

Examiners' report

AS LEVEL

MEDIA STUDIES

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

H009

For first teaching in 2017

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate responses is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from [Teach Cambridge](#).

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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 and analyse 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 using specific products in their responses. Each question offers a slightly different challenge, and each requires a slightly different approach to meeting the assessment objectives. It is vital that students are coached to understand these different structures.

This was the second paper since the changes to some of the set products, with questions on the new film (*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 seen demonstrating this. Responses seen covered almost the entire range of marks for each question, with many fitting the criteria for Level 2 and Level 3.

The paper appeared to be accessible to most candidates with a range of responses demonstrating a variety of different approaches to tackling the exam. Few papers were seen where candidates had not attempted every question. It was clear that candidates from most centres had been well prepared on the specific criteria required by each question. Answers from some candidates demonstrated an inconsistency between 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 specifics of the AO2 requirements, particularly in terms of analysing the chosen LFTVD episode), for Question 5 (where very few candidates used theory to support their analyses) and Question 6 (where many candidates provided a general overview of newspaper readerships rather than detailed examples relating to *The Daily Telegraph's* categorisation of its audience or simply did not reference the set media product at all). A few candidates started with Question 4; although this did not seem to offer any significant benefit, it is the highest tariff question and so might be a helpful strategy for candidates worried about time management.

Candidates who performed successfully tended to balance the broader focus of the questions with specific and relevant examples from the media products required, using those examples to demonstrate either knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework or their ability to analyse specific media products, 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 reasonably concise approach to answering the 5-10 mark questions with the more in depth analysis and argument required for Questions 4 and 5 (which between them contribute 50% of the paper's overall marks).

Less successful responses tended to demonstrate only a general understanding of the questions (for example, that technological developments in cinema include advancements in CGI and greater use of streaming) without giving clear examples (such as discussing specific moments from the *Shang-Chi* trailer which demonstrate the use of CGI or exploring the implications of the movie's swift release on Disney+ as well as the importance of different formats such as IMAX in terms of audience and industrial competition). Less successful responses to AO2 questions tended to present general analysis without exemplification, rather than using specific examples to support arguments (for example, discussions of *Stranger Things* which outlined examples of the sci-fi/ fantasy genres in general rather than analysing key moments from the episode in relation to the importance of genre conventions). This was particularly evident with the newspaper front pages used for Question 5, with many candidates simply analysing the content rather than focusing on the influence of stereotypes, using academic ideas or providing a clear judgement, suggesting a slight misunderstanding of this question's requirements.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• used appropriate media terminology throughout their examples • referred to the question within their answers, using this to structure their responses • used the number of available marks as a guide to response lengths • demonstrated understanding of the differences between questions focused on AO1 ('explain', designed to test knowledge and understanding) and AO2 ('analyse', designed to test ability to apply the theoretical framework to analysis) • applied theory where appropriate, using this to support and develop arguments and responses • strengthened responses through use of precise examples which were relevant to the question.	• missed critical aspects of the assessment objectives (such as the need to provide evidence of judgement in Question 4 or the expectation that theory be used in Questions 5 and 6) • focused too much on general discussion of the theoretical framework in Question 4 rather than understanding that responses also require a precise analysis of the chosen TV drama episode in relation to genre conventions • did not answer the specific questions being asked (for example, describing how films benefit from technological developments without giving specific examples from <i>Shang-Chi</i> or analysing the unseen front pages of the <i>Mirror</i> and the <i>Express</i> without considering the influence of stereotypes on audiences) • did not mention specific elements of the question within their responses (for example, responses to Question 6 which only discussed political contexts, or answers to Question 3 which only referred to production and not distribution within the film industry) • 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's paper, analysis (Question 2) was usually stronger than explanation (Questions 1 and 3), where responses sometimes just presented lists 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 technological developments influenced film production and distribution without considering the specifics of *Shang-Chi*.

Question 1

- 1 Explain how social contexts can influence video games.
Use *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* in your answer.

