

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

MEDIA STUDIES

**OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in
Media Studies**

H409

For first teaching in 2017

H409/01 Summer 2025 series

Contents

Introduction	3
Paper 1 series overview	4
Section A overview	5
Question 1	5
Question 2*	10
Question 3	16
Question 4	18
Section B overview	20
Question 5	20
Question 6	22

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 [Teach Cambridge](#).

Would you prefer a Word version?

Did you know that you can save this PDF as a Word file using Acrobat Professional?

Simply click on **File > Export to** and select **Microsoft Word**

(If you have opened this PDF in your browser you will need to save it first. Simply right click anywhere on the page and select **Save as . . .** to save the PDF. Then open the PDF in Acrobat Professional.)

If you do not have access to Acrobat Professional there are a number of **free** applications available that will also convert PDF to Word (search for PDF to Word converter).

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 different questions should best be approached, understanding of academic ideas and how to maximise marks by making good use of available time was evident. 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. On occasion, candidates ran out of time or rushed through Questions 5 and 6. This paper saw more candidates attempting to answer all questions with less no responses than in previous series.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• 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 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 relevant judgements and conclusions in their answers • could confidently use subject-specific terminology relevant to the framework, media form and products studied • were confident in their application of, and ability to critically evaluate, the key ideas and arguments of theorists.	• did not manage the timings for all questions effectively or did not respond to at least one question • didn't engage with or address the question • wrote brief, undeveloped responses • made limited reference to 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, and judgement • wrote responses that were undeveloped and basic in the lines of reasoning or did not offer judgements or conclusions • did not use appropriate subject-specific terminology or were inaccurate in their use of terms • 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 to source material and the case study products to support their responses and were able to use academic ideas and theories where required. Candidates showed varied levels of success in demonstration of knowledge and understanding of the theoretical frameworks of Media Language, Representation and Industries, contexts, making judgements and reaching conclusions and in the application and evaluation of academic ideas.

Question 1

- 1 Analyse the media language used in **Source A** and **Source B** in relation to political contexts. Use Barthes' theory of semiotics to support your answer.

[10]

Most candidates were able to engage with the question and the nature of the two sources as examples of social media posts. Many candidates could triangulate their understanding of Barthes with their analysis of the media language conventions used in the two unseen sources in relation to political contexts. Candidates could support their responses with accurate references to Sources A and B and were able to make connections between the different uses of media language conventions in both sources and how they functioned as signs to connote meaning relevant to each source. Candidates used appropriate subject-specialist terms in relation to media language in their analysis. They could identify relevant details from both sources, such as the headings, images, register and lexis, use of emojis, a poll and the comments, to explore how meaning was constructed in relation to political contexts to varying degrees of success. Most candidates were able to use appropriate terminology associated with Barthes' theory of semiotics with reference to the use of signs, signifiers, the signified, denotation and connotation.

Examiners noted that a good number of candidates achieved Level 3 marks for this question in this series. 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 effective 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 answers. The strongest responses often explored alternative interpretations of their selected textual evidence. These candidates were successful in identifying the polysemic meaning constructed in the *Daily Telegraph* source and were able to articulate that the scruffy-looking visual code of the image can be interpreted in several ways; either to humanise Johnson or to appeal to readers in a populist manner. Similarly, successful responses could identify that the selected image of Sunak anchored with the heading worked as signs in *The Guardian* post to subtly communicate a bias against Johnson while not appearing to contradict the outlet's 'balanced' journalism.

In higher band responses there was particularly effective application of Barthes in relation to his ideas of myth. While candidates are not required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theory beyond the ideas identified in Appendix 5e of the [specification](#), there were some excellent responses that analysed the two sources with reference to Barthes' five codes. These gave triangulated responses using detailed examples from the sources together with political knowledge and use of the theory in relation to how Barthes' codes were evidenced through different features of the media language conventions to support their points.

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. Less successful responses also missed out Barthes entirely, only focusing on media language. The least successful responses tended to describe rather than analyse the sources. Less successful responses were also less clear of, or didn't know, the political leanings of the two news brands.

Centres had prepared candidates well for this question. Candidates were generally successful in triangulating their responses to demonstrate they understood how to analyse the sources in relation to media language, political contexts and could make generally appropriate reference to Barthes' theories of semiotics. Candidates were able to select and identify media language conventions from the sources and it was evident that centres had prepared candidates well for analysing unseen sources. 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 Barthes' theory, there were also inaccuracies, with some candidates confusing Barthes' theory of semiotics with Hall's reception theory.

Areas for centres to develop would be to provide opportunities for candidates to acquire confidence in their knowledge and understanding of each of the academic ideas required for this specification. A focus on exam technique, with particular emphasis on timings, continued practice in analysis of unseen sources and developing skill in how to triangulate the three stems of the question, theory, analysis, and contexts, in timed writing would be advantageous and support candidates in attaining high-level marks in this question.

