

Media Studies

General Certificate of Secondary Education J526

OCR Report to Centres

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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B322 Textual Analysis and Media Studies Topic (Moving Image)

Responses to the textual analysis examination were much improved in this series. Most candidates completed all four questions and more candidates than in previous examinations divided up their time appropriately, producing shorter answers for question one and longer answers for question three, for example.

Adjustments to the examination questions seemed to have had their intended effect. Question one now asks for two ways in which the **narrative** fits the genre and this led to fewer answers struggling to separate 'characters' and 'events'. Question two no longer has a reference to the genre; fewer answers wasted time repeating generic conventions from question one. Question three now includes a number of suggestions of social groups, events or places that the candidates might analyse. This may have helped some candidates look for these representation strategies as the text was played.

The slight rearrangement of the answer booklet also appeared to aid candidates. Most could fit their answer into the space provided, which was designed to fit the relative weight of each question in the examination.

A few candidates submitted their notes with their answers. Centres should remember that the notes are now to be retained by the centre and securely disposed of at the end of the examination.

The extract from the film 'Hancock' proved accessible in terms of genre, media language and representation. Including a short prison sequence provided contrast with the following action sequence in the use of media language. Moreover, it offered another social group – criminals – for representation analysis. Plus the presence of a male African-American hero and a feisty white female 'damsel in distress' (in the form of an injured policewoman) offered a clear 'racial' and gender dimension.

Section A

Question 1

This question was answered well. Most candidates stated two generic conventions and strongest answers stated two clearly different conventions. Many used terminology and thus entered level 4. However, some candidates used terminology without providing a generic convention – most especially, those who argued correctly but too vaguely that 'there is a protagonist and an antagonist' is a generic convention. Strong answers stressed the heroic qualities of the protagonist and the villainous qualities of the antagonists, the conflict, the spectacular explosions and the peril.

Question 2

Again, this question was answered well. Editing and mise en scène proved – as usual – the most demanding media language elements and some candidates wasted time defining the terms or repeating generic conventions, but most seemed clear about their task: selecting precise examples and explaining their connotative effect. The noted effects included: tension, excitement, majesty, misery (for the prison) or thoughtfulness.

The strongest answers typically gave two or more examples for each element. Future papers will ask for two examples for each element to encourage all candidates to do this. Weaker answers failed to give a specific example or listed examples without explaining their effects.

For soundtrack, many candidates commented on the different uses of music and the sound effects of gunshots and explosions.

For editing, many candidates commented on the use of CGI – the strongest answers used this term, thus establishing post-production effects. 'Special effects' worked as an answer if the examples chosen were post-production effects (ie not 'pyrotechnics'). Many commented on the use of slow motion, the cross cutting between Hancock and the bank robbers, and the use of shot-reverse shot. Some commented on the abrupt transition to the bank robbery scene.

For mise en scène, many candidates commented on the superhero suit, the lighting, the guns, masks, bombs, explosions, and the detonator. There were more descriptive responses for mise en scène than for any other element – candidates may need extra help in picking examples they can link to connotative effects.

For camerawork, there were many and varied responses, including examples of the hand-held camerawork, the close ups, the tracking shots, the aerial shots, the whip pan, and the sudden zooms.

Question 3

This paper added suggestions for representation analysis at the end of the question. This may have aided candidates, but any improvement in answering this question largely mirrored that for the previous two questions, so the effect is as yet unclear. Many candidates did use the suggestions to address issues of gender, race, nationality and the representation of the 'big city'. Fewer addressed 'criminals' and 'superheroes'.

The strongest answers showed an awareness of general media stereotyping. They analysed gender stereotyping in the male superhero and female 'damsel in distress'. They discussed the policewoman's ambiguous representation as both stereotypically vulnerable but at the same time an anti-stereotypical representation of female activity and power. They discussed the anti-stereotypical representation of an African-American hero, but also questioned the rarity of such a representation in the contemporary media. They discussed the easy equation of Americans and heroism. They noted the stereotypical representation of the big city as a place of danger.

Good answers clearly discussed media stereotyping but avoided discussion of social reality. Weaker answers tended to draw upon racist or sexist attitudes with no element of distancing.

Weaker answers often simply described characterisation, or described a character as male, for example, without linking this to the representation of masculinity (eg 'the hero is male and strong').

Some weaker answers simply repeated generic conventions from question one (eg 'there is a hero, a villain, and a damsel in distress'). A specific example of this were those answers that dogmatically applied learning that 'villains are always foreign' to an extract where the nationality of the villains was not clear. Some better answers did discuss representation issues successfully with reference to action adventure films alone, so this strategy could be successful. The very best answers demonstrated clear sense of understanding representation issues not just in the action adventure genre but in the media as a whole.

Some answers worked diligently through the list of suggestions in such a way that they failed to get into detail for any one of them. Candidates should bear in mind that these suggestions are not a requirement – answers can achieve full marks only analysing one representation issue, if done with sophistication and in depth.

Question 4(a)

Most candidates seemed comfortable with contrasting two scheduling decisions.

The instruction to state the day, time and channel for each text was usually followed, though some weaker answers seemed less clear on the second text. Answers on programmes scheduled on BBC1 and BBC2, C4, E4 and ITV1 often displayed a grasp of institutional information and clear awareness of scheduling practices. The best answers had to be concise to cover the whole question: they analysed how each of the programmes met one or more of their channel's target audience, brand image, and ethos, and explained both the scheduling day and time for both programmes.

Weaker answers were vague about scheduling, or concentrated solely on either the 'how' or 'why' of scheduling.

Question 4(b)

The requirement to analyse the pleasures of one text was usually followed and most candidates appeared to have enough material from one text to illustrate the answer.

The strongest answers analysed a range of pleasures and gave detailed exemplification. Many answers on 'Eight Out of Ten Cats' were successful in this. Weaker answers offered only one pleasure – many on 'Gavin and Stacey', for example, failed to move beyond comedy pleasures – or offered little textual exemplification.

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