[5]

The most successful responses to this question balanced an understanding of social contexts with knowledge of video games and included specific references to *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*. They demonstrated a logical link between relevant social contexts of the early 2020s (such as the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic or the development of online communities) and choices made by producers of video games, specifically Nintendo in relation to the development and release of *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* (e.g. Nintendo's positioning of itself as a family-friendly platform and the game's exemplification of this, the ways in which the game's mechanics supported online gatherings, Nintendo's inclusion of features in response to consumer demand). In general, these ideas were often linked to the ways that players used online video games as a significant mechanism for building or maintaining relationships during a time of huge social disruption – some of the most successful responses explored how *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* was used both by families trying to stay in touch and by activists, e.g. the Black Lives Matter movement. Although not a requirement of the question, some candidates were able to apply Uses and Gratifications theory to support their responses, expanding on why different social groups had found the game an effective resource and reflecting on how Nintendo had embraced this element of the game's appeal.

Where candidates did not address the influence of social contexts on video games, responses were less successful. Such responses tended to describe the content of the video game without really reflecting on the social contexts which had influenced this. For example, several candidates gave detailed descriptions of certain components of the video game (customising the island, interactions with the animal characters) without relating these to any social contexts (e.g. reflecting or escaping from the reality of lockdown, the ability to create a flexible identity in the context of social debates about identity). It is important that candidates demonstrate understanding as well as knowledge, which can mean spelling out what might seem obvious. Some candidates simply described Nintendo's significance as a media organisation without really referring to *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* or just considered the general landscape of online gaming. Several candidates referred to elements of *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* without clarifying the point they were making; centres should make sure that candidates are coached on how to explicitly link their knowledge of the 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.

Answer Length

It is important that candidates match the length of their answers to the number of marks available. There are a maximum of five marks available for this question. To achieve this, candidates should aim to write answers which make two valid points relating to the specified context with relevant exemplification from the appropriate product – this would fit the mark scheme's definition of 'comprehensive' given the comparatively small tariff. Top level answers have been seen which manage to achieve this in a comparatively concise word count. More detail would be expected for questions with higher marks. It is critical that candidates balance their ability to show both knowledge and understanding with the time available.

Question 2

- 2 Analyse how the music video *Million Reasons* by Lady Gaga uses media language to create meaning. [10]

Some exceptional responses were seen to this question, with many candidates achieving marks in Levels 2 or at the upper end of Level 3. Clear links were made between the use of media language and the creation of meaning. Some particularly effective ideas about how different aspects of Lady Gaga's image were communicated using specific shots, editing and especially colour palette were seen, with a range of moments of the video being analysed in detail. More successful candidates identified how different elements of the video combined to create different meanings, with some referring to the video within the broader context of Gaga's career (mentioning, for example, *A Star Is Born* or the preceding video *Perfect Illusion*), a valid approach when directly related to the media language within *Million Reasons*. Many candidates referred to Lady Gaga's (apparent) rebrand which, when it was clearly linked to the use of media language to create meaning, was a reasonable point. Answers to this question were often very well exemplified, suggesting a high level of candidate engagement. Some very long answers were seen to this question.

Less successful responses tended not to focus on the question asked; such answers often concentrated on discussion of the media language within the video without considering any intended meanings (or presenting connotations without justifying or clarifying ideas). Several candidates simply described the video without offering much or any analysis. As has often been the case with this question, some candidates simply presented an overview of everything they knew about Lady Gaga (for example, her real name or the relationship of the single with the album *Joanne*) with little reference to the video at all. Some spent a significant amount of space analysing the lyrics without relating these to the video or its meaning. These approaches were not appropriate for an AO2 question, which requires analysis of a specific product (in this case the set music video). As noted, some candidates were able to demonstrate their knowledge of Gaga's career or biography, but without context or link to the meanings connoted by the video, such points become irrelevant in this context. A few candidates appeared to have written a 'generic' analysis answer they had learned, which (since it did not reference the creation of meaning) offered little which could be credited.