Exemplar 1

Source A is an online tweet from the left-wing broadsheet newspaper the Guardian and concerns the resignation of former Prime Minister Boris Johnson as an MP. ~~The~~ Roland Barthes theory of Semiotics concerns the study of signs, he says there are two parts to a sign, the signifier (the literal denotative object) and the signified (what it is representing / conveying). The Guardian chooses to use a thumbnail of then-current Prime Minister Rishi Sunak as the thumbnail for the article. Whilst Sunak is part of what the hyperlinked article is about, he is acting as a signifier in this situation with the clear signified implication being that the Guardian wishes to move on from Boris Johnson, a politically controversial and corrupt figure. However, the choice of image is rather rather inglorious for Sunak, clearly taken mid-speech which acts as an important signifier that is showing him as somewhat of a joke and a signified meaning that ~~politically~~, politically, the country has ready to move on. This idea also extends to the engagement with the post. One user has included a 'gig' of a satirical moment of someone 'shooting' someone else's kneecaps ~~the the~~. Whilst the gig is a signifier, the signified meaning has darker connotations and seeks to expose their own political opinions. The headline too that the Guardian represents for their article ends by claiming 'Sources

Say', Barthes would say this is a signifier for the fact that The Guardian and the Country doubt the authenticity of his words.

Source B, is a Tweet from the right-wing broadsheet The Telegraph. It presents an unpalatable (and atypical for a right-wing paper) opinion towards Boris Johnson through its use of an unflattering signifier image of him in the thumbnail. This sign has been picked up by a user in the comments whose own signifier picture editor has made the view of the Telegraph clear here...'. Its signifying their own opposing view of Johnson. The use of emojis in the tagline for the tweet is perhaps surprising but makes sense in the context of the online space, they ~~sign~~ act as signifiers for a less politically serious discussion and more as a fun online debate. A user also uses the sign of 'Nixon', this is a word synonymous with political corruption due to the Watergate scandal of 1972. There is a clear signifier comparison between the two figures. The asking for input by the Telegraph is clearly meant to invite discussion and debate.

Exemplar 1 is an excellent response to the question that achieved full marks.

- the candidate clearly understands Barthes' theory and can apply it confidently in relation to political contexts in both sources; their understanding of the political contexts of each brand and their readers is comprehensive
- there is a lot of detail in the response; it is accurate, precise, relevant
- the response demonstrates:
- **comprehensive, detailed and accurate application** of knowledge and understanding of how media language is used in relation to political contexts to analyse both sources A and B
- the **analysis** of both sources **demonstrates consistently logical connections and a good line of reasoning**
- **precise and relevant reference to Barthes' theory** of semiology is evident and is **used to support analysis** of the sources
- **references to both sources** are **detailed and accurate**

The response comprehensively triangulates the three stems of the question.

Assessment for learning



Practice exam technique with particular focus on developing skills in triangulating content in every paragraph to support skills in analysing the sources, supporting analysis with theory and developing lines of reasoning in relation to political contexts.

Assessment for learning



Provide opportunities to practise the analysis of different styles of unseen sources so that candidates are familiar with and confident to analyse print, online and social and participatory media sources from the two case study products, as set out in the [specification](#) on pages 9,14,15.

Misconception



While many candidates were clear on Barthes' theory of semiotics, less successful candidates confused Barthes' theory with Hall's reception theory.

OCR support



Use the OCR Academic ideas and arguments [factsheet](#) on [Teach Cambridge](#).

Question 2*

2* **Source A** and **Source B** cover the same news event from two different online news sources, one from a left-wing broadsheet newspaper and one from a right-wing broadsheet newspaper.

How far do the representations in the sources convey values, attitudes and beliefs?

In your answer you must:

- explain how representations in news sources convey values, attitudes and beliefs
- analyse the representations in the sources
- make judgements and reach conclusions about how far the representations in the sources convey values, attitudes and beliefs.

[15]

Responses presented information that was relevant, well-structured and supported by some evidence. There was accurate knowledge and understanding of how the representations used in news sources convey values, attitudes and beliefs (AO1). The use of subject-specific terminology relevant to the Representation framework, such as stereotypes, mediation, construction, under and over-representation was mostly accurate when used (AO1).

There was relevant, generally successful application of knowledge and understanding of representation to analyse sources A and B. Most candidates could identify the viewpoints of the two sources. Candidates could discuss why specific elements of the sources, such as the images used, had been selected and how the representations constructed by the images conveyed specific values and beliefs. Many candidates were also able to link to the political stance of the news brands and the audience comments in their answer. Candidates were able to make judgements and conclusions about how far the representations in the sources conveyed viewpoints and ideologies (AO2).

Higher achieving candidates considered the 'How far' element of the question well and avoided generalised discussion. These candidates were able to debate different reasons for the varying representations of the two politicians as individuals and connect these to wider representations of social groups, events and issues, connecting and linking them to the values of the two newspapers. These responses were secure in their discussion of the two sources and offered interesting lines of reasoning regarding the representations constructed with awareness that they could be considered to contradict their values and those of their readers. Higher level responses supported their explanations with comprehensive analysis of the audience responses to the representations through the comments sections.

