

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

MEDIA STUDIES

H409

For first teaching in 2017

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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. A selection of candidate responses is also provided. 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 and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 1 series overview

Overall, the paper was accessible to candidates who responded in a differentiated way to individual questions with areas of strength, depending on the topic and task, clearly shown. The impact of teaching in relation to the theoretical frameworks of media, knowledge and understanding of the set products for this component, how the very different questions should best be approached and how to maximise marks by making good use of available time was evident. On occasion, candidates ran out of time or rushed through Question 6. Some candidates began the paper with the two 15 mark questions, Questions 2 and 6, followed by a chronological or 'most confident' order, which benefitted those who adopted this approach.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • managed the timing of the paper well, completing responses to all six questions • established an argument to the question in the introduction and wrote well-structured, coherent, developed responses that referred back to the question and their argument regularly to remain relevant and engaged • analysed the source materials and case study products in detail to apply knowledge and understanding and fully support the points they made • made logical connections, developed lines of reasoning and could make judgements and conclusions in their responses • could confidently use subject specific terminology relevant for the framework, media form and products studied • were fluent and confident in their application of, and ability to, critically evaluate the effectiveness of the key ideas and arguments of theorists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not manage the timings for all questions effectively or wrote no response to at least one question • didn't engage with or answer the question • wrote brief, undeveloped responses • provided limited support from case study or source material • answered the question with case study product examples that weren't relevant or accurate for the specifics of the question • described and/or listed what they knew rather than using the AO skills of application, analysis, explanation, evaluation, judgement • wrote responses that were undeveloped and basic in the lines of reasoning or conclusions offered, if at all • did not use appropriate subject specific terminology or were inaccurate in their use of terms, especially terminology for media language conventions • did not understand, apply or evaluate theoretical ideas.

Section A overview

This section on News was generally addressed well by candidates. Most candidates demonstrated ability in the analysis and application of knowledge and understanding of source material and the case study products to support their responses where required. There was mixed success in the knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media language, contexts and in the application and evaluation of academic ideas.

Question 1

- 1 Analyse the representations used in **Source A** and **Source B** in relation to social contexts. Use hooks' feminist theory to support your answer. [10]

Most candidates were able to engage with this question and triangulate their understanding of bell hooks, representation in relation to social contexts and the two unseen sources. Candidates adequately applied their knowledge and understanding of representation in relation to the social contexts of feminism and nationalism, with generally appropriate reference to bell hooks' theory of feminism in relation to patriarchy, white supremacy, intersectionality and challenging the gaze to varying degrees of success. Candidates could support responses with some accurate references to Sources A and B and make some logical connections across the different representations found in both sources. Use of appropriate, relevant terms in candidates' analysis was good.

Examiners commented that it was pleasing to see that analysis was well-focused on the sources with candidates accurately referring to source materials by clearly citing specific textual examples. Candidates were able to identify the social aspects of both sources and understood features of hooks' theory. They were able to identify how the Lionesses were represented as powerful in Source A and discuss the selection of the image of Chloe Kelly celebrating in Source B. Many candidates were able to link hooks' idea of feminism and patriarchy to the source. Some candidates were able to discuss intersectionality and link hooks' theories of white supremacy with the sources.

Successful responses comprehensively triangulated the three stems of the question and were characterised by precise and relevant reference to, and application of, hooks' feminist theory in relation to differing representations of women found in the sources. The most successful candidates were able to analyse the front pages in detail beyond a more straightforward argument regarding a positive representation of women. The strongest responses could apply intersectionality effectively. The use of theorist soundbites, such as 'intersectionality', 'white supremacy', and 'movement to end patriarchy' was an effective way for candidates to show their understanding of the theory and its application to the sources. The strongest responses effectively explained these theories using precise language and relevant examples.

The most successful responses were well-structured, well argued, well supported, offered consistent comparisons and made connections across the sources, theory and context to provide clear lines of reasoning. As in previous series, candidates who excelled in this question often provided a brief outline of the theory at the beginning of the response and embedded it into detailed analysis that helped structure their responses. These candidates often used the theory as a 'lens' through which to analyse the representations presented. The focus on social contexts was often done well; the sources provided a rich basis for analysing social groups and social events to discuss social issues around changing attitudes towards women and nationalism. The strongest candidates were able to comprehensively discuss the nuances of the Burchill quote in Source B being a reference to a gender critical perspective and discuss this in relation to the conservative outlook of *The Daily Mail*, their audience, hooks' theories of patriarchy and evolving social contexts.