When analysing either of the two set music videos, candidates should always be advised to consider the relationship between the track and the visuals as well as the overall structure since these can provide clear focus for an answer, particularly for a media language question. However, they must remember that the set product is the video and not the song or the artist, so any exploration of lyrics or the singer (either in relation to media language or representations) should be in the context of the visuals. Candidates should also be encouraged to move beyond the opening sections of the videos and consider other elements, particularly where these offer contrasts (for example, in *Million Reasons*, the use of

black and white as well as colour; the performance as well as the narrative elements). Symbolism is also worth exploring (for example, the use of religious iconography, the apparent influence of Madonna). However, they should make sure their points link to the question rather than just analysing the media language out of context.

Exemplar 1

		A second way media language is used to create meaning is through the pink suit that Gaga wears for a part in the music video. At one point of the video, Gaga is seen wearing a pink suit. This pink suit has a number of connotations such as femininity, empowerment and resilience. in The pink aspect feeds into stereotypical ^{repeated} stereotypes about women and what colours are associated with women, as described by Gerbner's cultivation which describes how repeated stereotypes can reinforce behaviours and beliefs. However, the suit contrasts the stereotypical nature of the colour pink. Suits are typically associated with men, having been worn by men in the work place for centuries, but by having Gaga wear it, it shows she's empowered and aspirational. The pink suit is meant to mean how Gaga has overcome her struggles with mental health and how she has been able to work through this difficult part in her life and move forward with herself, no longer having to struggle in silence and become a shell of herself.
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Exemplar 1 is the second paragraph of a Level 3 response which covered most of the requirements of Question 2. This is a detailed analysis of a particular media language element of the Lady Gaga video which makes use of a range of ideas from the theoretical framework in a good level of depth. There is some attempt to apply Gerbner's cultivation theory (not required, but helpful here) and a fair level of analytical detail. The response had previously considered the symbolism of the different locations used and went on to discuss other elements of media language, including the potential connotations of the use of black and white/ colour.

Question 3

- 3 Explain how technological developments in the film industry have influenced the production and distribution of films.

Use *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* to support your answer.

[10]

Many candidates appeared to struggle with this question, with few writing answers which met the criteria to be placed in Level 3. Although candidates seemed to have a reasonable knowledge of technological developments in the film industry (for example, use of CGI, digital distribution to cinemas, the importance of YouTube and social media or the significance of streaming platforms), few answers were seen which demonstrated confident application of this knowledge using *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* as an example. Some candidates referred to specific moments in the trailer which demonstrated how *Shang-Chi* depended on CGI to tell its story, while a few referred to the swift post-Covid release on Disney+, with its associated financial benefits to Disney. One or two candidates referenced how movies are digitally distributed to cinemas in comparison to the traditional physical provision of film, considering how this offers benefits to both studios and cinema chains. The few who produced top level answers were able to articulate how actual features of the trailers, production and distribution of *Shang-Chi* exemplified the influence technological developments have had on modern cinema.

Less successful candidates did not refer to *Shang-Chi* directly (or in some cases at all) while a few did not discuss one of the two strands of the question, focusing either on production or distribution but not both. Some candidates simply described features of the *Shang-Chi* trailer without relating it to the question; this demonstrates knowledge but not understanding. Some candidates demonstrated a knowledge of *Shang-Chi*'s production or its significance as a film with a predominantly Asian cast but did not link this to the broader knowledge of technological developments required by the question. A few candidates referred to the posters without really explaining how these connected with the question. Some wrote about the trailer and posters purely in reference to marketing as opposed to their exemplification of the use of technology within the film industry. Centres should make sure students are aware of the two different ways in which materials relating to *Shang Chi* might be used in the exam to support the two different media forms covered. There was a tendency for candidates to refer to industry theorists such as Curran and Seaton 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 considered the specifics of *Shang-Chi*'s production and are able to use it both as an example of advertising as well as an industry case study.

