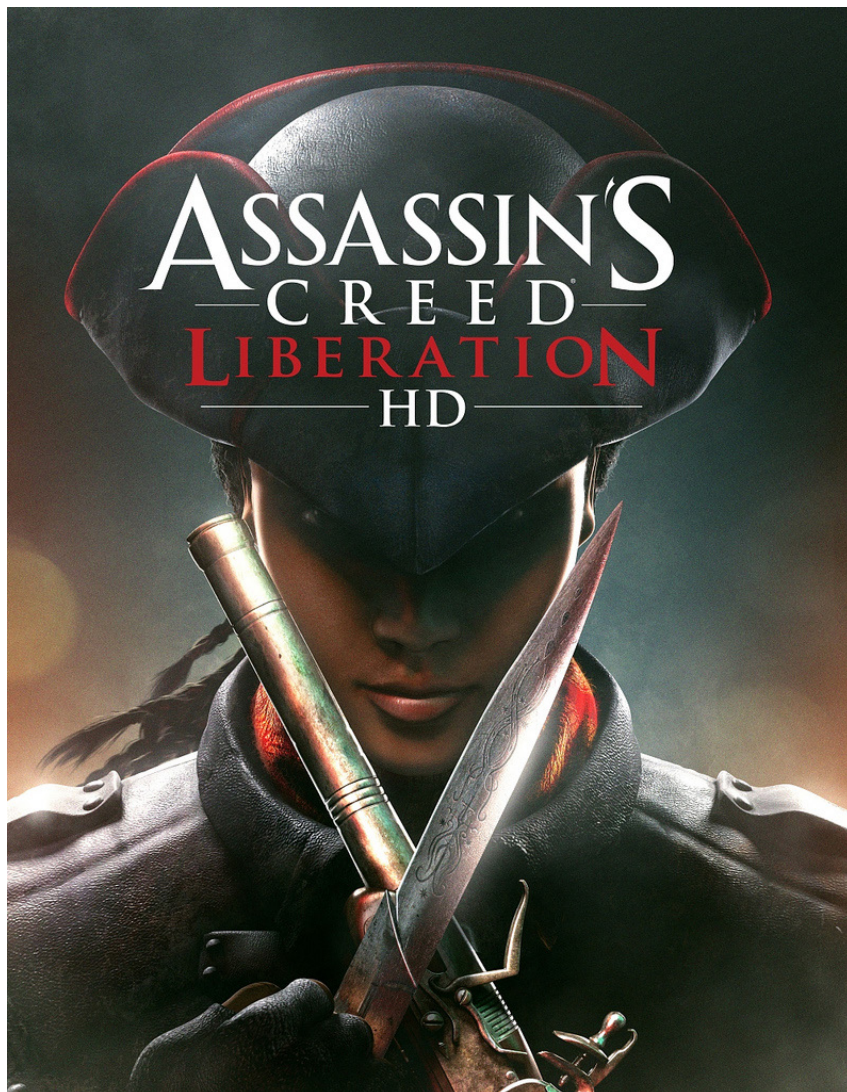


# Assassin's Creed III: Liberation



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# Assassin's Creed III: Liberation

## AS Component 1: Investigating the Media A level Component 1: Media Products, Industries and Audiences

### Subject Content: Media Industries Focus Area: Audiences, Media Contexts

#### PRODUCT CONTEXT

- *Assassin's Creed III: Liberation*, part of the very successful games franchise, was developed by Ubisoft and released on October 30 2012, along with *Assassin's Creed III*.
- The game was originally exclusive to the PS Vita but was later (2014) released in a modified HD version across a large range of consoles and platforms (including PS3, Xbox 360 and Microsoft Windows).
- *Assassin's Creed III: Liberation* offers familiar pleasures to existing fans (narrative situation of the Assassins v the Templars, open world gameplay etc.) along with new elements to target a wider audience (e.g. the use of a strong female protagonist).

#### PART 1: STARTING POINTS - Media Industries

##### Historical Contexts:

Video games are a relatively **new media form**. Consider the exponential **growth** of this form since the 1970s, the rapid **technological development**, the construction of "the gamer" and the difficulty of **regulating** or monitoring the impact of such a fast paced industry.

##### Economic and Political Contexts:

Video games are culturally and financially significant across three major territories (Japan, Europe and the USA). The release of new gaming **technology** (PS Vita is considered part of the 8th generation of game technology) or games from popular franchises can be major **economic events**. It would be useful to explore the way that games and technology (and specifically those from within the *Assassin's*

*Creed* game **franchise**) have been **marketed** and received across the three major territories.

##### Consider processes of production, distribution and circulation:

- The game was **released** on the Sony hand held device PlayStation Vita. It was developed by Ubisoft and released alongside *Assassin's Creed III* on the PlayStation 3.
- This **simultaneous release** might be discussed in terms of an attempt to have maximum impact on the three **major markets** for console and video game release (Japan, North America and Europe).
- In terms of **production** the game was a multinational development which is typical of game production in larger studios such as Ubisoft.

##### Consider the relationship of recent technological change and media production, distribution and circulation:

- The ways in which the PS Vita was attempting to tap into the increasing success of **mobile gaming** (smart phones, tablets etc.). The PS Vita was designed with many features usually associated with smart phones (touchscreen as well as Wi-Fi, 3G and Bluetooth capability).
- The game itself as part of a well-known and popular **franchise** may be seen as an attempt to bring high game **production values** to the burgeoning new mobile gaming arena. It is significant that the game was originally exclusive to the PS Vita but was later (2014) released in a modified HD version across a large range of consoles and **platforms** (including PS3, Xbox 360 and Microsoft Windows).
- In terms of **distribution** these versions of the game could be purchased over the internet using such outlets as Steam, the Playstation Network or Xbox Live Arcade.

