

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

MEDIA STUDIES

H409

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Version 1

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

Paper 1 series overview

Overall, the paper was accessible to candidates who responded in a differentiated way to individual questions, areas of strength being clearly shown depending on topic and task. What was obvious was the impact of teaching in relation to how the very different questions should best be approached and how best to maximise marks by making good use of available time and differences in mark allocation. On occasion, candidates ran out of time or rushed through Questions 4 to 6. Examiners commented that some candidates spent too much time on Q2 which had an effect on the time available for subsequent questions. Some candidates started with Section B of the paper with no real impact on marks.

Section A overview

This section on News was generally addressed well by candidates. The majority of candidates demonstrated focus on the source material and key media texts in their responses, and addressed the media theoretical framework effectively. There was mixed success in the application of academic ideas and media theory.

Question 1

News

- 1 Analyse the different social and cultural representations in **Sources A and B**.
Apply Hall's theory of representation in your answer.

[10]

On the whole candidates answered this question adequately. Higher achieving candidates developed sophisticated discussions of the social and cultural representations rather than simply describing the way Theresa May had been represented. There were a wide range of interpretations about what constituted Hall's theory of representation; therefore, it was necessary to be broad in accepting candidates' application of the theory to the two texts. Some candidates analysed the two texts and then tried to shoehorn Hall's theory into their answer. Interpretations of Hall ranged from stereotypes, to power relations, analysis of gender and finally to reception theory. Few made the mistake of only analysing one of the sources. A small number of responses did not refer to Hall.

Question 2

- 2* **Sources A and B** cover the same news event from two different tabloid newspapers.

How far have media conventions been used to construct viewpoints in **Sources A and B**?

In your answer you must:

- outline the conventions of the front pages of tabloid newspapers, including use and style of headlines and images
- analyse the contrasting use of symbolic, technical and written conventions in the sources
- make judgements and reach conclusions on the way in which media conventions construct viewpoints and ideologies.

[15]

This question was usually answered in more detail than any of the other questions, although there was plenty of overlap in the use of examples from Q1. Where candidates identified the key media conventions of tabloid newspapers from the outset they were then able to identify and apply their knowledge well. Most candidates seemed to have understood that it was an extended response question.

Successful candidates included discussion of the style of fonts, image to text ratios, analysis of colour, and used technical language such as masthead, splash and skyline in relation to the way viewpoints and ideas were constructed, demonstrating a good understanding of the conventions of the front pages of newspapers.

However, an area for development is for centres to make sure candidates have a sound grasp of media conventions. Lesser achieving candidates were able to describe in detail the opposing content of the two texts, but sometimes lacked the technical language to sufficiently analyse the texts to achieve the Level 3 criteria.

Exemplar 1

large image dominating the cover. Similarly, on the Daily Mirror's cover, the image is enlarged, but displays May looking "in fear" – a less flattering photograph. The use of the close-up enables her to be presented to the audience as "in fear", which is then supported by the caption "face of fear". The use of language to label May as fearful, portrays her contrastingly to Source B. Additionally, it adheres to the conventions of the red-top tabloid that they are direct and controversial, clearly highlighting their political stance in the cover.

This response demonstrates an example of convincing, perceptive and accurate analysis of the construction of viewpoints through the use of conventions.

Question 3

- 3 Explain how economic contexts, including commercial and not-for-profit funding, affect the distribution of newspapers. Refer to *The Guardian* and the *Daily Mail* to support your answer. [10]

Top level responses addressed economic contexts and distribution, as well as the transformation of the printed press in an online age. These responses focused effectively on distribution and how content to be distributed is affected by ownership, ethos and the specific audience. Discussion of the effects of advertising and subscription on the distribution of newspapers was also a feature of successful responses. A number of candidates achieved highly on this question where there were sophisticated explanations of the impact of economic contexts on distribution.

Lesser achieving candidates were not able to discuss the two texts in terms of context. Some candidates wrote only about one of the texts, but it was necessary to consider both *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*. A surprising number of candidates identified Rupert Murdoch as being the proprietor of *The Daily Mail*. Many candidates were also confused about paywalls for both papers and didn't understand the nature of *The Guardian*'s membership scheme. On occasion candidates omitted this question.

Question 4

- 4 Evaluate the usefulness of **one** of the following theories in understanding audience use of online newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *MailOnline*:

EITHER

- Jenkins on participation

OR

- Bandura's media effects theory.