Quite a few responses started with a long paragraph detailing the history of Disney as a company. Although there are some circumstances where such knowledge could have been applied to this question (for example, Disney's pivot from cell animation to use of CGI, its shift from physical distribution via Buena Vista to digital distribution via Disney+) or where it might be appropriate (for example, a question relating to conglomerate ownership), no answer was seen where these ideas were tied directly into the question and so such material did not really offer any insight into the question asked.

Exemplar 2

3-	Shang chi and the legend of the ten rings is a marvel film that was marketed and is a film that represents the asian american demographic in a hollywood set up and so to achieve this the film had to represent elements such as the martial arts accurately and technological advancement greatly contributed. The several fight scenes which included martial arts techniques were all enhanced and accurately depicted using high quality state of the art CGI ^{and editing} . The mystical elements of the film such as the powers of ten rings and mystical realm of Ta Lo, creatures and end fight scenes were all brought to life through CGI all of which greatly contributed to the film's screen by the audience immersion. High quality film cameras and various other production equipment contributed to film's expected marvel quality.
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Exemplar 2 shows the first half of a low Level 3 answer which covered all the requirements of Question 3. This demonstrates a detailed discussion of one element of the question in relation to the use of CGI. There are clear references to *Shang-Chi's* trailer and several points made about the use of technology in the film's production. The candidate goes on to discuss the film's post-Covid release in equal detail as well as considering the importance of YouTube and other social media platforms to the film's release.

Knowledge and understanding

Questions testing AO1 (usually beginning with 'Explain') require candidates to demonstrate both knowledge and understanding. Information (such as that Disney+ is an online streaming service) shows knowledge but, to prove understanding, candidates must be able to explain how Disney+ demonstrates technological developments in the broader film industry and how *Shang-Chi* exemplifies this. In the context of this question, answers needed to be framed according to an awareness of *Shang-Chi's* release into a post-Covid landscape and how this specifically influenced its distribution on Disney+ (for example, the shorter gap between cinema and home media release, use as a marketing tool for Disney+, developing competition in the streaming landscape, etc.)

Section B overview

This section on Long Form Television Drama (LFTVD) was answered well by candidates, with many given marks in Level 2 and Level 3. The majority of candidates managed to balance both assessment objectives, often demonstrating a fair 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 relevant exemplification from the episode (all centres chose to use *Stranger Things*). Many candidates described general ideas about genre codes and conventions without analysing specific moments in appropriate depth or exploring events in the episode as to whether or not they contributed to its success in the context of genre codes and conventions. Although many candidates referred to theorists such as Neale or Todorov, not all demonstrated that they could use these theories in a meaningful way, with several candidates just mentioning the name of the theorist or describing the theory without any context or application.

Centres should be aware that if a more contemporary LFTVD product to *Stranger Things* 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 must rely on genre codes and conventions to be successful.'

Discuss how far you agree with this statement in relation to the set episode you have studied.

In your answer you must:

