



Trailer #1

Semiotic Analysis

The Signifier: "Avengers: Infinity War," the third movie in the "Avengers" series and the nineteenth movie in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. The content of the movie and its release date (May 4th, 2018).

The Signified: "Avenge" is defined as "inflict harm in return for (an injury or wrong done to oneself or another)."

"The Avengers" are a fictional team of heroes that originated in the Marvel comic "The Avengers #1" by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. In 2012, Marvel released "The Avengers," a film adaptation of the comics filled with already-established characters in their films leading up to it (Iron Man, Hulk, Captain America, Black Widow, Thor, Hawkeye, Loki, and Nick Fury).

In 2015, a sequel was released, titled "Avengers: Age of Ultron."

"Infinity" is defined as "the state or quality of being infinite," and "War" is defined as "a state of armed conflict between different groups." The title "Infinity War" signifies either a war that will go on for an infinite amount of time or the idea of infinity being decided by a war.

Syntagmatic Analysis: Disregarding for a moment the film's obvious narrative connections (the first two films and the Marvel Cinematic Universe as a whole), the trailer itself follows a narrative structure and reveals an overall theme. It begins with a quote by the character Nick Fury (played by Samuel L. Jackson) from the first "Avengers" film, recanted in voiceover by various characters as they appear on-screen, and set against ominous music (a minor rendition of the "Avengers" theme by Alan Silvestri). Accompanied with images of these characters in seemingly precarious situations, the trailer then introduces a threat. A large, destructive-looking ship appears in the sky over New York City, and from a portal emerges Thanos, a large purple humanoid alien with Josh Brolin's face and a chin that could dig tunnels. His emergence results in many dramatic shots of characters looking at things, as well as shots of characters being overpowered by him.

Then comes in the armies of aliens, in a large war scene to end the trailer. Narratively, this seems to be a condensed version of the potential plot of the movie, with the largest and most eye-popping events happening near the end. The theme of the trailer seems to be impending doom, and a feeling of hopelessness is conveyed through the staging of the various shots.

Images: Marvel is famous (infamous?) for loading their trailers with meaningful images, often for only seconds or less, that represent huge story or character developments without fully spoiling the plot.

Here are some examples:



This screencap from the trailer shows the Marvel Cinematic Universe iteration of a popular Marvel character, Spider-Man, in a flashy, metallic suit. This image is used as an attention-grabber of comic book fans, Spider-Man fans, or for anybody that saw a previous Marvel movie, "Spider-Man Homecoming" (2017). In that movie, Spider-Man was offered this same suit at the end of the film and declined. The suit shows up in this trailer as a point of interest for viewers who recognized the suit, and acts as a mysterious crowd-attractor ("Why does he have the suit?").

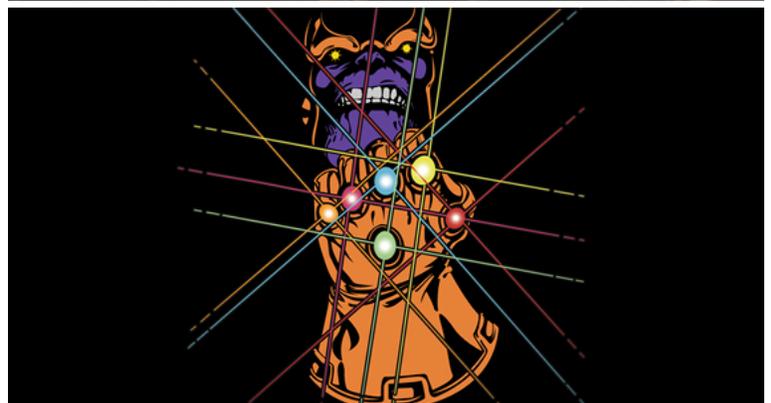


This image is on screen for only 2 seconds, but offers a quick glimpse at the return of an object of interest from the second movie in the series, the “Hulkbuster” armor. This armor was used as a selling point in the trailer for that film, as it was one of the big set-pieces and visual spectacles. It works in a similar way here, as it teases the return of the armor, and also an example of the film’s CGI.



