OCR

Oxford Cambridge and RSA

AS LEVEL

Examiners' report

MEDIA STUDIES

H009

For first teaching in 2017

H009/01 Summer 2024 series

Contents

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 answers 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.

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Paper 1 series overview

This paper is designed to test candidates' knowledge and understanding of the media as well as their ability to explore a range of media products, both seen and unseen. To succeed in this paper, candidates must apply their broader knowledge of the media and discuss a range of media forms, analysing or referencing selected products. Each question offers slightly different challenges, and each requires a slightly different approach to meeting the Assessment Objectives.

This was the first paper since the change in set products, with questions on the new advertising products for *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* and the new video game *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*. Candidates could also have answered questions on two new television set products, although no responses were submitted demonstrating this. Responses covered almost the entire range of marks for each question, with many fitting the criteria for Level 2 and Level 3.

In general, the paper was accessible to all candidates with a spectrum of responses demonstrating a range of different approaches to sitting the exam. It was clear that candidates from most centres had been well prepared on the specific criteria of each question. Answers from some candidates demonstrated a disparity of responses across the paper which led to some uneven overall outcomes. This was particularly clear in relation to responses for Question 4 (where some candidates did not really address the AO1 requirements), for Question 5 (where some candidates provided few examples from the unseen products) and Question 6 (where most candidates provided general rather than detailed examples). As has been the case in previous years, some candidates appeared to have run out of time or rushed through Questions 4 to 6. Some candidates started with Question 4, although this did not seem to have any significant benefit.

Candidates who performed successfully tended to balance the broader focus of the questions with specific examples from the media products indicated, using those examples to demonstrate either knowledge and understanding or their ability to analyse, depending on the nature of the question. Crucially, such candidates also tended to apply theories where appropriate (rather than simply stating the name of the theorist and/ or offering a brief out-of-context precis of the theory). They also balanced a concise approach to answering the 5-10 mark questions with the more in-depth analysis required for Questions 4 and 5 (which contribute 50% of the paper's overall marks).

Less successful responses tended to demonstrate a general understanding of the question (for example, production and distribution of video games) without giving clear examples (such as discussing the Nintendo store or online gaming platforms in general rather than considering specifics relating to the production, distribution and circulation of *Animal Crossing; New Horizons*). Less successful responses to AO2 questions tended to present general analysis without exemplification, rather than using specific examples to support arguments. This was particularly the case with the unseen social media posts used for Question 5, with many candidates simply analysing the content rather than focusing on the influence of media technologies.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
- used the bullet points included in some questions to structure responses - referred back to the question - used the number of available marks as a guide to response lengths - demonstrated understanding of the differences between questions focused on AO1 ('explain') and AO2 ('analyse') - applied theory where appropriate, using this to support and develop arguments and responses - supported responses through use of examples which were relevant to the question.	- missed critical Assessment Objectives (such as the need to provide evidence of judgement in Question 4 or the expectation that theory be applied in Questions 5 and 6) - focused too much on analysis in Question 4 rather than understanding that responses also require a broader knowledge of the media form - did not answer the specific question being asked (for example, describing how video games are produced and distributed without referring to Animal Crossing: New Horizons or analysing the social media posts from the Mirror and The Guardian without considering the influence of media technologies) - did not mention some specific products within their responses (for example, responses to Question 2 which only discussed the poster and not the trailer for Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings). - did not attempt some of the questions, or only wrote short responses to questions with higher mark tariffs.

Section A overview

This section on The Media Theoretical Framework was addressed well by many candidates. Most referred to the specific media products highlighted in the questions and applied the theoretical framework to support their responses. There was a confident use of appropriate terminology by some candidates. In general, it seemed that candidates had studied the required forms and products in reasonable depth although as with last year analysis was sometimes stronger than explanation, which was often just presented as a list of examples with little attempt to contextualise or discuss – knowledge without understanding. This was particularly true for Question 3 where many candidates listed different ways in which video games are produced, distributed and/or circulated, rather than considering the specifics of *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*.