While most candidates were able to identify and offer some explanation of the representations constructed in the two sources to varying extents, explanation of how the representations conveyed values, attitudes and beliefs was less successful. Less successful responses were typically more descriptive and often described the images or transcribed one or two comments directly from the sources. In some instances, candidates did not use terms at all, including omission of the word representation. Judgements and conclusions in less successful responses were often missing. Several candidates repeated their response to Question 1.

Candidates were generally well-prepared for this question. While there was some confusion between left and right wing, most candidates were able to identify that each news outlet, and their audiences, had different values, attitudes and beliefs. It was evident that most candidates had been prepared to identify specific examples from the sources for analysis and could explain the representations to varying extents. For some candidates, answers were too short and so didn't have capacity to attain the higher level marks.

Areas for development for centres to further support candidates in attaining high-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
- practice identifying political and ideological beliefs in a range of newspapers and selecting specific examples to practice lines of reasoning and developing judgements and conclusions for candidates to access higher level marks
- provide opportunities for lots of practice on unseen front pages of national daily news titles to develop familiarity with and a good grasp of the UK paper market. This should include practice of a range of unseen sources including print, online and social and participatory examples as set out in the [specification](#) on pages 9,14 and 15. For sources that are examples of social and participatory media, prepare candidates to analyse all source material including social media comments
- provide opportunities for candidates to develop confidence in their knowledge and understanding of the Representation framework, especially including appropriate use of key terminology for this framework to support candidates' access to higher-level marks for the AO1 element of this question.

Exemplar 2

Online news is more popular than ever and more and more audiences access their news via social media.

Broadsheet newspapers such as The Guardian and the Telegraph using social media allows quality journalism

to share their political beliefs whilst the platform allows audiences to share their values attitudes and beliefs.

The two newspapers take extremely differing sides on the story. The Guardian choose to just express the facts linking to their mission statement of "comment is free, but facts are sacred". The Guardian write with a neutral stance linking to their belief in quality journalism and just say that "Rishi Sunak would block Boris Johnson comeback" and they end their sentence with "Sources say" proving their factual attitude to journalism. This links to the Guardian's liberal values of wanting to make the world a better place through factual reporting. In significant contrast The Telegraph show their right wing leaning with the photograph showing Boris with his thumb up suggesting they want him back. This conveys their attitudes and they give the audience their opportunity to have their say through a poll and this suggests through this representation that they believe audiences deserve a say, linking to right wing ideology of free speech that Donald Trump advocates for.

The left-wing broadsheet newspaper, The Guardian represents important political figures with respect and do not ~~even~~ ^{give a} comment as they remain neutral in their reporting. The Guardian present a respectful photograph of Rishi Sunak

giving a speech. The presence of this photo linking to Hall's theory makes him look like an important figure who is intellectual knowledgeable and deserves to be listened to. This links to the Guardian's belief of that "the voice of an opponent, no less than that of a friend, deserves to be listened to. As a left wing newspaper the Guardian are oppositional to Rishi Sunak, a conservative politician but they give him respect linking to their liberal values which they believe in healthy debate. Furthermore, the Guardian remains neutral and linking to Shirk's and of audience theory allow the mass of people (audience) to be active and give their opinion without giving away theirs. The audience's active participation suggests left wing attitudes as everyone says Boris Johnson is corrupt but the Guardian allow this while remaining neutral themselves.

Telegraph

The ~~Telegraph~~ use representations which show their right wing values attitudes and beliefs obviously. The Telegraph present a question and use the image representation to answer it themselves as there ~~is~~ is an image of Boris Johnson putting his thumb up directly after the question. This image signified their support for the right wing beliefs. This is even though The Telegraph is a quality broadsheet paper this makes them a less trustworthy news source as they are supporting a political leader who had to stand down after lying and being involved in scandalous behaviour. The Telegraph get significantly more audience interaction

as they ask the audience to give their views and they get comments which convey the beliefs ~~that~~ of "Bring Back Boris". This participation clearly shows their right wing readership. The Telegraph gained 666 more comments to their post than the Guardian suggesting newspaper opinions gain more attention.

This is a confident response that sits firmly in the upper end of the Level 3 band.

AO1

- the response demonstrates clear, comprehensive knowledge and understanding of how representations convey values, attitudes and beliefs
- there is comprehensive use of subject-specific terminology associated with the representation framework

AO2

- there is **comprehensive, detailed and accurate application** of knowledge and understanding of representations **to analyse the representation** of the two politicians and the comments about them in both sources
- the **analysis of both sources is convincing and demonstrates perceptive, logical connections and good lines of reasoning**
- there are some **accomplished judgements and conclusions** regarding how far the candidate thinks the representations in the sources convey values, attitudes and beliefs, which are convincing, perceptive and mostly developed.

To get to the very top of Level 3 for AO2 the response could develop the statements regarding how representations construct values, attitudes and beliefs further. Additionally, some reference to wider representations in relation to social groups or issues would have benefited the response. But, overall, the response demonstrates:

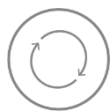
- a **well-developed and detailed line of reasoning**
- it is **coherent and logically structured**
- the **information** presented is **entirely relevant**
- the response is **substantiated**.