Less successful responses struggled to address all aspects of the question so were unable to triangulate the three stems required to access marks in the middle and higher levels of the mark scheme. These responses took a generalised reading of the representations in both sources as positive and were unable to identify or critically engage with the more negative tone of the representations constructed in Source B or the contrasting representations of femininity found in Source A.

Some candidates did not address social contexts. For some candidates, reference to hooks was absent or minimal with a key idea stated but not developed or applied. In some instances, candidates confused hooks' theory with Van Zoonen or Hall's theories of representation. The least successful responses described the sources rather than analysed or omitted to refer to specific examples to support their response.

Centres have prepared candidates well for this response. Many responses stood out for their well-structured arguments, supported by relevant examples and candidates demonstrated their understanding of and skill in how theoretical concepts can be applied. While many candidates were clear on hooks' theory and how it is different from other feminist theories studied, there were also inaccuracies in relation to bell hooks, which less successful candidates discussed as 'feminism' or by merging or confusing the theories of hooks, Van Zoonen and/or Butler.

Areas for centres to develop would be to make sure that there is lots of practise of the theories with time to develop understanding of how the theories which focus on similar areas of representation are different from each other. In addition, time to develop skills in analysis of images, copy and by-lines in relation to developing lines of reasoning would be beneficial and support candidates in making connections more consistently, developing reasoning skills and attaining the higher level marks.

Assessment for learning



Practise the application of theoretical ideas to relevant examples to support candidates in moving beyond their description of the theory or trying to 'prove' it is right or wrong.

Misconception



Some candidates confused hooks' feminist theory with Van Zoonen's and Butler's theories. Candidates would benefit from developing their knowledge and understanding of each of the theories and, for those which focus on similar areas of representation, how they are different from each other.

Question 2*

2* **Source A** and **Source B** cover the same news events from two different newspapers, one left-wing and one right-wing.

How far does the media language used in the sources incorporate viewpoints and ideologies?

In your answer you must:

- explain how newspapers use media language to incorporate viewpoints and ideologies
- analyse the media language used in the sources
- make judgements and reach conclusions about how far the media language used in the sources incorporates viewpoints and ideologies.

[15]

Most candidates were able to show accurate knowledge and understanding of how the media language used in news sources incorporates viewpoints and ideologies (AO1). The use of subject specific terminology was mostly accurate (AO1). There was relevant, generally successful, application of knowledge and understanding of media language to analyse Sources A and B. Candidates could identify and analyse genre conventions of tabloid and mid-market newspapers and relevant visual, technical and linguistic codes used in both sources generally successfully. Candidates could provide some logical connections across the two sources with some adequate lines of reasoning. There were adequate judgements and conclusions made regarding how far candidates thought the media language used in news sources incorporates viewpoints and ideologies (AO2). Responses presented information that was relevant, well-structured and supported by some evidence.

Most responses accurately used some media language terminology, with the majority of candidates citing specific textual examples from the source materials, including references to visual codes (images, colour, layout, font styles), lexical codes (language), and genre conventions (tabloid and mid-market). Understanding of the distinct political affiliations of both papers was evident and candidates attempted to discuss the question using the sources provided, although some were more descriptive than others. Candidates adopted various approaches to explore how media language incorporates viewpoints and ideologies in this question.

The more successful approaches considered how the genre of each newspaper constructed meaning and influenced the selection of technical elements on each front page to further communicate viewpoints and ideologies. Other candidates focused more on the opposing ideological positionings of the newspapers and their political standings to explore the viewpoints and ideologies presented. This approach was also successful.

Higher achieving candidates confidently used terms such as 'liberal ideology', 'progressive viewpoints' and 'hegemony' in their analysis. These higher achieving candidates were able to effectively analyse the front pages and identify the ideologies and viewpoints of the two sources in terms of very specific, detailed and accurate examples of media language, using correct terminology. Strong responses contextualised the two newspapers while remaining focused on the specific sources. Although not a requirement to use academic ideas and theory in response to this question, some of the most successful candidates applied Barthes' theory of semiotics to identify media language codes and conventions as signs that connote viewpoints and ideological myths that reflect the bias of their owners and have appeal to their audience demographic; these candidates had a strong grasp of the nuances of the UK newspaper market. It should be noted however that not all uses of theory are beneficial to candidate responses and in some instances these lessened the quality and focus of the response.

While most candidates were able to consider the viewpoints and ideologies of the two sources to some extent, analysis in terms of media language was often less successful. Less successful responses were unable to apply media language to their analysis with some responses offering little or no use of any

media language subject specific terminology. In the least successful responses, there was a lack of understanding of the conventions of front pages of newspapers and basic analysis was focused on the actual written words rather than media language codes and conventions. These less successful responses were typically more descriptive and often described the headlines or what they could see.