Question 1

1   Explain how cultural contexts can influence music videos.
        Use *Billie Jean* by Michael Jackson to support your answer.   **[5]**

The most successful responses balanced an understanding of cultural contexts with knowledge of music videos and included specific references to the *Billie Jean* music video. They demonstrated a logical link between relevant cultural contexts of the 1980s (such as the influences of institutional racism on the media or the ubiquity of the paparazzi) and choices made by creators of music videos, specifically *Billie Jean* (e.g. portrayal of Jackson as a countertype, the negative representation of the 'detective' character). In general, these ideas were often linked to the ways that artists use music videos as a primary form of representing themselves in a positive way – some of the best responses explored how *Billie Jean* was foundational in terms of developing the identity of Black artists in the early 1980s. Although not a requirement of the question, some candidates were able to apply Hall's ideas relating to reception theory; some also applied Gilroy which, given that this theory is not covered by the AS specification, suggested some wider-ranging approaches to delivering the qualification.

Where candidates did not address the influence of cultural contexts on music video, responses were less successful. Such responses tended to describe the content of the video without really reflecting on the cultural contexts which had led to their inclusion. For example, several candidates gave detailed descriptions of certain elements of the video (the detective's costume, the pavement lighting up) without relating these to any cultural contexts (e.g. reference to *film noir*, 1970s disco). It is important that candidates demonstrate understanding as well as knowledge, which means spelling out what might seem obvious. Some candidates simply described Jackson's cultural significance without really referring to *Billie Jean*. Several candidates mentioned examples from *Billie Jean* without clarifying the point they were making; centres should make sure that candidates are coached on how to explicitly link their knowledge of media to relevant examples from specific products so that they might demonstrate understanding. Some candidates wrote excellent responses which only focused on one example; to demonstrate the comprehensive knowledge required for a Level 3 mark, at least two relevant examples should be explored in detail.

Many candidates seemed to believe that the Black Lives Matter movement started in the early 1980s (it was founded in 2013).

Exemplar 1

Q1		Michael Jackson's 1982 music video of Billie Jean was
		a significant media product that affected society then and
		still effect society today. However, there were also cultural
		contexts that influenced the production of this music video,
		which are exemplified in the video visually. Michael
		Jackson was evidently a black musician, known today as
		'The King of Pop'; during the 80s his race would have
		been controversial in the music video industry. Yet,
		Jackson targets this racist industry by being the first
		black musician to have made a music video on MTV.
		He also targets these negative views on black individuals
		by presenting himself with star-like qualities with his
		suited costume and the voyeuristic state where in which
		Jackson was being followed like celebrities would usually.
		Overall, Jackson was a cultural role model for younger
		audiences during the 80s. This problem of race influenced
		his music videos as well as others amongst this time.

Exemplar 1 is the first paragraph of a Level 3 response which covered all the requirements of Question 1. There is a very clear link made here between a cultural context – the representation of Black musicians on MTV. Points are directly related to the music video, such as Jackson's star-like qualities, his costume and the reference to the paparazzi. The second paragraph goes on to discuss a different aspect of the video, with equally detailed exemplification.

Question 2

2 Analyse how the posters **and** teaser trailer for *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* construct representations of individuals and social groups. **[10]**

Some successful responses were seen for this question, with many candidates achieving marks in Levels 2 and 3. Links were made between the media language used in the marketing materials for *Shang-Chi* and a range of representations. Some particularly effective ideas of how stereotypes and countertypes worked were seen. More successful responses identified a range of different representations (for example age, ethnicity, gender, family) across the marketing materials, making links between the print and moving image products with a focus on the potential impact for the potential audience. Some candidates referred to Disney's attempts to appeal to the Chinese audience which, although not directly relevant to the question, supported some effective analysis as long as it was clearly tied into the representations of ethnicity or Asian culture.

Less successful responses tended not to focus on the question asked. Such answers often concentrated on image analysis without considering the representations (although consideration of media language is clearly important, the focus should be on the representations rather than a general semiotic discussion); several candidates solely focused on elements such as the colour schemes or the non-verbal codes rather than exploring how they mediated representations. As has often been the case with this question, some candidates simply presented an overview of everything they knew about the product with little reference to the specific marketing products or evidence of analysis. Some less successful responses only referred to either the posters or the trailer rather than both, as was required by the question. As noted, some candidates were able to apply their knowledge of Disney's reasons for making *Shang-Chi*, but when this was done without links to the representations in the marketing materials, such points were not relevant. A few candidates had a very vague knowledge of the marketing materials which led to superficial responses which only met the marking criteria to a minimal level. Some candidates gave responses which would have been successful had the question asked about the film industry, which suggested a slight lack of understanding about how the film marketing materials should be used to explore the theoretical framework (as well as a misconception of what AO2 is testing).