Misconception



A common misconception was that *The Guardian*, as a centre-left newspaper that is committed to 'balanced' ethical journalism, does not have any political bias and therefore does not represent values, attitudes and beliefs.

Assessment for learning



Provide opportunities for candidates to develop confidence in their knowledge and understanding of the Representation framework, especially including appropriate use of key terminology to support candidates' access to high-level marks for the AO1 element of this question.

Question 3

- 3 Explain how social contexts influence the production and circulation of print and/or online news. Refer to *The Guardian* and the *Daily Mail* to support your answer. [10]

Candidates could recall relevant facts about the production and circulation of news from the *Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*. Some candidates answered the question by considering social contexts such as Covid. Others by considering the institutional contexts of *The Guardian* and the *Daily Mail*. Some candidates considered the changing social demographics of the audiences for the *Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*. These candidates discussed how similar or different print and online audiences for the two brands are and how news production has developed in response to this. Most students focused on technology as a social context, with some misinterpreting the question as 'social media'. Some responses to this were very brief, but there were less un-attempted responses than there have been to Question 3 in previous sessions, which was pleasing.

Most candidates had good knowledge of the history of the two newspapers and their move to online news. They were able to discuss facts and figures and link to relevant examples. Discussion of how social contexts influenced the production and circulation of print and online news provided the most successful responses. Some candidates gave a detailed explanation of the case studies but did not go into enough depth about production and circulation. Successful responses were able to discuss contexts and give detailed examples from their case studies which supported their response. More perceptive responses confidently explored several social factors and provided examples from both newspapers. These responses often took a broader 'macro' perspective, which was an effective approach for addressing this type of question.

The highest achieving responses were characterised by candidates effectively considering the ways in which the two newspapers had responded to the challenges of declining print circulation. These responses were able to confidently use detailed facts and figures accurately. They could provide relevant, specific examples in relation to news production and examples of changes to news circulation from both the print and online news platforms of the case study products to comprehensively explain how news outlets produce news to appeal to their digitally literate audiences and capitalise on global circulation within these wider social contexts. Successful responses were able to contextualise news production and circulation in response to the social shift to online platforms and identify not just the negative issues of this shift but also the financial benefits of the move to online for the two case study

news outlets. Some interesting, perceptive responses identified the influence of these social contexts in leading to a greater tabloidisation of news to appeal to wider, less partisan global audiences and questioned the role of news and journalism within this context.

Less successful responses were able to explain how news is produced but relied on generalisations and mostly provided descriptive accounts of the case study newspapers. Some candidates didn't really address the question and used their case studies of the *Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* on a specific day to try to answer the question. This approach did not really allow for a comprehensive demonstration of knowledge and understanding of news production and circulation. Other responses offered a 'potted history' of each newspaper with no or little reference to the question. Some candidates focused on regulation rather than social factors.

Centres had prepared candidates well for this question. However, although candidates were confident, the focus of the question was sometimes missed. Candidates who focused on not just production or circulation or the history of the case study products but were able to discuss all three elements, tended to be the most successful.

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

- preparing candidates to confidently select specific news production features and statistical examples of print and/or online circulation to support their discussions more precisely
- continue to develop skills in exam technique and essay writing; provide opportunities for candidates to learn how to link the points and the examples they use from the case study products back to the question and practice this
- look at ways to embed contemporary analysis of the fast-changing nature of digital and online media, and its impact on the historical, economic, social and cultural contexts of UK news production, distribution and circulation.

Assessment for learning



Prepare candidates to confidently select specific news production features and statistical evidence of print and online news circulation to support their discussions more precisely with accurate, relevant and detailed examples from the case study products.

Question 4

- 4 Evaluate the effectiveness of **one** of the following theories in understanding how audiences interpret online news.

EITHER

- Bandura's Media Effects theory

OR

- Shirky's 'End of Audience' theory

[10]

Candidates demonstrated application of knowledge and understanding of their chosen theory and how audiences interpret online news in different ways. Many candidates were able to provide well-structured responses that provided solid summaries of their chosen theory. There was a broadly equal selection of Shirky and Bandura by candidates in response to the question. Responses to Shirky generally were strongest. Candidates demonstrated good understanding of the theory and could consistently apply Shirky's key ideas in a straightforward way to online news with relevant examples to offer some evaluation of the effectiveness and limitations of the theory to demonstrate understanding of how audiences interpret online news. Candidates who selected Bandura were able to explain his ideas generally well and evaluate the extent to which Bandura's ideas may not be fully applicable to online news.

While the application of the theory was generally stronger than in previous series, the evaluative element of this question was still often not acknowledged by candidates, limiting access to higher-level marks. Additionally, candidates often struggled to reference specific examples from the *Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* to support their application.

Higher achieving responses demonstrated excellent understanding of the individual theorists. Responses were consistently detailed and supported with relevant examples from the *Daily Mail* and/or *The Guardian*. The strongest answers were able to clearly evaluate the effectiveness of the academic ideas and could successfully reference alternative theories to further develop their evaluations.