##### Consider the regulatory framework and the role of regulation in global production, distribution and circulation:

- **Video Game regulation** differs around the world but is becoming standardised

across many European countries.

- In the **UK** until July 2012 video games had been regulated by the BBFC. They are now largely regulated by the **Video Standards Council (VSC)** applying the **PEGI** system (Pan European Game Information). The PEGI system can be discussed in terms of its process (age ratings as well as visual descriptors of content) and also its attempt to harmonise the protection of children across Europe.
- Consider the effectiveness of PEGI (possibly in comparison with the BBFC or the American ESRB system in terms of authority and compliance).
- The game was **classified** 18 by PEGI and this in itself may be a good area for discussion.

### Consider the impact of digitally convergent media platforms on global production, distribution and circulation:

- It is significant that the *Assassin's Creed III: Liberation* **hand held game** could be linked to the full PS3 **console version** of the game (owning both versions would unlock additional game content). This use of **convergence** is relevant in terms of promotion/marketing and circulation.
- The **internet/Wi-Fi functionality** of the PS Vita allows users opportunities to download additional content (DLC) such as weapons, characters and “skins” or outfits. It also affords users the chance to engage in **multiplayer versions** of the game. These features promote gamer engagement and identification with the game.

### Consider theoretical perspectives:

#### A level only:

#### Regulation – Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt

- Consider the impact of **convergence** and **diversification** in media on regulatory practices. New technology (in this case the convergent PS Vita with access to internet etc.) opens up new opportunities and arguably new risks that complicate regulation.
- Questions that might be discussed in relation to Livingstone and Lunt include:
  - » Should regulation be more flexible?
  - » Should industries self-regulate?
  - » Should individuals be empowered to make their own decisions?
  - » Should individuals be expected to develop ‘media literacy’ and make

informed decisions for themselves?

### Cultural Industries – David Hesmondhalgh:

- Use Hesmondhalgh to explore the way in which cultural industry companies might attempt to **minimise risk and maximise audiences**.
- The game is part of an established **franchise** with a large **fan-base**. Producers are clearly attempting to harness the popularity of this franchise to encourage **sales** both of the game itself and the hand-held device the PS Vita.
- The video game industry offers many comparable examples of attempts to use **software** (games) to sell **hardware** (games systems and platforms).

## PART 2: STARTING POINTS – Audiences

### Social and Cultural Contexts:

Considering video games in relation to **gender issues** may be a useful way to explore them in terms of **social and cultural significance**. The representation of female characters, under-representation of women in video game development and an assumed minority of female video games players are areas that could be explored. This game has a **female protagonist** and it may be useful to consider whether she subverts or reinforces expectations of female characters in games and how audiences may **respond** to this.

### Consider how producers target, attract, reach, address and potentially construct audiences:

There are many aspects of the game that are significant in relation to audience

#### targeting and construction:

- » The game is for a **hand held device**. This may imply it is aimed at a more casual or mobile gamer (a discussion here about “on the go” gamers playing mobile games versus traditional console and PC gamers may be useful).
- » The game features a female protagonist. This is unusual in the franchise and may be considered in terms of **appealing to a different demographic** (possibly linked to the “on the go” gamers discussion above). The existence of a female protagonist may also be discussed in terms of constructing audiences by asking whether this game might offer a platform for female gamer identification.



### Consider the interrelationship between media technologies and patterns of consumption and response:

- The game is linked to a more traditional **console** version and which was simultaneously released with this game. This might be considered as an attempt to draw gamers from different **platforms** to purchase additional hardware and adopt new gaming habits.
- The two versions of the game are also linked in terms of **downloadable content and special features**. This relates to changing patterns of **consumption**. Gamers might be being encouraged to have a more complete or satisfying experience by using a range of interlinked products that offer exclusive downloadable content. This is only made possible through **convergent technology** and gamer “buy-in” to the value of the exclusive content.

### Consider theoretical perspectives:

#### Media effects - Albert Bandura

- The game received an **18 rating from PEGI** due largely to violent content.
- Consider audience response to violent video games in terms of Bandura’s arguments about observation and **imitation** and vicarious consequences. Explore the “Bobo Doll Experiment” and discuss how relevant this is to the audiences targeted by the game. Are audiences likely to imitate the behaviours

portrayed in the game? What might be imitated?

- A useful discussion might be had in relation to the **active role** adopted by a player of video games. Question whether Bandura’s conclusions are invalidated or made more relevant if audiences are choosing to commit acts of violence in a video game rather than watching/imitating violent acts.

#### A level only:

#### Fandom - Henry Jenkins

- Discuss the significance of **fan culture** (and in particular **online fan communities**) when exploring the success of video games. This discussion may focus on the way video games have evolved closely alongside the **internet**. Video games offer **social experiences** (online multiplayer options) as well as communities outside of the core game experience. Fans may be passionate exponents of a game or the harshest critics and can often impact the **development** of games directly.
- The *Assassin’s Creed* **franchise** has a strong, well developed **fan-base** that could be researched and discussed in relation to Jenkins’ ideas.