Less successful responses were also marked by confused ideological positionings of the newspapers and over the political messages/ideologies in relation to Liz Truss. Some candidates concluded that there were no ideological viewpoints in Source A as there were no political topics on the front page. Some candidates repeated their response to Question 1.

A common misconception was understanding the requirements of the question. Candidates were often focusing on analysis, the AO2 element of the question, but not using specific subject terminology relevant to the media language framework (AO1) to support the response. This was demonstrated by candidates who thought 'media language' meant the words and language used, not the technical and visual codes and conventions of the media language framework in relation to print news as a form.

Candidates were generally well informed and well prepared for this question. Candidates were able to address the question effectively in terms of viewpoints and ideology, demonstrate a line of reasoning and make some conclusions. Good knowledge of the newspapers was clear and candidates generally understood the political ideologies of both papers.

Some candidates were less confident or successful in terms of applying appropriate media language, identifying a range of media language elements or using appropriate terminology. Examples of best practice were those candidates who were able to link several aspects of media language to the focus of the question and apply these in their analysis. For example, those candidates looked at the copy, colours, images and masthead and linked this to their overall response. Some candidates had confident grasp of technical media language terms, accurately referring to and appropriately applying their knowledge and analysis of the skyline, standfirst, headline, main image, layout etc to identify the viewpoints and ideologies communicated through these elements.

Areas for development for centres to further support candidates in attaining higher level marks for this question would include:

- developing skills in exam technique, particularly breaking down the examination questions, understanding the framework focus for assessment and using the bullet points provided in the question as a guide for structuring responses. This can be extended by signposting which content candidates should include to address AO1 and AO2 descriptors in their responses.
- developing candidates' skills in demonstrating their knowledge of the media language framework and newspaper conventions. Centres should develop candidates' knowledge and understanding of what 'media language' means as a term and what needs to be included in a response to a media language framework question. Look at and break down unseen sources to analyse the viewpoints or connotations constructed by the masthead, images and typography for example. Make sure that candidates learn, are able to identify and can accurately use technical terminology to explain what they can see on a front page and the meanings that are communicated as a result.
- provide opportunities for lots of practice on unseen front pages of national daily news titles to develop familiarity with and good grasp of the nuances of the UK newspaper market.
- practise identifying political and ideological messages in a range of newspapers and select specific examples to practice lines of reasoning and developing judgements and conclusions in order for candidates to access higher level marks.
- practise this type of question, with particular focus on how it is different from Question 1 in terms of the assessment objectives and question requirements, to avoid repetition or similarity in response.

Assessment for learning



Develop candidates' skills in demonstrating their knowledge of the media language framework and newspaper conventions. Centres should develop candidates' knowledge and understanding of what media language means as a term and what needs to be included in a response to a media language framework question. Look at and break down unseen sources to analyse the viewpoints or connotations constructed by the masthead, images and typography for example. Make sure that candidates learn, are able to identify and can accurately use technical terminology to explain what they can see on a front page and the meanings that are communicated as a result. This supports candidates in preparing to address the AO1 and AO2 requirements of this question.

OCR support



[The OCR News Delivery Guide](#) pp 16-20 suggests useful ways in which media language and genre conventions can be approached for this unit.

OCR's Exam Review and Exploring the Exam [professional development](#) events offer further support for approaching delivery of this component.

Exemplar 1

2		Media language is source A The Daily Mail a - established in 1846 - is a right leaning
		leaning mid-market tabloid which is owned by DMGT.
		with the majority of the population source B
		On the other hand, source B A - The Daily Mirror - is a left-leaning

		tabloid owned by Reach PLC. Media language is used to incorporate differing political views on women and politics.
		Source A - the Daily Mirror - even whilst before the main image of women football players celebrating being "Pride of the Nation". The positive message alongside the low composition and layout with the main image be taking up more space of the front cover aligns with the Daily Mirror's liberal values towards women. The high image to copy ratio signifies the importance of women liberation and celebration in comparison to hard news like politics - contrasted from Source B. The headline incorporating other stories also involves positive imagery of women with the impactful, motivating text of "girl power" enhancing female empowerment. However, the strong with worded placed on the top left shows depicts women in the main image with the phrase "£5 off", sign downplaying women to need for stereotypically appealing to a female audience. This is arguably downplays women to individuals who are only entertained by shopping, leisure and not perhaps not capable of learning much. However, it is important to note that the Daily Mirror is a red top tabloid with a C2DE or predominant audience. Therefore, this reflects the viewpoints and ideologies of the paper to appeal to its target audience.
		Source B - The Daily Mail - enforces its nationalist, patriotic and ideologies in this front cover through the