Less successful responses described the theory. In some responses, candidates spent too long explaining the theory or describing their case studies rather than evaluating the strengths and limitations, as required by the question. Other responses demonstrated little use of examples to support their application of the chosen theory, did not evaluate and/or misinterpreted the theory or confused them with a different theorist.

There were some common misunderstandings of Bandura's theories, which were sometimes confused with those of Gerbner, in particular Gerbner's ideas of the effects of media over time and Mean World Syndrome. Some candidates confused Shirky's ideas with Jenkins.

As with previous series, the greatest misconception for this question was disregard of the requirement to evaluate the theory and many candidates still omitted to do this.

Centres had prepared candidates well for this question in terms of understanding the theories. Most candidates demonstrated understanding of their chosen theory and could describe the key ideas with some confidence. Some candidates had a very strong grasp of the theories and could confidently structure their responses effectively; examiners remarked that the structure of candidate responses tended to be stronger than in previous series. Successful candidates were able to apply the theory to the set products with skill and embed their evaluation within the application. Some candidates were less

confident in application of the theories to the specific demands of the question, 'how audiences interpret online news'. Although they understood the key ideas of the theory, they were not always able to discuss the usefulness or limitations of the theory, which is the requirement of the question.

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

- use Appendix 5e of the [specification](#) closely, stick to the bullet points for each theory
- practice breaking down the question into its different parts; 'evaluate the effectiveness' and 'understanding how audiences interpret online news.' Provide opportunities for candidates to discuss and evaluate how the key ideas from each theorist is effective/less useful in understanding the specific focus of the question stem
- embed literacy and exam writing techniques; practice structuring responses, equip candidates with language and terminology they can use in their sentences that explicitly signposts evaluative content in response to the question
- develop skill in selecting and using case study examples from print, online and social and participatory media platforms, to apply the key ideas of each theory and 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
- as suggested in the Examiner Reports for previous series, have a bank of alternative theories that can be suggested as being 'more' useful or effective in understanding the question stem. 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 focal point of the response.

Misconception



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

Assessment for learning



Practice breaking down the question into its different parts; 'evaluate the effectiveness' and 'understanding how audiences interpret online news.' Provide opportunities for candidates to discuss and evaluate how the key idea from each theorist is effective/less useful in understanding the specific focus of the question stem.

OCR support



Refer to the OCR Academic ideas and arguments [factsheet](#) on [Teach Cambridge](#) as a starting point to develop candidates' knowledge and understanding of the key ideas related to each theory/academic idea and what the possible uses and limitations of each could be for news.

Section B overview

Most candidates were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the theoretical frameworks of Representation and Media Language, apply this knowledge to the stimulus source C and their case study music video set products with appropriate subject-specific terminology to support their understanding with relevant examples. As with previous series, candidates showed varied levels of success in the ability to explain, identify connections or make well-reasoned judgements and conclusions.

Question 5

5 Study **Source C** in the Resource Booklet.

Explain how magazines represent issues, individuals and/or social groups through processes of selection and combination.

Use **Source C** to support your answer.

[10]

Candidates could explain the representation of some issues, individuals and/or social groups in Source C. Most candidates were able to identify the significance of the use of the main image in constructing representations of individuals and/or social groups. Many candidates could also refer to the masthead, name of *The Big Issue* and slogan 'A hand up, not a handout' in relation to the issue of homelessness to offer some explanation of how these linked to the ideology of *The Big Issue* as a magazine that offers alternative representations of marginalised groups. Not all candidates were able to address the 'selection and combination' requirement of the question.

The highest achieving responses to this question considered all aspects of the front cover as elements that had been selected by the producers of *The Big Issue* and combined to construct progressive representations. The most successful responses could explain how the selection of the main image, feature lines, cover lines, masthead, slogan, use of colour, typography and layout were combined to reinforce the ideological values of *The Big Issue* as a magazine that offers a voice for marginalised groups. These responses could explain how these combined representations of issues, individuals and social groups appealed to the target audience with culturally relevant and engaging content. Examiners commented that these were 'a pleasure to read'.

Less successful responses offered generalised descriptions of the main image or only focused on the use of media language, such as colour, or the intertextual reference to *The Rocky Horror Show* to explain meanings on the front cover. These responses omitted explanation of the representations in the source. The least successful responses listed everything they knew about *The Big Issue* with very little reference to Source C or to the representations found in the source.

Several candidates wrote about their pre-learned case study front cover instead of Source C or offered a comparison of Source C with their own case study front cover. This was not appropriate for the requirements of the question.

Some candidates were not clear that the framework being assessed by the question was Representation and focused on the textual analysis of media language conventions and viewpoints communicated. Some candidates discussed Barthes' theory of semiotics with explanation of signs and their connotations.

Candidates were generally well-prepared for a question on *The Big Issue* with most candidates demonstrating confident understanding of *The Big Issue* as a magazine, their approach to distribution,

their target audience and their values and political viewpoints regarding homelessness and marginalised groups. However, some candidates struggled to address the specific area of study that the question was assessing regarding the 'processes of selection and combination' in representation. Candidates were also not always able to combine a discussion of more than one area of representation in their response.