- explain how long form television dramas use genre codes and conventions
- analyse how genre codes and conventions have influenced the set episode you have studied
- use 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. The most successful responses were able to apply a range of theories and examples to support their arguments. Better responses to this question addressed both assessment objectives with excellent knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework in general and LFTVD in particular being used to support a detailed, well exemplified analysis of the first episode of *Stranger Things* (ST) in relation to genre codes and conventions. The strongest answers demonstrated knowledge and understanding of genre in relation to LFTVDs, with a clear appreciation of the codes and conventions of the form as well as the specific episode of ST as a horror/sci-fi/teen drama hybrid. Such responses often presented a range of ideas which did not necessarily fully (or even partially) agree with the statement, often seeing genre as just one element linked to the wider success of LFTVDs. Effective responses included detailed analysis of ST with precise references to how genre was used within the episode, supported by relevant theory (Neale's ideas about repetition and difference were often mentioned, but many also referred to Uses and Gratifications theory and Hall's reception theory, which was sometimes applied to great effect). Some candidates demonstrated an excellent knowledge and understanding of how the genre features linked to or were subordinate to (for example) intertextual elements such as references to other films and how this functioned in relation to the success of ST. To do this they considered 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 to attract and maintain a range of audiences. Some candidates used their knowledge of industry to challenge the statement, relating success to Netflix's marketing of *ST* and the development of a fandom which helped build success through online interaction and word of mouth. Where theory was used well, it was embedded as a fundamental aspect of the response's overall structure and line of reasoning, with clear exemplification and discussion relating to the episode. Personal judgement clearly informed the argument in a sensible and well-articulated manner and was again a consistent element. Candidates made logical links between genre and success (the entertainment/ escapism component of Uses and Gratifications, as well as Jenkins' ideas about fandom were also 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 analysis of the episode. Such candidates were often able to analyse the episode with some reference to genre (for example, the horror/sci-if/teen movie elements) but without really touching on the key point of how these elements contributed to the success (or otherwise) of the episode. Some responses were simply comprised of lists of genre features with little or no analysis. Some candidates confused the idea of genre (the categorisation of media products) with narrative (the means by which the story is told) leading to answers which were in depth but not focused on the correct area of the subject content (for example, a detailed analysis of the episode using Todorov's narratology which did not refer to how the narrative 'beats' demonstrated genre features). 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 genre (for example, Mulvey's 'male gaze' or Curran and Seaton's ideas about Power and Media Industries). Such ideas could potentially have been relevant if they were discussed in relation to genre 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. On a more positive note, the range of theorists applied, including many not featured in the AS specification (such as Hesmondhalgh) suggests that centres are really embedding this aspect of Media Studies into their delivery.

It should be noted that several papers were seen where candidates had written very long responses to Question 4 and then short or even no response to Questions 5 and 6. Centres should coach candidates on the importance of time management since, although Question 4 is the highest tariff question on the paper, Questions 5 and 6 between them are worth a significant number of marks and should have a similar amount of time spent on them.

Section C overview

The section on News and Online Media allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of newspapers and the newspaper industry through both analysis and explanation. However, very few papers were seen which really got to grips with the questions fully. A significant number of the responses to Question 5 did not fully address the specific focus of the question (the influence of stereotypes on audiences), instead offering straightforward analyses which either explored the sources' use of stereotypes without considering their potential influence on audiences or simply analysed the media language and representations within the sources without considering stereotypes at all. 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 Daily Telegraph* (several answers referred to the two unseen newspapers). This suggests that some candidates do not fully understand 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 *Express*). Although an equal amount does not need to be written about each source, there should be evidence of a reasonable discussion involving both products. A limited number of responses referred to theory, with those that did often just naming the theorist without applying their ideas to the unseen sources. Very few responses to Question 6 referred to how contexts influence categorisation, mostly discussing demographics without considering psychographics, a key element relating to how those audiences are categorised by newspapers. There were almost no answers seen which directly referred to political or cultural content from specific editions of *The Daily Telegraph* or even *Telegraph Online* (for example, individual cover stories or social media posts) although one answer was seen where the candidate referred to the stories which had featured on the front page of *The Daily Telegraph* published on the day of the exam, which demonstrated versatility and confidence.

Question 5*

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

To what extent do **Source A** and **Source B** use stereotypes to influence audiences?

In your answer you must:

- analyse and compare the ways in which **Source A** and **Source B** use stereotypes to influence audiences
- use relevant contexts and academic ideas and arguments in your analysis
- draw judgements and conclusions in relation to the question.