		<p>main image of Chloe Kelly celebrating with her teammates at Wembley. This is to represent the victorious event of Lionesses winning the 2022 UEFA Championship. The same event is represented in a positive manner similar to Source A. The positive lexis of how "femininity can change the world" is used intentionally utilized to incorporate ideologies of feminism and female empowerment. This right-wing paper conveniently represents only the white football players to and not the black football players is evident in the Daily Mirror's front cover to to subconsciously influence ideologies of ethnocentrism and put instill patriotic values within to the audience. Therefore, there is difference in representations of the same event media language to represent the same event due to its values and ideologies. Source B incorporates incorporates a bigger headline "Liz: I'll halt June food tax" in a bold serif font which is the largest copy on the page. The hard news of politics & takes up more space and incorporates passes more copy copy to place more importance to political news as opposed to entertainment, good news. The main story This is a convention of mid-market tabloids to incorporate elements of hard news. The Daily Mail is intentionally incorporates the Conservative leadership contest to appear as the main story as the Daily Mail is affiliated with the Conservative party - appealing to its right-wing audience. The semantic field of authority power in the words "leadership", "taxes", "halt"</p>
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		and "state plans" is the Daily Mail's attempt to incorporate right-wing & specific ideologies and importance to the readers.
		In conclusion, media language is used effectively to incorporate different viewpoints and ideologies. Source A uses high image to copy right as to emphasise the importance of women empowerment and . Source B utilises soft and hard news to celebrate national, feminist ideologies feminist viewpoints, promote nationalism. However, Source B uses informal lexis like "rip up nanny state plans" which subverts the Daily Mail's conviction of promoting the Conservative party as a competent party. There are is more evidence for media language effectively incorporating viewpoints, and the idea , this is done to a great extent.

AO1:

There is comprehensive, detailed and accurate knowledge and understanding of how media language is used in Sources A and B to incorporate viewpoints and ideologies. (L3)

There is a comprehensive range of references made to the use of media language examples in the sources and the subject specific terminology used to discuss these is relevant and accurate. (L3)

AO2

This is a comprehensive, detailed and accurate application of media language to analyse the sources. (L3)

The response is very skilled, highly developed, coherent and logically structured. (L3)

The information presented is relevant, substantiated and consistent. It is also comprehensively detailed in its application of knowledge and understanding of media language to analyse the viewpoints in Source A and Source B and makes clear connections and excellent lines of reasoning. (L3)

Judgements and conclusions are highly developed and confident. (L3)

Question 3

- 3 Explain how economic factors influence the way print and/or online news is produced. Refer to *The Guardian* and the *Daily Mail* to support your answer. [10]

Candidates generally performed well on Question 3, demonstrating adequate knowledge and understanding of how economic factors influence the way print and/or online news is produced. Candidates could explain a range of influences of economic factors on the way news is produced using both *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mail* to support their knowledge and understanding. Many candidates were able to identify a drop in print sales circulation, address how newspaper brands have increased their cover prices and the use of social media in news production. They were also able to discuss the way they make money online through subscriptions, paywalls and adverts. Some responses discussed hybridisation to offset printing costs and differences in production of online content compared to the print versions of the papers, through using soft news to appeal to wider audiences, comments sections and clickbait to encourage online engagement and increase advertising revenue. There was good use of the studied editions of the newspapers and lots of detail on the papers' online offering.

Strong responses to this question were characterised by candidates who could effectively consider the ways in which the two newspapers had responded to the challenges of developments in digitally converged technologies, declining print circulation and the differences between the case study brands. These responses demonstrated strong understanding of the different economic models of both papers and used a range of examples, including statistics, from case studies to exemplify their explanations. The most perceptive responses confidently explored several economic factors, provided examples from *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* and often took a broader 'macro' perspective. The candidates who took this approach for addressing this question benefitted from applying specific statistical evidence, examples of news stories, campaigns and features to illustrate their arguments more precisely. Strong responses were also characterised by using the question as an opportunity to discuss theorists from the industry framework; although this is not a requirement of the question, many stronger responses applied Curran and Seaton and Hesmondhalgh with purpose. A significant portion of candidates excelled at discussing the various financial factors that influence the British press. This included insightful analysis of topics such as advertising revenue, ownership structures and government subsidies.

