1 million to date.
- This meant that Warner Brothers was the top performing Hollywood 'studio' in 2013.

Task 2: (digital resource 2b)

Look at the breakdown of TimeWarner's business concerns and do the following:

In pairs, list how this huge amount of media power might:

- offer advantages to the producers of *Gravity*
- offer advantages to the audiences of *Gravity*.

Task 3

What are the problems with this sort of media power?

Task 4: TimeWarner and other media conglomerates

TimeWarner is one of the largest media conglomerates in the world – where film, television, online interactive, print and entertainment interests are combined. This is called ‘vertical integration’ – where a company can extend profits through owning companies sharing the same interests – in this case, media interests. All of the major US ‘studios’ are vertically integrated owning a broad range of film and media interests, very often including (like Sony and Comcast) consumer electronics as well.

- **Explore what each of the major media conglomerates *Comcast, The Walt Disney Corporation, TimeWarner, Sony, News Corporation* and *Viacom* own in the following categories:**

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	Comcast	The Walt Disney Corporation	TimeWarner	Sony	News Corporation	Viacom
Film	Universal, Focus Features, Working Title	Disney, Touchstone Pictures, Pixar	Warner Bros., Castlerock films	Columbia Pictures, Sony Pictures Classics	20th century Fox, Fox Searchlight	Paramount Pictures
TV						
Music						
Print Media						
Interactive entertainment (e.g. videogames)						
Consumer electronics						
Entertainment & leisure interest						

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Task 5 (Digital Resource 2c)

Read the following piece about Warner Brothers' production facilities in the UK.

<http://www.thelocationguide.com/blog/2014/07/ng-studio-news-warner-bros-studios-leaves-den-to-expand-filming-facilities-with-new-sound-stages/>

Questions

- What is the positive impact of this facility opening in the UK for the British film industry?
- Are there any negative points associated with this Warner Brothers' facility?

Task 6

Using what you have found out about *Gravity*, TimeWarner and other media conglomerates, explore one other major film produced by a media conglomerate. Give examples of the many ways the film can make money for the conglomerate.