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

- develop exam technique, practice breaking down exam questions and identifying the area of study in the question so candidates can develop skills and confidence in directly answering the specific requirements of the question rather than providing a broad, more generalised, response
- provide opportunities to analyse past exam questions, exemplar responses, mark schemes and previous examiner reports. Be clear on the differences for responses to Representation and Media Language framework questions. Spend time practising how to respond to these so the weighting of content in candidate responses is relevant to the framework being assessed by the question
- practice identifying a combination of elements on *The Big Issue* magazine front covers so candidates can move beyond analysis of the masthead and main image and support their explanations with a range of detailed, accurate and relevant examples
- allow opportunities to develop understanding of what issues are and how they can be analysed in relation to representations of individuals and social groups
- develop skills in explanation so candidates develop confidence in explaining their knowledge and understanding in response to the question. For example, what has been selected for the front cover by producers? How does the combined use of these selections construct specific representations? Why would the producers of *The Big Issue* want to construct these representations?

OCR support



Find assessment materials including past papers, mark schemes, candidate exemplars and previous Examiner Reports in the Assessment section of [Teach Cambridge](#).

Question 6

6 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>
Lil Nas X – <i>SUN GOES DOWN</i>	Sufjan Stevens – <i>Sugar</i>
Emeli Sandé – <i>Heaven</i>	David Guetta – <i>Titanium</i>

Analyse how effective the use of intertextuality is in creating meaning in **both** music videos you have studied.

In your answer you must:

- analyse the media language in **both** music videos in relation to how intertextuality is used to create meaning
- make judgements and draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the use of intertextuality.

[15]

Candidates demonstrated generally adequate understanding of intertextuality, could select relevant examples from their chosen case study music videos and could maintain a line of reasoning in their response regarding the meanings constructed in the videos because of the intertextual references used.

Most candidates responded well to the requirement to refer to both music videos in their response. Not all candidates analysed the use of intertextuality in both music videos and made a judgement on how effective the use of intertextuality was.

Candidates who understood the difference between direct and indirect intertextuality in their chosen music videos often produced stronger responses. Some candidates were able to consider that intertextuality isn't the only way a media product can create meaning effectively. Some candidates could offer a valid judgement that one music video might be more effective than the other in using intertextuality to create meaning. A number of candidates concluded that intertextuality might not be the most effective way to create meaning in a music video but use of media language codes and conventions to illustrate lyrics or repetition of genre conventions were equally or more important.

All case study products from lists A and B were seen across the responses in this series. Emile Sandé, *Heaven* and Lil Nas X, *SUN GOES DOWN* were the most popular List A music videos. Radiohead, *Burn the Witch* and David Guetta, *Titanium* were the most popular List B music videos. Corinne Bailey Rae, *Stop Where You Are* and Sufjan Stevens, *Sugar* were the least referenced set music videos. All case study products produced responses across the full range of marks for this question.

The highest achieving responses confidently analysed a range of relevant intertextual elements in both case study music videos. They used appropriate media language terminology to explain how intertextuality was used and the meanings this communicated. The strongest responses demonstrated clear focus on how effective the use of intertextuality was and, where relevant, were able to successfully use the case study video that was less intertextual to help with their evaluation to make sophisticated judgements and conclusions. Examiners remarked that there was some 'highly effective', 'impressive' and 'sophisticated' demonstration of knowledge and understanding of intertextuality and media language, and skills in analysis and the ability to make judgements and conclusions in these higher achieving responses.

Lesser achieving responses, while often demonstrating adequate understanding of what intertextuality is tended to focus on the meanings created using intertextuality and did not address the question requirement of 'how effective' the use of intertextuality is. These responses did not make the necessary judgements or reach conclusions required by the question. The least successful responses demonstrated limited knowledge and understanding of intertextuality and were not able to support their responses with relevant examples. Other responses struggled with the requirements of the question and described the music videos, who the artists were or how the artists were represented.

A common misconception was the omission of the requirement to make a judgement of how effective the use of intertextuality is in creating meaning in the music videos. The requirement to refer to both music videos was also misunderstood by some candidates.

Centres had prepared candidates well for the demands of answering a question on music videos. Candidates knew their case study music videos well, many showing detailed knowledge and understanding. Candidates could provide relevant examples from the videos to support their responses. Many candidates understood what intertextuality is and could make connections across their two case study videos. As with previous series, although it is clear some candidates were well-prepared for the 'how effective' requirement of the question, this is an aspect all centres would benefit from developing further, so all candidates have greater opportunity to attain the high-level marks for this 15-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 intertextuality and how different approaches to intertextuality can be considered in their study of the List A and List B music videos
- develop use of appropriate and accurate media language terminology when analysing music videos
- allow equal time to study both music videos so candidates are equally confident with, and can demonstrate, their knowledge and understanding of both case study products
- practice exam technique by breaking down the exam question and reading the bullet points underneath the question stem. Make sure candidates are aware of the 'judgement' instruction, for example 'how effective'. Plan to give time to candidates to practise developing confidence in making judgements and reaching conclusions in their writing to directly answer the question in response to the AO2.3 requirement and access higher-level marks.