In less successful responses, while candidates could recall relevant facts about the production of news from *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*, discussions included unsupported assertions about the economic factors influencing them and tended to be very generalised. The least successful responses were characterised by description of The Scott Trust and DMGT/Lord Rothermere and lacked support to demonstrate adequate knowledge and understanding. In some instances, responses were characterised by discussion of the historical contexts of the two papers, particularly regarding ownership. Some lesser achieving candidates focused on regulation rather than economic factors. However, although some responses were very brief, almost all candidates attempted Question 3 this session.

Candidates were well prepared for this question. Centres have clearly taught economic factors beyond ownership creating a stronger understanding of the production of contemporary news in the online age. Candidates understood the reasons for the decline of the printed press. Candidates who answered the question by considering the impact of online media were clearly very well prepared and equipped with the skill to discuss how news has moved to an online model. They were able to link this with the type of stories that were written and changes to advertising models to increase revenue in a clear and concise manner. Centres have prepared candidates well to use specific, relevant terminology and candidates had been prepared to provide concrete evidence to support their arguments.

Areas that centres could develop in preparation for this question include supporting candidates in their explanation of what constitutes 'economic factors' in relation to media production; practising how to link

economic contexts to examples of production, distribution and circulation; how to identify and make valid case study points that are appropriate to the question. Centres could also provide opportunities for candidates to develop their knowledge and understanding of the wider, macro contexts of both newspapers.

Additionally, and importantly, the majority of responses had a solid understanding of all aspects of the question but low level and mid-level responses struggled to structure their knowledge and synthesise their understanding to create a focused response.

Assessment for learning



Rigorous essay practice and opportunities to develop skills in applying knowledge of economic contexts to the case study products in a way that successfully structures a cohesive response in a specific time frame is invaluable for candidates.

Question 4

- 4 Evaluate the effectiveness of **one** of the following theories in understanding how different audiences use news (print and/or online) in different ways.

EITHER

Gerbner's Cultivation Theory

OR

Hall's Reception Theory

[10]

Candidates demonstrated some adequate application of knowledge and understanding of their chosen theory and how different audiences use news (print and/or online) in different ways. Many candidates demonstrated secure understanding of the chosen theory and provided solid summaries as a way into the question. The evaluative element of this question was often not acknowledged, preventing access to mid and higher level marks. Additionally, candidates often did not include specific examples from *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* to support their points. Some candidates offered hypothetical examples, which worked well. More candidates answered the question using Hall than Gerbner. However, the Gerbner responses were often stronger with more consistent application and evaluation of the effectiveness and limitations of the theory for understanding how different audiences use news in different ways.

Higher achieving responses were able to structure their responses using the key ideas of the chosen theory and apply their knowledge of the case study products to support their understanding. Successful responses were also able to clearly evaluate the effectiveness of the theories and often brought in other theories in comparison, which enhanced their responses.

Less successful responses struggled to address the requirements of the question. Lesser achieving candidates were descriptive, listing the features of the theory rather than attempting to evaluate the effectiveness of the academic ideas, struggling to apply them to the different ways audiences use print and/or online news. Some responses entirely disregarded the 'evaluation' requirement of the question, resulting in generic regurgitation of the theory, or provided simplistic evaluations that lacked relevance to the question.

There were some common misunderstandings of Hall's theory. Less successful responses argued that it could not be applied to news and some candidates identified a preferred reading as a passive audience and an oppositional reading as an active audience. In instances this was confused with the age of news audiences; some candidates suggested older audiences read print passively, younger audiences read online news actively. Additionally, two readings of Hall emerged across the cohort, the first on encoding/decoding and the second on preferred, negotiated and dominant readings. The strongest responses were able to discuss both with regard to the relationship between producer and audience but for less successful candidates this wasn't addressed.

Centres had prepared candidates well for this question in terms of understanding the theories. Most candidates had at least a limited understanding of the two theories. Some candidates had been taught the theories very clearly and could apply them to the set products with skill. However, for many candidates, they struggled to apply the theories to the demands of the question and although they understood the key ideas of theory, they were not able to discuss the usefulness or limitations of the theory, which is the requirement of the question.

To support candidates in preparation for this questions centres are encouraged to:

- refer to the summaries of theories in Section 5e of the [specification](#), stick to the bullet points for each theory and don't stray too far from these
- develop skill in selecting and using case study examples to apply the key ideas of each theory to demonstrate good knowledge and understanding
- develop skills in evaluation so candidates understand that this question requires an evaluation of the theory
- make sure candidates can discuss not just the usefulness but also the limitations of a theory and have a bank of alternative theories that can be suggested. However, candidates must be aware that the purpose of suggesting alternative theories is to support the evaluation of the theory being assessed and should not become the focus of their response.