When considering representations, centres should advise candidates to consider how elements might be regarded as stereotypical or countertypical. They might also be encouraged to consider elements such as ideologies, hegemony and social constructionism, where relevant. However, they should make sure their points link to the question, rather than just analysing the representations out of context and they should always base their responses on precise examples from the relevant source.

Exemplar 2

2		Shang - Chi's promotional posters masterfully construct representations of individuals and social groups within by utilising the mise-en-scene. One of the promotional posters features features Asian-American A actor Awkwafina, with a hardened expression. This expression connotes a sense of seriousness, maki of rather than that of a stereotypical weak women. Moreover, she is wearing traditional Asian clothing, which demonstrates how Disney and Marvel are trying to be diverse and represent underrepresented minorities. This clothing As Shang-Chi is the first Asian lead movie. using Van Zoonen's feminism theory, also combats the stereotypes of women being unable to fight, as her overall appearance indicates that of a warrior, much like the main character – Shang-Chi.

Exemplar 2 is the first paragraph of a Level 2 response which covered most of the requirements of Question 2. This is a fairly detailed analysis of the Awkwafina-focused poster which covers two aspects of representation (gender and ethnicity) in a reasonable level of depth. There is some attempt to apply Van Zoonen's feminist theory (not required, but helpful) and a fair level of detail. The response went on to consider the trailer in equivalent depth, again covering gender and ethnicity, but if one of the other posters been covered, or they had looked at a different aspect of representation, this would have been a safe Level 3 response.

Question 3

3   Explain how the production, distribution and circulation of video games have been influenced by recent technological change. Use *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* to support your answer.   **[10]**

Question 3 was one of the less well-answered questions. Although many candidates had a good knowledge of the circumstances and impact of *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* (*AC:NH*) being released during the Covid-19 pandemic, few responses were seen which demonstrated confident understanding of the three areas required (production, distribution and circulation). Some candidates were able to refer to one or two of these criteria (for example, how Nintendo had held back release of the game until the technology was available to make it more effective, its online functionality, its role as a 'system seller', the effect of distribution via Nintendo's online market, the impact of social media as a means of circulating content or developing online communities), but it was rare to find a candidate who had considered all three. Examples were often superficial and lacked depth. Candidates writing at a higher level were able to articulate how specific features of *AC:NH* illustrated exactly how the game had been produced (for example, inclusion of particular interactive features such as 'island visits'), distributed (the exclusive release on Nintendo's Switch console and the implications of this for the game's marketing) and circulated (forums on social media platforms aimed at fans of the game, references to specific streamers who had promoted the game - Dan TDM was often mentioned) and in some cases demonstrated an appreciation of how these reflected Nintendo's somewhat unique position in the gaming industry.

Less successful responses did not refer to *AC:NH* directly, while a significant number seemed to assume that the examiner would accept general points without substantiation or exemplification. Some candidates simply described features of *AC:NH* without relating these to the specifics of the question; this demonstrates knowledge but not understanding. Some candidates demonstrated an understanding of relevant elements the gaming industry, such as online distribution, but did not link this to the specific knowledge of *AC:NH* required by the question. Some responses just described how Nintendo release their games without mentioning *AC:NH* at all and a few candidates spent the bulk of their responses presenting a potted history of Nintendo, the *Animal Crossing* franchise or even the entire video games industry without addressing the question. There was a tendency for candidates to refer to audience theorists such as Shirky or Jenkins without applying or explaining why a particular theory was relevant (this happened in quite a few questions but was notable here). It is important that candidates demonstrate that they have a working knowledge of *AC:NH*; more successful responses were able to reference specific examples to illustrate their knowledge and show understanding.

Misconception

? Many candidates did not seem to fully understand the difference between questions testing AO1 and AO2.

Questions testing AO1 (such as Questions 1 and 3 in Section A) usually use the command word 'Explain'. Such questions require candidates to demonstrate both knowledge and understanding of specified media forms with reference to specific products. Information (e.g. that music videos are influenced by the media contemporary to them or that video games are distributed using online stores) demonstrates knowledge, but to show understanding candidates must be able to explain how these are evidenced in the products cited in the question (for example, the intrusions of paparazzi into the lives of celebrities and the rise of tabloid culture in the US is a clear influence on *Billie Jean* while the exclusivity of Nintendo's platform is a clear influence on the distribution of *AC: NH*).