[15]

Some candidates were able to discuss how both front covers demonstrated the use of stereotypes and were able to analyse the potential effects of those on audiences, mainly relating to how the two newspapers presented markedly different representations of Rishi Sunak through a combination of verbal and non-verbal codes and how these used stereotypes of wealth/Conservative politicians to influence their respective audiences to either support or feel negative about Sunak and his statements. More successful answers were able to appreciate the clear differences between the two papers based on the perceived ideological positions of their audiences (this had been given in the contextual information and there is an assumption, given the two newspaper case studies, that candidates will have at least some understanding of the differences between left- and right-wing newspaper readerships). An 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 answers wove the analyses of the two front

pages together, comparing and contrasting the ways that stereotypes were used in similar ways to influence these assumed audiences such as the C2DE/ left-wing *Mirror* audience being served with more 'low-brow' stories and a negative stereotype of Sunak as a 'spoilt rich kid' compared to the slightly more affluent right-wing audience of the *Express* being presented with stereotypes of royalty (both actual and cultural), the respectable figure of Dr Mosely and the heroic stereotype of the successful Prime Minister (as well as the negative stereotyping of migrants). The most effective responses tied these into a broader consideration of how both newspapers were both serving the needs of their perceived audiences to attract them, while at the same time trying to maintain their sense of their own influence over that audience. Some fascinating arguments were made suggesting very different readings of the front pages comparing the representation of Sunak, which demonstrated quite sophisticated engagement from some candidates. Where theory was used, this tended to be either Hall's ideas about representation and reception, Cultivation Theory or (in a couple of cases) Hesmondhalgh on Cultural Industries. A few candidates used Male/Female Gaze in their considerations of the *Mirror's* photographs of Debbie McGee and Jude Bellingham.

Less successful answers tended to describe the two front pages in isolation (with no comparison or analysis), concentrated on the Sunak story without considering other elements of the front pages or focusing on specific elements (such as the representations of Sunak or the implications of the photos of Jude Bellingham) without really considering how they used stereotypes to influence audience. As has been the case with this question over the last few years, very few answers applied theory in any way (even implicitly). Centres must advise candidates that use of theory to support answers is essential for the fifteen mark question in Section C, otherwise answers are capped at ten marks since one of the assessment objectives is not being met (some potential fifteen mark answers were seen which fell into this category – please see the exemplar below). It was also noticed that some answers were quite short; bearing in mind the question is worth close to 25% of the marks on the paper, a response of reasonable length might be expected. In a few responses, theorists (or theories) were named without any context, application or explanation. Quite a few responses were unbalanced (writing a great deal about one paper and very little about the other). Some candidates wrote in quite general terms about the two sources and one or two did not reference them at all.

It should be noted that, as with previous years, quite a few candidates made claims about audiences in Question 5 (and Question 6) which demonstrated a very simplistic level of understanding. Some candidates equated the (perceived) C2DE/'working class' audience of the *Daily Mirror* with a lack of intelligence, while the readers of right-wing papers/Conservative voters were often categorised as being 'upper class' and more intelligent. This is not accurate. Although the reading age of tabloid newspapers is lower than that of broadsheets/compacts, this does not reflect the assumed cognitive abilities of the audience but is more to do with the conventions of the genre. It should also be considered that the *Daily Mirror* does have a significant ABC1 readership.

Exemplar 3

		in source A, uses the stereotype of the typical conservative to influence their viewership that Rishi Sunak cannot understand them. As the Daily Mirror is a can Labour newspaper, they are more likely to be favourable to Labour and put down the conservatives. The headline paired with the mid shot of Sunak evokes a sense of sarcasm from whoever created it. It ^{They} are blatantly making fun of Sunak for everyone to see. They use the stereotype of the privileged child to describe Sunak, using an article that has Sunak stating he didn't have any why millions of children go hungry. This stereotype can influence and reinforce readers beliefs about the conservatives as they would also be Labour supporters like the newspaper and use it as an echo chamber to reinforce their own beliefs. They ^{the} image in the top right By having this as the main focus and the other two stories having no stereotypical connotations, it is meant to make a reader believe that whatever Rishi Sunak has to say is irrelevant, even having the word 'deprived' in bold sans serif next to this the statement claiming he has launched his manifesto.
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Exemplar 3 shows the first half of an upper Level 2 response which covered most of the requirements of Question 5. This demonstrates a focused discussion of how stereotypes were used within Source A demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical framework to analyse the source. The candidate goes on to provide a similarly detailed analysis of Source B before concluding with a comparison of both sources and a broader consideration of the influences of newspapers on audiences. This candidate would have likely been placed in Level 3 had they also applied some theory within their essay (for example, Hall's ideas about representation, Gauntlett's theories about identity or any of the audience theories) and demonstrates the importance of applying theory within this question.