Exemplar 2

4	<p>Gerbner's Cultivation theory suggests that through repeated images or messages, audience's opinions will be influenced or changed to fit with the viewpoint shown in media.</p> <p>This can lead to an audiences developing a pessimistic view of the world, known as Mean World Syndrome.</p>
	<p>Some may argue that Gerbner's theory is highly highly effective in understanding how different audiences use news in different ways. If audiences consistently only read the same source of news, then their own personal views are likely to have been influenced by the news's viewpoints and ideology. An example</p>

could be the Daily Mail. Their notorious support of the Conservative party could influence their audience's political opinion. Furthermore, the Daily Mail's commonly negative portrayal of groups such as liberals and migrants may increase the likelihood of their audience developing mean world syndrome where they develop mistrust and dislike for groups different to them.

On the other hand, some may argue that Gerbner's theory is not effective for understanding how different audiences use news in different ways. Even if newspapers include messages and preferred meaning into their articles, audiences typically have the capability to negotiate or reject these ideas. It is unlikely, but not impossible, that a reader will agree with every opinion or ideological message featured within an issue of a newspaper. So this suggests that different audiences are able to challenge the newspaper's ideology and therefore reducing the chance of developing mean world syndrome.

		In conclusion, Gerbner's Cultivation Theory is somewhat effective.
		It is true that over time, audiences can be influenced by newspaper's political ideology however most readers are able to negotiate and often reject the idea meaning that a newspaper is trying to suggest through their ideology. Some audiences use news in different ways and don't agree with all the hidden meanings within news.

This is a mostly comprehensive response.

The candidate understands the theory and a number of ideas around it; there is discussion around mean world syndrome and that over time audiences can be influenced especially with regard to political ideology to demonstrate mostly comprehensive understanding (L3) of Gerbner's theory.

Application of knowledge and understanding (L3) of how audiences use news in different ways to evaluate Gerbner's theory is comprehensive, demonstrated through examples relating to his ideas of repeated exposure. The example of the reporting of immigration is a well selected and a good example to apply here.

Mostly convincing (L3) and accurate evaluation of effectiveness (L3) of the theory; the candidate presents a counterargument – could be/might not be - and in discussing preferred meaning through references to Hall is able to consider how audiences can negotiate or reject the ideas; this is a convincing way to further evaluate the effectiveness of Gerbner in relation to understanding audiences for news. But this isn't always consistent and at the end of the response the candidate makes the statement 'most readers' rather than evaluates.

Exemplar 3

4	Hall's reception theory states that producers encode texts with a biased (preferred) reading. Audiences then encode decode these texts in in an either oppositional, negotiated or preferred manner. It is a useful theory for understanding how audiences interact and use the news. For example, The Guardian and Daily Mail both have online news platforms which allow audiences to comment under articles and share their own reading of a text.
	Hall's theory is useful for understanding the way newspapers are encoded with

4	Messages by their producers and in turn either supported or contrasted by audiences. As a result of digital convergence, audiences are more inclined to share these readings online either through comments on online news articles or via social media. The theory is also is likewise a useful in understanding how audiences read news in accordance to their own ideologies, whether as entertainment or as a means to gain knowledge, the news allows audiences to be active and reinforce or question their own viewpoints.
	the theory is however limited by the

		fact that most audiences are partisan
		readers and only consume news from
		sources that align with their own
		ideologies. therefore, they are likely to
		simply take a preferred reading no
		matter what. A more useful theory
		to to analyse could be Jenkins
		as they look at active audiences
		in the digital age and their need
		to speak back to producers regardless
		of their reading. whether positive, negative
		or more nuanced, audiences will want
		to interact with the news regardless.

This is a mostly comprehensive response.

The candidate introduces the theory to show their understanding and applies it to the two case study products to discuss the idea of active audiences. The candidate comprehensively demonstrates their understanding of how audiences tend to consume media products and news titles that align with their own ideologies and links this to preferred readings. This demonstrates comprehensive, accurate application of how audiences use news to evaluate Hall's theory. (L3)

There is comprehensive and accurate evaluation of the effectiveness of Hall's theory (L3) and their reference to an alternative, more suitable theory is handled well and takes the response comfortably into comprehensive.

The response could use more effective examples, but the candidate clearly understands the theory, can apply it and it is accurate.

Overall, the candidate really gets to grips with the question and their evaluation is convincing (L3).