Exemplar 3

Radhead's 'Burn The White' music video is an incredibly unusual depiction of a band. It is a video almost exclusively about intertextual references with the whole thing being stop-motion animated in 4:3 aspect ratio in the style of the 1960s 'Tomorrow' trilogy of BBC Children's Shows. This is used exclusively ironically, the original show is the idea of a perfect English village however, the video was released in 2016, a month before the Brexit referendum and the video's director says the band were trying to draw attention to the refugee crisis in Europe and the way people are treated. This makes the decision to doubly subvert this quaint Children's show both shocking and very effective. The video also seems to be a pastiche or homage to The Wicker Man, this is something that becomes very explicit in the video's closing moments where there is their own version of the titular statue. However, the two share a similar plot with an outsider (inspector) arriving in this supposedly normal town before being burnt alive (although the animated character survives). The choice to use intertextuality to a film about an outsider coming into a society is a parallel to immigration and racism from the Leave campaign as well as people like Donald Trump (Tonsure) is very effective at communicating this meaning. The intertextual references are rounded off by references to David Lynch's

'Blue Velvet', himself a very progressive filmmaker.

Emeli Sande's 'Heaven' music video (directed by John Numa of Beyoncé fame) has comparatively little intertextuality. Sande claims the idea of the song is a 'dirty and clean heart' which she communicated to her producer Naughty Naughty Bely. She chooses to show this through realism and her own experiences by shooting the video in her home town of Bettwyl Green where she grew up. She introduces an array of characters with little narrative in the video. Instead, close-ups of things like cigarettes bring to mind ideas of drug abuse. There are many instances too where close-up shots of religious imagery are witnessed which goes with Sande's own belief that there is a God ~~but~~ but she doesn't attach herself to any particular religion. ~~She also~~ This idea of religion is further seen through a shot of a man with angel wings tattooed on his back, a woman standing in front of graffiti of angel wings and a man with his arms out in 'Jesus position'. All the footage is altered to look as if it was shot on film with added grain and colour grading reflecting a more burnt and washed out look, however, it appears this was not done with any particular film in mind and is not an example of intertextuality. Whilst Sande frames herself as equal to all her characters

In medium close-up, there are no obvious intertextual references or intertextuality to things the audience should understand. It is instead deeply personal to Sade's own life and whilst the meaning of a 'clean and dirty heart' is created, it is not through intertextuality.

In conclusion, both Radiohead's *Burn The Witch* and Emeli Sade's *Heaven* very effectively communicate their meaning. However, Radiohead is able to do this effectively through intertextual references to children's TV show *Thompson* which it uses satirically and pairs it with the plot of *The Witcher* in order to emphasise the refugee crisis. Emeli Sade is equally effective at creating meaning but does

not achieve this through intertextuality and instead uses personal experiences to bring this across.

This is a very comprehensive response that demonstrates a high Level 3 mark.

- there is **convincing, perceptive and accurate analysis** of the **two videos** to discuss how meaning is created. In their analysis of *Heaven*, the candidate is very clear how meaning is constructed in the video using references and media language elements. Their analysis of *Burn the Witch* clearly analyses how meaning is created through intertextuality
- there are **logical connections and a good line of reasoning** evident in the analysis and the response **successfully analyses how effective the use of intertextuality is** in creating meaning in both videos
- the response sets out a clear argument that the music videos create meaning in different ways and is successful in making **developed, accomplished judgements and conclusions** about how effective each video is in using intertextual references to do this.

The response doesn't quite achieve full marks as it is a little less comprehensive in places. For example, the reference to *Blue Velvet* is undeveloped and there could be greater use of terms to discuss the technical codes and visual elements in *Heaven* that are used to illustrate the lyrics.

Misconception



A common misconception was the omission of the requirement to make a judgement of how effective the use of intertextuality is in creating meaning in the music videos.

Assessment for learning



Practice exam technique by breaking down the exam question and reading the bullet points underneath the question stem. Make sure candidates are aware of the 'judgement' instruction, for example 'how effective'. Plan to give time to candidates to practise developing confidence in making judgements and reaching conclusions in their writing to directly answer the question in response to the AO2.3 requirement.

OCR support



Allow equal time to study both music videos so candidates are equally confident with, and can demonstrate, their knowledge and understanding of both case study products. Use the OCR factsheets for each of your chosen music videos, available in the Teaching section of [Teach Cambridge](#).

Supporting you

Teach Cambridge

Make sure you visit our secure website [Teach Cambridge](#) to find the full range of resources and support for the subjects you teach. This includes secure materials such as set assignments and exemplars, online and on-demand training.

Don't have access? If your school or college teaches any OCR qualifications, please contact your exams officer. You can [forward them this link](#) to help get you started.

Reviews of marking

If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our post-results services. For full information about the options available visit the [OCR website](#).

Access to Scripts

We've made it easier for Exams Officers to download copies of your candidates' completed papers or 'scripts'. Your centre can use these scripts to decide whether to request a review of marking and to support teaching and learning.