Questions testing AO2 (such as Question 2) usually use the command word 'Analyse'. Such questions require candidates to demonstrate their ability to apply their knowledge and understanding of media concepts to specific named products. Although reference to broader knowledge might help to support an analytical point, it is essential that all discussion in an AO2 question is founded on the product specified in the question. For example, the exploration of the *Shang-Chi* marketing products should have clearly focused on the content of the materials rather than being a general overview of Disney's approach to global production, or *Shang-Chi* as an example of an MCU movie. In relation to *Shang-Chi* it is essential that centres make sure candidates are aware of the two forms it exemplifies (advertising and marketing as well as the film industry).

Section B overview

This section on Long Form Television Drama (LFTVD) was often addressed successfully by candidates, with many given marks in Level 2 and Level 3. Candidates managed to balance both Assessment Objectives, often demonstrating a good level of knowledge of the theoretical framework which allowed them to analyse the chosen episode in some depth. The main issue was a lack of understanding of intertextuality, with some candidates confusing this for narrative foreshadowing or multiple narrative strands. Many candidates were able to confidently apply Neale's genre theory, and some were even successful in referencing Todorov and Baudrillard, despite the latter not being an AS theorist.

Centres should be aware that if a more contemporary LFTVD product is preferred, candidates can now study *Killing Eve* (2018), episode 1, 'Nice Face' and *Atypical* (2017), episode 1, 'Antarctica'. Further information can be found on the OCR [website](#). Support materials for the new set products are available on Teach Cambridge.

Question 4*

4* 'Long form television dramas rely on intertextuality to appeal to audiences.'

Discuss how far you agree with this statement in relation to the set episode of the long form television drama you have studied.

In your answer you must:
- explain how long form television dramas use intertextuality to appeal to audiences
- analyse how intertextuality has influenced the key codes and conventions in the set episode you have studied
- refer to relevant academic ideas and arguments in your analysis
- make judgements and reach conclusions about how far you agree with the statement.

[20]

This question requires candidates to draw on their knowledge and understanding from the full course of study to analyse the set episode of their chosen LFTVD (all candidates who entered the exam had studied *Stranger Things*). The most successful responses were able to apply a range of theories and ideas to support their argument. Successful responses to this question addressed both Assessment Objectives with excellent knowledge and understanding in relation to the focus of the question being used to support a detailed, well-exemplified analysis of the first episode of *Stranger Things* (*ST*). The more successful responses demonstrated knowledge and understanding of LFTVD, with a clear appreciation of the codes and conventions of TV dramas. They also demonstrated an excellent knowledge and understanding of how intertextual elements such as references to other films functioned in relation to audience appeal, by considering how specific intertextual elements in *ST* (such as the references to *ET* or *The Goonies*) had been chosen for purposes of both nostalgia and homage. Such responses also demonstrated detailed analysis of *ST* with precise references to how intertextuality was used within the episode, supported by relevant theory (Neale was often mentioned in successful responses, but many also referred to Uses and Gratifications theory and Hall's reception theory, which was sometimes applied to great effect). Where theory was used well, it was embedded as a fundamental aspect of the response's overall structure and line of reasoning. Personal judgement clearly informed the argument in a sensible and well-articulated manner and was again a consistent element. Candidates made logical links between intertextuality and audience appeal (the personal identity component of Uses and Gratifications as well as Jenkins' ideas about fandom were sometimes applied). They used accurate terminology throughout and there was a clear understanding of the broader theoretical framework.

Less successful responses tended to address one but not both AOs. Mostly, this was to the detriment of the discussion of the appeal of intertextuality to audiences. Such candidates were often able to analyse episodes with some reference to intertextuality (for example, the bike sequence relating to *ET*) but without really touching on the key point of audience appeal (sometimes the audience was only mentioned in passing) or whether such intertextual references were an essential factor in the episode's effectiveness. In some responses, candidates confused the idea of intertextuality (the relationships between media products) with intratextuality (comparing elements within the same text). As has been the case in previous series, some candidates wrote exceptionally detailed analyses of *ST* which did not really fit the question and appeared to be pre-scripted essays. Such responses tended to focus on theories which were not strictly relevant to intertextuality (for example, theories of representation such as those proposed by Hall or bell hooks – these could potentially have been used if they were discussed in relation to intertextuality but were sometimes used as general frameworks for analysis). Centres might advise candidates that although it is necessary to refer to theorists in this question, the choice of theorist must be relevant to the area of the theoretical framework being tested, or the relevance must be made clear to the examiner. Crucially, the analysis must be framed to the question. Some candidates described the episode in detail without including any analysis or judgement, or simply listed examples of intertextuality without any analysis or judgement. Many candidates either did not mention academic ideas at all, or if they did they simply named the theory without any context or application. To achieve a safe Level 3 mark, candidates must make sure that all bullet points are consistently covered.