Assessment for learning



Candidates must evaluate the effectiveness of the theory they have selected. Centres must make sure candidates can discuss not just the usefulness but also the limitations of a theory in relation to news and have a bank of alternative theories that can be suggested as more plausible theories to aid understanding. However, centres must take care to make sure candidates are aware this alternative 'bank' is to support the evaluation of the theory being assessed and should not become the focus of their response.

Misconception



Many candidates disregarded the requirement to evaluate the chosen theory in their responses.

OCR support



Refer to the [OCR Academic ideas and arguments factsheet](#) as a starting point to develop candidates' knowledge and understanding of the qualification's specified theories and some possible uses and limitations of each theory for news.

Section B overview

This section on Media Language and Representation was addressed well by candidates. Most were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the theoretical frameworks of representation and media language, apply this knowledge to the set products and/or sources with adequate analysis and appropriate subject specific terminology to support their understanding with relevant examples. As with previous series, there was mixed success in candidates' ability to explain, identify connections or make well-reasoned judgements and conclusions.

Centres are reminded that this was the final assessment of some of the set media products for Advertising and Music Video. New set media products were introduced for first teaching in September 2023, first assessment in 2025. More information about the changes to the set media products can be found in this subject [update](#).

Question 5

5 Study **Source C** in the Resource Booklet (advert for Old Spice).

Explain how audiences respond to and interpret media representations in adverts.
Use **Source C** to support your answer.

[10]

Candidates could explain the representations in the Old Spice advert and were able to identify a range of meanings constructed by representations used. Candidates were able to explain stereotypes and aspirational representations, they understood the rebranding of Old Spice and were able to analyse the impact of using Isaiah Mustafa as celebrity endorsement. Almost all candidates were able to identify intertextual references used in the advert and more successful responses were able to discuss these in relation to the representation and use of stereotypes of hypermasculinity and ethnicity. Detailed knowledge of the advert's content and aims was evident in responses. Examiners noted that many candidates disregarded the audience response and interpretation element of the question.

The highest achieving responses to this question were able to discuss the effect of representation on audiences with a precise, balanced explanation. The most successful candidates could apply their understanding of the representations of individuals and social groups constructed in the source and considered how different audiences, male and female, may interpret and respond to these representations. The highest achieving candidates were able to identify how the use of intertextual references and advertising conventions constructed representations that address specific target audience interpretations and achieve the aim of persuading these audiences to respond in a specific way and subsequently buy into the brand. Although the use of academic ideas is not a requirement for this question, some strong responses were able to use theorists such as Hall's reception theory, Van Zoonen's theory of feminism and Gilroy's theory of ethnicity and Post-Colonialism in a comprehensive, precise way to support their explanations.

Less successful responses were often brief with a tendency to describe, which meant that some candidates were not able to respond to the question with the required precision or comprehension to access higher level marks. Lesser achieving candidates listed what they could see and did not consider how audiences may respond to the representations. Short responses provided limited explanation which focused on the main image of Mustafa and his representation rather than the advertisement as a whole. A number of candidates applied theoretical approaches that were misunderstood, not relevant to the

question or were not applied effectively; for these responses the application of academic ideas was detrimental to their response.

The application of academic ideas and theory is not a requirement for this question. Candidate's knowledge and understanding of the framework, subject content in relation to the framework and the ability to make accurate and detailed reference to the set products, together with skill in how to demonstrate and explain this knowledge should be the focus of these responses.

A common misconception made by candidates in response to this question was that it was asking how producers have constructed representations that appeal to audiences, rather than how audiences respond to and interpret representations. Additionally, some candidates misunderstood the framework being assessed by the question and focused on detailed textual analysis of media language conventions and viewpoints communicated rather than representation.

Centres have prepared candidates with thorough knowledge of the set product. Most candidates were very well prepared with detailed knowledge and understanding of the case study product and were prepared for explaining representations in the advertisement. Candidates were less confident in explaining how audiences respond to and interpret media representations in adverts.

Areas for centres to develop for this question would be to prepare candidates for:

- understanding the theoretical framework of media being assessed and how to identify this in the question set
- providing opportunities to analyse and break down past exam questions to identify the different parts of a question and to develop confidence in how it can be answered
- understanding a range of representations of events, issues, individuals and social groups in the set products
- developing skill in explaining how audiences might respond to and interpret media products in a variety of ways and some factors this may depend on.

Centres should provide opportunities for candidates to develop exam technique further with techniques in using the wording of the question throughout the response to make sure their focus remains on the question being asked and to improve time management skills. Centres could encourage students to practise answering exam questions under timed conditions. This will help them learn to pace themselves and allocate appropriate time to each section.