Our free, on-demand service, Access to Scripts is available via our single sign-on service, My Cambridge. Step-by-step instructions are on our [website](#).

Keep up-to-date

We send a monthly bulletin to tell you about important updates. You can also sign up for your subject specific updates. If you haven't already, [sign up here](#).

OCR Professional Development

Attend one of our popular professional development courses to hear directly from a senior assessor or drop in to a Q&A session. Most of our courses are delivered live via an online platform, so you can attend from any location.

Please find details for all our courses for your subject on **Teach Cambridge**. You'll also find links to our online courses on NEA marking and support.

Signed up for ExamBuilder?

ExamBuilder is the exam paper builder platform for a range of our qualifications. [Find out more](#).

Free for all OCR centres with an Interchange account, it allows unlimited users per centre. We require an [Interchange](#) username to verify your centre's users for ExamBuilder.

If you do not have an Interchange account, please contact your centre administrator (usually the Exams Officer) to request a username.

Once you have an Interchange username, use the form on [this page](#) to sign up for ExamBuilder, or ask an existing user at your centre to create an ExamBuilder account for you.

Active Results

Review students' exam performance with our free online results analysis tool. It is available for all GCSEs, AS and A Levels and Cambridge Nationals (examined units only).

[Find out more](#).

Online courses

Enhance your skills and confidence in internal assessment

What are our online courses?

Our online courses are self-paced eLearning courses designed to help you deliver, mark and administer internal assessment for our qualifications. They are suitable for both new and experienced teachers who want to refresh their knowledge and practice.

Why should you use our online courses?

With these online courses you will:

- learn about the key principles and processes of internal assessment and standardisation
- gain a deeper understanding of the marking criteria and how to apply them consistently and accurately
- see examples of student work with commentary and feedback from OCR moderators
- have the opportunity to practise marking and compare your judgements with those of OCR moderators
- receive instant feedback and guidance on your marking and standardisation skills
- be able to track your progress and achievements through the courses.

How can you access our online courses?

Access courses from [Teach Cambridge](#). Teach Cambridge is our secure teacher website, where you'll find all teacher support for your subject.

If you already have a Teach Cambridge account, you'll find the link to the **Online courses** under the **Assessment** or **Training** tab – hover over **Assessment** or **Training** on the horizontal menu and select **Online courses** from the dropdown.

If you don't have a Teach Cambridge account yet, ask your exams officer to set you up – just send them this [link](#) and ask them to add you as a Teacher.

Access the courses **anytime, anywhere and at your own pace**. You can also revisit the courses as many times as you need.

Which courses are available?

We recommend all teachers complete the module on Online courses – NEA for their subject. These courses provide subject-specific information about course content; how to prepare for planning, marking and submitting; and support with understanding the marking criteria.

The subject-specific courses are tailored for each qualification that has non-exam assessment (NEA) units, except for AS Level and Entry Level. They cover the following topics:

- the structure and content of the NEA units
- the assessment objectives and marking criteria for the NEA units
- examples of student work with commentary and feedback for the NEA units
- interactive marking practice and feedback for the NEA units.

We are also developing courses for some of the examined units, which will be available soon.

How can you get support and feedback?

If you have any queries, please contact our Customer Support Centre on 01223 553998 or email support@ocr.org.uk.

We welcome your feedback and suggestions on how to improve the online courses and make them more useful and relevant for you. You can share your views by completing the evaluation form at the end of each course.

Tell us what you think

Your feedback plays an important role in how we develop, market, support and resource qualifications now and into the future. We want you and your students to enjoy and get the best out of our qualifications and resources, but to do that we need your honest opinions to tell us whether we're on the right track or not.

You can email your thoughts to resources.feedback@ocr.org.uk or visit our [feedback page](#) to learn more about how you can help us improve our resources.



Designing and testing in [collaboration with you](#) and your students



Helping young people develop an [ethical view of the world](#)



Equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) are [part of everything we do](#)

Contact the team at:

☎ 01223 553998

🖥 ocr.org.uk

To stay up to date with all the relevant news about our qualifications, register for email updates at ocr.org.uk/updates

Visit our Online Support Centre at support.ocr.org.uk



OCR is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

OCR is a Company Limited by Guarantee and an exempt charity. Registered in England. Registered office: The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA. Registered company number: 3484466.

We operate academic and vocational qualifications regulated by Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and CCEA as listed in their qualifications registers.

We are committed to providing a fully accessible experience across all our products, platforms, and websites. Find out more about our [accessibility standards](#).

© OCR 2025. All rights reserved. We retain the copyright on all our publications. However, our registered centres are permitted to copy and distribute our material for their own internal use, in line with any specific restrictions detailed in the publication. Find out more about our [copyright policies](#).

We update our publications regularly so please check you have the most up-to-date version.

We cannot be held responsible for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and do not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

When we update our specifications, you'll see a new version number and a summary of the changes. While we do our best to reflect these changes in all associated resources on [Teach Cambridge](#), if you notice any discrepancies, please refer to the latest specification on our website and [let us know](#).

Our resources do not represent any teaching method we expect you to use. We cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions in our resources.