Terminology

It appeared that although some candidates had a very broad knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework, others had a more limited awareness of what some key media terminology meant. Centres are advised that questions in the AS Media Studies exam will always draw on the terminology used in the specification, particularly that featured in the table of subject content on pages 21-23. As noted in the specification, 'learners will develop knowledge and understanding of the following subject content in relation to the relevant set media products'. For Question 4, the question was specifically focused on the media language subject content covered by the bullet which reads 'the processes through which meanings are established through intertextuality'. Similarly, Question 3 assumed that candidates would have knowledge and understanding of the differences between 'production, distribution and circulation', since these are referenced several times in the section on Media Industries. Centres are advised to make sure that candidates have a working knowledge of all the terminology used in the specification.

Section C overview

The section on News and Online Media allowed candidates to show a very broad knowledge of the news industry, although there was a tendency towards writing responses which lacked precision or demonstrated a misunderstanding of the question. A significant number of the responses to Question 5 did not address the media technologies element of the question, being generic analyses which occasionally touched on the fact that the sources were taken from social media. As has been the case for several series now, some responses to Question 6 used only very general examples which could refer to any newspaper rather than (as was required) specific references to the *Mirror*. This suggests that students lack confidence in the key requirements of these questions.

Many of the responses to Question 5 lacked balance in relation to the analysis of the sources (often to the detriment of the *Mirror*). Very few responses to Question 6 referred to more than one or two examples of how social contexts influenced marketing of newspapers (and a surprising number did not mention marketing at all, being more about the target audience – although the two are linked, they are not quite the same).

Question 5*

5* Study **Sources A** and **B** in the Resource Booklet.

To what extent have media technologies influenced the ways meaning is constructed in **Source A** and **Source B**?

In your answer you must:
- analyse and compare the ways in which the meanings in **Source A** and **Source B** have been influenced by media technologies
- use relevant contexts and academic ideas and arguments in your analysis
- draw judgements and conclusions in relation to the question.

[15]

Most candidates were able to present a reasonable analysis of the two sources, mainly contrasting the positive images within the *Mirror* with the more nuanced *Guardian* post. More successful responses were able to appreciate the opportunities posting on social media offered the two newspapers. Some element of comparison was required and candidates who were able to do this tended to produce responses of some depth and insight. The most successful responses were able to contrast the *Mirror*'s slightly more socially conformist approach, and particularly the sense of realism suggested by the two video clips, with the reportage-like shot chosen by *The Guardian*. Many candidates were able to identify how *The Guardian* had seemingly used social media to construct a story which would incite the kinds of response seen in the comments. The most effective responses were able to link this into a broader consideration of how newspapers have come to rely on their social media feeds. Hall's reception theory was often used to try and explain what meanings the newspapers hoped to construct for their audience, as were Shirky's ideas about 'end of audience' (often related to *The Guardian*'s comments) and even Jenkins' ideas about fandom (in relation to both the family featured in the *Mirror* and the broader appeal of the Royal Family suggested by Source A).

Less successful responses tended to either describe the two social media posts (with no comparison or analysis) or presented a straightforward analysis (such as *Mirror*'s use of colour or the composition of *The Guardian*'s image) without really considering how media technologies were involved. Many candidates presented very detailed analyses of the two sources without discussing the influence of media technologies (in some cases, not even mentioning the social media element), while other candidates listed social media features such as hashtags, links or likes without analysing how or why the two newspapers might have included them (either as part of a socio-political agenda in the case of *The Guardian* or a means of marketing/ appealing to a patriotic active audience in in the *Mirror*).

Although not as prevalent as previously, there were still candidates who did not mention theory, or simply used a theorist's name without actually applying the theory. Centres are reminded that use of theory to support responses is essential for the 15-mark question in Section C, otherwise responses were capped at 10 marks (some potential 15-mark responses were seen which fell into this category). It was again noticed that many responses were quite short, sometimes a lot shorter than responses for Question 6; bearing in mind the question is worth close to 25% of the marks on the paper, a response of reasonable length might be expected. As noted above, some responses were unbalanced and candidates wrote a great deal about one source and very little about the other. Some responses wrote in detail about why newspapers depend on social media without mentioning the sources. Although this was interesting, it did not address the question.