This image is the penultimate shot of the trailer, and is a signature stylistic choice of the “Avengers” films. Due to the nature of the movies being teams coming together, each film contains a shot that features all the major characters, usually in the midst of a battle, together in a somewhat posed formation. This trailer includes this shot as an excitement-builder and a assurance that the movie will have a similar style to the previous films.

Intertextuality: The trailer contains a symbol, in the form of an item, that is a staple of the Marvel comics empire: The Infinity Gauntlet. In the comics (and in the films), the Gauntlet is a very powerful artifact, which at its full potential can destroy the universe. The appearance of the Gauntlet in the trailer serves as a visual call to its limited appearance in previous films, as well as decades of comic books. Comic book fans everywhere get giddy with excitement when Marvel brings in popular storyline features to the films, and Marvel used this advantage to premiere the first “use” of the Infinity Gauntlet.



Interpellation: The Marvel Cinematic Universe has, for most of its duration, been targeted at comic book fans and the younger generations.

“Infinity War” has slightly adjusted its target audience, due in large part to the incredible hype and excitement for the movie preceding it, “Black Panther.” This is notable, because “Black Panther” is the first Marvel film to feature an almost entirely black cast and producing/writing team (as well as director). That movie is Marvel’s first large-scale attempt at targeting black audiences, and the results have been overwhelming. The film has sold the most presale tickets of any Marvel movie to date, and the initial reviews following its recent premiere have been exemplary.

On the fictional side of it, “Black Panther” offers viewers the first glimpse into the fictional, super-advanced African country of Wakanda. In the “Infinity War” Trailer, more shots of Wakanda are shown, including the large battle scene that ends the trailer. This, along with the appearance of Chadwick Boseman’s character Black Panther, is meant to target black audiences that are excited for the “Black Panther” movie.

Ideology: This trailer seems to have the obvious belief of “This big purple man is not good news.”

Beneath the surface, despite the sense of hopelessness found in many parts of the trailer, a belief that hope is not lost is also present, demonstrated by the fighting scenes of the heroes near the end of the trailer.

Structuralism: This is, obviously, a comic book movie. However, it is not the same type of comic book movie as, say, “Superman” (1978). The biggest difference between comic book movies of the previous eras and the ones released nowadays are the visual effects. CGI has become a selling point. One-liners and quips are found in almost every comic book film, as those are the only real forms of dialogue in most comic books. The trailer shows off a couple quips, and definitely expresses that the film will contain a boatload of pretty CGI landscapes and wild battle scenes. Those are the two most important parts of comic book movies today.

Auteur Theory: The Avengers films are distinct in the Marvel Cinematic Universe due to their larger nature of conflicts, higher volume of CGI “wow” shots, and never-ending quips and one-liners. The first two films were directed by Joss Whedon, who is famous for his quippy style, and although “Infinity War” is being directed by the Russo Brothers (Joe and Anthony), that style does not seem to have faded in the trailer. The Russos directed previous Marvel films “Captain America: The Winter Soldier” and “Captain America: Civil War.” They were praised in those films for their solid action shots and practical effects, which is vastly different than what is required in the “Avengers” movies. However, it seems from the trailer that their talents aren’t limited to practical stunts and camera-movements.

Obfuscation: Marvel is famous for obfuscating many story aspects of their films in their trailers for them. Oftentimes, they will show a series of images and sequences back to back in the trailer that have no connection in the film itself, as a way to offer mystery as to how they all come together. In this trailer, this seems to be focused on the Infinity Gauntlet. It is shown directly after the apparent demise of another character (Vision), whose gem in his head is essential to powering the Gauntlet. It then shows Thanos inserting another gem into the Gauntlet, effectively raising its power and making it more dangerous. How is it more dangerous? We don't know, because the next shot of Thanos is him punching someone in an Iron Man suit with his non-Gauntlet hand. This acts as a way to keep the Gauntlet's power a mystery while also showing an example of how powerful Thanos is regardless.