Assessment for learning



Centres should provide opportunities for candidates to explore and reflect on examples of how audiences might respond to and interpret adverts, and media products more generally, in a variety of ways and the factors that influence the different interpretations and responses made by different audiences.

Misconception



The question of how audiences respond to and interpret media representations was misunderstood as how producers construct representations that appeal to audiences or the meanings communicated by representations.

OCR support



Break down the delivery of the unit into the areas of the subject content for Media Language and Representation as set out in Section 2e of the OCR Specification for [A Level Media Studies H409](#) p.23-25

Question 6

6 Study **Source D** in the Resource Booklet (front cover of *The Big Issue*).

Analyse how far **Source D** challenges genre conventions.

In your answer you must:

- analyse how **Source D** uses media language to challenge (and/or conform to) genre conventions
- make judgements and draw conclusions about how far **Source D** challenges genre conventions.

[15]

Candidates demonstrated a generally successful analysis of how effective Source D was in challenging conventions of magazines and could demonstrate generally accurate application of knowledge and understanding of the media language framework. A sound level of ability was shown in referencing the source materials, making logical connections and providing adequate lines of reasoning. Candidates frequently demonstrated good contextual knowledge of *The Big Issue* magazine, which often served as their 'way in' to the question. Candidates could make some connections about *The Big Issue* and how conventions were similar or different. Candidates were able to discuss the cover in terms of how Source D subverted mainstream magazine conventions; some candidates focused on how Source D challenged *The Big Issue* conventions before and after their rebranding. Both approaches were acceptable.

Higher achieving candidates were able to structure their response to discuss different elements of magazine genre conventions such as the masthead, the use of colour and image selection in relation to how Source D challenged or conformed to conventions with consistently logical connections and good line of reasoning. The strongest responses were able to discuss the significance of the image of Michael Palin as a convention that both conformed to and challenged genre expectations and could make some accomplished judgements regarding the appeal of Palin to the audience, ideological values of the magazine, *The Big Issue's* distribution methods and how far Source D challenged or conformed to print magazine genre conventions.

Less successful responses discussed genres more broadly, rather than magazines, by focusing on newspaper conventions or travel magazines. These responses didn't have a sufficiently robust understanding of the concept of genre conventions and these candidates analysed *The Big Issue* in terms of its historical context or brought in other covers they had studied instead of applying their knowledge and understanding with an analysis of Source D. The responses were largely descriptive of how the cover looked.

Common misconceptions for this question were not identifying that the question was asking about magazine genre conventions. Many candidates discussed Source D in relation to newspaper and travel

documentary conventions, partly due to misinterpreting *The Big Issue* as a travel magazine because of the cover's reference to *Around the World in 80 Days*.

Centres have prepared candidates well in their understanding of *The Big Issue*. Candidates had good understanding of *The Big Issue*'s historical and economic context and understood their social, cultural and political relevance as a magazine. For most candidates, there was confidence in analysing an unseen source and identifying appropriate supporting examples, showing they have been prepared well for the question. Some candidates seemed less confident with regard to the genre codes and conventions of magazines.

Additionally, although it is clear centres generally prepare candidates well for the 'how far' requirement of the question, this is an aspect centres would benefit from developing further so all candidates have greater opportunity to attain the higher level marks for this fifteen mark question.

Areas for centres to develop further in preparation of candidates for this question would be to:

- make sure that candidates are aware of what is meant by genre conventions
- provide opportunities for candidates to develop knowledge and understanding of what print media and magazine genre conventions are and practise identifying them on *The Big Issue* front covers
- look at other more conventional magazine covers with direct comparison to *The Big Issue* front covers to develop skills in identifying similarities and differences across magazine products
- develop use of terminology of magazine codes and conventions so candidates are confident in using appropriate and accurate media language terminology when analysing magazine covers
- practise making judgements and reaching conclusions so candidates can access the higher level marks.

Centres could also consider developing practise of exam techniques in planning and structuring fifteen mark question responses. Particular focus should be on:

- identifying the framework of the question as either representation or media language
- the subject content within each framework
- how to select appropriate examples and how to use these to structure a coherent response
- how to analyse examples with clear lines of reasoning that lead to confident judgements and conclusions in response to the question so responses address the 'how far' element.

Assessment for learning



Centres could prepare candidates by providing opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of what the genre conventions of print media and magazines are, with practice identifying these conventions on *The Big Issue* front covers.

OCR support



Refer to the OCR [Delivery guide](#) for Media Language and Representation for suggestions on how to develop candidates' knowledge, understanding and skill in identifying genre conventions used in print magazines and *The Big Issue*.

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