Several candidates appeared to believe that the *Mirror* was right wing (and quite a few seemed to believe that *The Guardian* was also right wing). Although it is understandable that candidates might not have come across *The Guardian* before, the *Mirror* is a set product and not identifying its political affiliation might be a cause for concern.

Some candidates presented a history of the *Mirror* (which was not required for an analysis question) or went into lengthy asides about the influence of social media and the online world on newspapers in general without relating this to the sources. Centres should advise candidates preparing for Question 5 (which is always focused on AO2) that both sources should be referred to throughout the response.

Exemplar 3

However, Source B, entirely juxtaposes this with a negative political story from the Guardian (broadsheet). The Guardian shares a post discussing an anti-monarchy group and the the police's arrest of them. This is an upsetting and post that invites a political discussion in the comments. The comments are entirely focused on the arrest and are not whipped or discussing the actual coronation itself. Gerbner theorised that when media products puts out negative content it affects the audience and makes them think negatively as well, this is described as 'mean world syndrome'. With technological advancements allowing for news to become a discussion, audiences are riddled with the negative events in the news instead of celebrating / acknowledging the positive event (the coronation).

Exemplar 3 shows the second paragraph of a Level 2 response which covered most of the requirements of Question 5. This demonstrates how the candidate tries to apply theory in an appropriate manner to the question, presenting a reasonable analysis of *The Guardian*'s choices in relation to the social media post and relating this to an understanding of Gerbner's ideas. This paragraph is preceded by a slightly less insightful analysis of the *Mirror* post but did go on to compare both posts. Had the analysis of the *Mirror* been as detailed, this would have been a safe Level 3 response.

Question 6

6   Explain how social contexts can influence how newspapers are marketed.
Use the *Daily Mirror* to support your answer.

In your answer you must:
- consider relevant social contexts that can influence the marketing of newspapers
- use your knowledge and understanding of relevant academic ideas and arguments
- use the *Daily Mirror* as an example of how newspapers are marketed.

[10]

This question was often answered in an adequate manner, but very few responses met the criteria to be placed higher than Level 2. This was mainly due to candidates providing very general examples or simply not writing enough to be given marks in Level 3. The best responses demonstrated an understanding of how the *Mirror* is marketed in different ways and were able to give specific examples (for example, tie-ins with particular brands – Alton Towers was mentioned most often). Candidates were also able to explore the implications of the *Mirror*'s left-wing stance with its audience, discussing how in some cases this was used as a marketing method, for example the use of stories attacking the Conservative party or supporting the Labour party. It was accepted that although political contexts are considered separately in the specification, for the purposes of this response, politics was an acceptable social context.

Less successful candidates either did not mention any contextual factors or did not consider how the *Mirror* was marketed. Candidates usually referenced social contexts, but sometimes did not explain them. Furthermore, as noted in relation to Question 5 above, some candidates were assured in their belief that the *Mirror* supported the Conservative party and, in some cases, responses were framed using this idea, to the detriment of the candidate's argument. Considering that the newspaper is a set product for this qualification, this would seem to be a fundamental misunderstanding.

There was a tendency to be prejudicial about the readership of the *Mirror*, with several candidates suggesting that C2DE audiences were less intelligent and that this influenced the stories and strategies the *Mirror* used as part of its marketing. Factors such as the economic downturn or lower-paid jobs might be valid arguments for choices made by the *Mirror* in terms of its marketing, while a broader understanding of tabloid conventions in terms of soft news and celebrity gossip are relevant socio-cultural influences. However, it is unfair (and untrue) to assume that intellect and acumen are related to economic status (several responses made the claim that 'working class' people would not be interested in politics, a statement which can be proven untrue by looking at almost any edition of the *Mirror*). Given that this question was testing knowledge and understanding, responses which made this claim were difficult to place higher than Level 2 (as were responses which misrepresented the *Mirror*'s political affiliation) and it is suggested that centres make sure that candidates are clearer about the nature of the *Mirror*'s target demographic.

It was notable that few candidates referred to relevant theory in the question, despite this being a requirement of the second bullet. Not many candidates referred to specific examples from the *Mirror* (as noted some mentioned an Alton Towers voucher giveaway while others used specific stories to demonstrate the social contexts they saw as marketing influences), but often points made were based on generalisations which could have referred to any tabloid.

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