[10]

The majority of candidates answered on Jenkins rather than Bandura. The most successful candidates very effectively analysed the relevance of either theory to the texts in the contemporary media world. Both Jenkins and Bandura seemed to have been taught well and there was at least an understanding of their ideas. Some responses meaningfully explored the usefulness of applying the theory. Application of theory could be flagged to centres as a development point. Responses were able to outline the theories, but very few candidates were critical of, for instance the limitations of Bandura's ideas in relation to online news, and there were many examples of candidates saying things like 'the Guardian use Jenkins theory to increase their audience'. At the highest level there were candidates that engaged with Jenkins and participation of audiences and the news.

Many candidates spent time explaining/outlining the theory which detracted from their overall response, and in relation to Bandura lot of time recounting the Bobo Doll experiment which wasn't relevant to the answer.

Exemplar 2

The fact that audiences can actively click on these hyperlinks improves their involvement, therefore creating a larger impact on them.

Despite the theory being applied to online news, Bandura did not specifically link it to news, but developed the theory regarding television, as it is a visual approach to media. Nevertheless, the theory clearly links supports the idea that all media texts effect us, as especially online news, audiences can return back again multiple times, whilst getting involved by using hyperlink and videos.

This response is an example of how theoretical ideas can be applied to newspapers meeting Assessment Objective 2.2, applying knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to evaluate academic theories. Convincing, perceptive and accurate evaluation of the usefulness of media theory.

Section B

Question 5

Media Language and Representation

- 5 Explain how media language in music video incorporates viewpoints and ideologies.

Refer to **one** of the music videos you have studied to support your answer.

[10]

You should have studied **two** music videos: **one** from **List A** and **one** from **List B** below.

List A	List B
Corinne Bailey Rae – <i>Stop Where You Are</i>	Radiohead – <i>Burn the Witch</i>
Massive Attack – <i>Unfinished Sympathy</i>	Fatboy Slim – <i>Ya Mama</i>
Emeli Sandé – <i>Heaven</i>	David Guetta – <i>Titanium</i>

The most popular videos were Emeli Sandé and Corinne Bailey Rae, then equally split between David Guetta and Radiohead. Some candidates considered the Massive Attack video, but very few addressed the Fatboy Slim music video.

Less successful responses focused on the lyrics rather than visuals, and occasionally lacked textual analysis of key elements such as mise-en-scene, editing, and camerawork. It was common for candidates to just describe what happens in the videos rather than analyse the messages and ideologies.

Some candidates interpreted *Burn the Witch* as being explicitly about Brexit/Trump even though the video was made before the referendum and Trump was elected president, but these were valid interpretations of the music video. At the same time, candidates discussing Radiohead were more likely to focus on the style or narrative of the video, sometimes to their detriment as they lacked detailed discussion of media language. Candidates discussing *Titanium* also focused on discussing the narrative and those analysing this text seemed to struggle with the concept of viewpoints and ideologies.

There was a clear rubric error where a number of candidates addressed two music videos rather than one.

Question 6

Source C is a poster advertising the homelessness charity Simon On The Streets. Simon On The Streets provides emotional and practical support for people who are homeless and rootless, especially those with issues related to rough sleeping.

The poster features a QR code, which is a type of barcode that can be scanned by a mobile phone and will take the user straight to the charity's JustGiving web page so they can donate money online.

- 6 Analyse how the Simon On The Streets advertisement (**Source C**) conveys values, attitudes and beliefs about homelessness.

In your answer you must:

- consider how media representations convey values, attitudes and beliefs in **Source C**
- make judgements and reach conclusions on how audiences may respond to and interpret these media representations.

[15]

Many candidates were clearly well prepared for the textual analysis required for this question, and were able to apply this to the Simon on the Streets advert. Top marks were given for some very sophisticated responses. Some candidates had clearly not left enough time to complete the answer and didn't write in sufficient detail for a 15 mark question. Many were able to consider both the elements of textual analysis and also the effect on audiences and how audiences might consume the text. Successful candidates were able to discuss the media text and link it to representations. Other responses focused on homelessness as an issue, and as a result lacked the required analysis. Less successful responses in particular found it difficult to go beyond comments such as 'Simon on the Streets says that most homeless people spend their money on drink and drugs' and that the advert was a criticism of the homeless.

There were some responses that compared this advert to Shelter and in some of those cases the responses became more about Shelter than the unseen text.

Exemplar 3

Similarly, the idea that the company are providing homeless people with the correct aid and support that will "turn rough lives around" puts hope in the audience that the company are actively trying to decrease the issue. Therefore, with this idea of hope and determination, the audience are more likely to get involved and support the cause. Furthermore, due to the addressing of the initial speculation and beliefs about homeless people, the company are able to reassure the audience that this method of giving will strive to end homelessness.

This candidate's response exemplifies a comprehensive application of knowledge and understanding of how the Simon On The Street advertisement has appealed to its audiences.

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