Choosing and applying theories

Candidates are asked to cover a broad spectrum of theories during their AS course. Questions 4, 5 and (to a limited extent) 6 ask students to apply these, although they can be used in any question to support answers. It is important that, where theories are used, they are relevant to the question and used to illustrate the point. As a general rule, candidates might be advised to only use theorists who fit the part of the theoretical framework being explored in a question (so if the focus is on media language, Todorov, Barthes and Neale would be the most appropriate). It was clear from this exam that many candidates had covered A Level theorists such as Levi-Strauss and even non-prescribed theorists such as Mulvey). It adds little to an answer if a candidate mentions a theory without explaining its relevance (for example, several answers to Question 4 mentioned Neale's ideas about genre without connecting this to the broader question of how genre links to success).

It is essential that if a question includes the term 'use relevant contexts and academic ideas in your analysis' that, at some point in the essay, the ideas of media theorists are referenced and applied. This bullet links to assessment objective AO2:1 ('apply knowledge and understanding of... the use of academic theories'); the mark schemes for Questions 4 and 5 show that marks for these questions are capped if theory is not used within answers since this would demonstrate the assessment objective has not been met. It is therefore vital that students are coached to apply theorists and theories in Questions 4, 5 and 6. Top level marks for AO2 cannot be accessed without reference to theory, while it also contributes to the broader knowledge and understanding of the framework covered by AO1.

Question 6

- 6 Explain how political **and** cultural contexts influence how newspapers categorise their audiences. Use *The Daily Telegraph* to support your answer.

In your answer you must:

- consider relevant political **and** cultural contexts that influence how newspapers categorise their audiences
- use your knowledge and understanding of relevant academic ideas and arguments
- use *The Daily Telegraph* to show how newspapers categorise their audiences.

[10]

This question was rarely answered effectively, with few answers achieving beyond Level 2 marks. This was mainly due to candidates missing one of the elements of the question (usually one of the two contexts, or the link between the contexts and audience categorisation). The most successful responses showed an understanding of how the content of *The Daily Telegraph* demonstrated how audiences were being categorised along political lines (for example stories which praised Rishi Sunak or challenged Keir Starmer, linked to the audience's political leanings) and along cultural lines (for example stories referencing dramas such as *Adolescence* or the Royal Family, linked to the audience's cultural interests).

Less successful candidates either did not mention culture or politics at all, mistook *The Daily Telegraph* for a left-wing/tabloid newspaper, or did not consider how either political or cultural contexts might affect how *The Daily Telegraph* (or any newspaper) might categorise its audience. Political contexts were referenced more than cultural contexts, but often not explained (for example, many candidates mentioned that *The Daily Telegraph* categorised its audience as right-wing but did not discuss how this was influenced by whichever government was in power or how particular stories/features might reflect that categorisation). As noted elsewhere, where a question is testing AO1, knowledge alone is not sufficient – understanding needs to be demonstrated through unambiguous explanation and clear exemplification from the specified source.

It was clear from responses that some candidates had not studied specific editions of *The Daily Telegraph* or had not been coached on how to use such studies to exemplify their points. Centres must make sure they cover all the set products since there is no pattern to how and when specific products will be used within questions.

Bullet points

Several questions in this paper include bullet points. Candidates should be coached to use these bullet points to support their answers. The bullets emphasise assessment objectives which are referenced in the mark scheme and candidates who do not meet all the requirements outlined are unlikely to achieve marks beyond Level 2. It was clear from the lack of theory in this question (and indeed in Question 5) that very few candidates had done this, since the requirement is clearly laid out in the second bullet point but only a small number of responses were seen which mentioned theory in any meaningful way.

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