



# Written examinations

## What's in this chapter?

- This chapter looks at the nature of the two GCSE Media Studies exams.
- It will show you which aspects of the course are covered by each exam and the nature of the expected questions.
- There are some sample questions and at least partial sample answers.
- The chapter ends with advice on how to approach the exams and prepare for them.

## Introduction

At the end of your AQA GCSE Media Studies course, you will sit two written exams: Media One and Media Two. Each exam will be one-and-a-half hours long, and will be worth 35% of the overall qualification. Each paper will be marked out of 84 marks.

You will need to show that you can:

- Recall the information you have learned during the course.
- Draw together information from the different areas of the course.
- Apply your knowledge and understanding to the questions set, including analysing media products you haven't seen before.
- Analyse and compare products and how they communicate meanings.
- Write answers that show your knowledge and understanding of media issues.
- Use specialist subject-specific terminology.

Both papers will ask you to show your knowledge of the areas of the theoretical framework, historical, social, cultural and political contexts for the media, and to analyse media products. Paper One is slightly more weighted towards knowledge and understanding, and Paper Two is more weighted towards analysis.

# Media One

## Key term



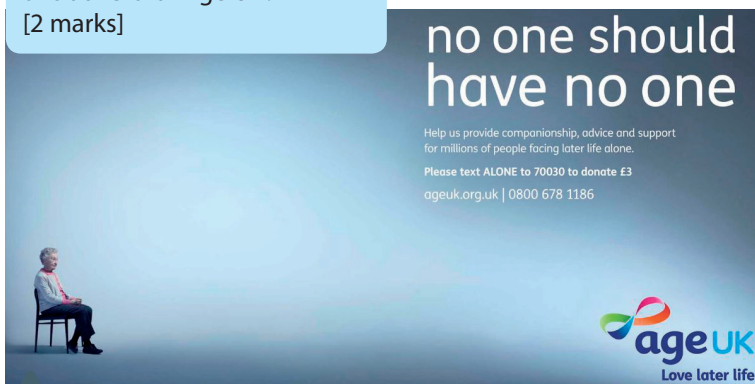
### Unseen source

A media product that has not been set as a CSP, and that can be reproduced in print form within the exam paper.

## Quick question 1



Short question example: What is connoted by the size and positioning of the woman in this advert for Age UK?  
[2 marks]



Print advert for Age UK

Media One will be divided into two sections. Section A will cover Media Language and Media Representations. Section B will cover Media Industries and Media Audiences.

You will have an **unseen source** – a printed version of a media product – in the paper and some of the questions will be about that product. You will not be expected to know about the product already. Instead you will be using the analysis skills you have learned during your GCSE Media Studies course, to be able to write about the media language and media representations you can find in that product. There could be further unseen sources elsewhere in the two exam papers.

You will find some 'short answer' or multiple-choice questions that are worth one or two marks. There will also be questions requiring mid-length and longer responses. One question in Media One will have 20 marks available; this is likely to be the final question on the paper. This is an extended response question, so

your answer should show that you can construct and develop a logical, relevant and sustained argument, and use examples to illustrate what you are saying. The front of the paper will remind you about this, with wording such as:

*Question x requires an extended response. You will be assessed on the quality of your written response, including the ability to construct and develop a sustained line of reasoning which is coherent, relevant, substantiated and logically structured.*

## Media One Section A – Media Language and Media Representations

In Section A you will answer questions on Media Languages and Media Representations, and will be tested on any two of the following media forms, including the relevant CSPs:

- magazines
- advertising and marketing
- newspapers
- online, social and participatory media and video games.

An unseen source is likely to be used within this section, with questions focusing on the use of media language and/or media representations. The unseen source could be any media product that can be printed, including screenshots from online products or video games. You could be asked a short-answer question about a very specific part of the language or representation. You could be asked a longer-answer question asking you to analyse the whole product. You are likely to find both types of question about the unseen source.

You may also find print versions of one or more of your CSPs, with related questions. Other questions may not include visual support, so you will need to have revised the products themselves so that you can answer questions about them. You will not know which two media forms have been chosen for each section of the paper, so will have to ensure you know *all* of the CSPs.

Short-answer questions will often test your understanding of terminology, such as the word *connoted* in Quick question 1. In this example, the key term is used within the question, and your answer will show that you understand the terminology. You may also be asked directly what a key term means and be expected to provide a definition.

Longer-answer questions in this section will usually ask you to present an analysis of a product, this could be of an unseen source or one of the 2019 CSPs. This analysis could focus on a specific aspect such as narrative or gender representation. It could also be a more open-ended question, giving you the opportunity to choose which elements to discuss. You will have found from your lessons that there can be more than one 'correct' approach and more than one 'correct' answer when you are analysing media products.

## Media One Section B – Media Audiences and Media Industries

In Section B you will answer questions on Media Audiences and Media Industries, and will be tested on any two of the following media forms:

- radio
- music video
- newspapers
- online, social and participatory media and video games
- film (Media Industries only).

Again, you will have a mix of short-answer and longer-answer questions. You will be tested on your knowledge of terminology in this section as well as in Section A. Make sure you know all the specialist terms used in the textbook and taught to you by your teacher.

In longer-answer questions, you will be assessed on your understanding of the nature of the media industries you have studied, and the relationship between media products, producers and audiences. You will need to answer these with reference to your CSPs. Longer-answer questions, especially the 20-mark question, are likely to refer to **contexts** of the media: historical, social, cultural or political. For example, a question could ask about the changing audience for music radio (historical context) with reference to the two radio CSPs.

Consider this longer-answer question example, from the first sample Media One paper, where the focus is on audiences:

How are print newspapers constructed to address their target audiences?  
In your answer you should refer to the *Daily Mirror*.

[9 marks]



### Quick question 2

Short question example: Briefly explain what is meant by the term 'stereotype'. [2 marks]



### Tip

Use the Glossary at the back of the book to help with your revision of terminology.



### Activity 1

An analysis question for the Age UK advert on the previous page could be:

Analyse the Age UK advert to show how different elements communicate meaning. [12 marks]

If you had to write a 200-word analysis in response to this, which aspects would you choose to write about? Compare your list with a partner. Which aspects have you both picked, and which aspects only appear on only one of the two lists?



### Quick question 3

Short question example: Briefly explain what is meant by conglomerate ownership. [2 marks]



Notice that although the question refers in general to 'print newspapers', you are also told exactly which CSP to refer to. This means that you are expected to use this one example of a newspaper to illustrate points about newspapers in general. For example, you could make a general point that newspapers use specific styles of vocabulary and lengths of sentences to suit the preferences of their target audiences, and could then refer to the short and punchy sentences in your CSP edition of the *Daily Mirror*, and how these are suitable for the target demographic of that newspaper.

## Media Two

Media Two focuses on the in-depth CSPs and is divided into two sections.

Tip



Use the two-minute period to highlight the key words in the questions as this will help you to focus your attention while watching the extract.

### Media Two Section A – television

Instead of an *unseen* source, at the start of this paper you will have a screening of an extract from one of your television CSPs, and you could be tested on any area of the theoretical framework in relation to this extract. You will be given two minutes at the start of the exam to read through the questions in Section A, so that you are aware of these before you watch the extract.

You will have studied the full episode in class during the course, but will only see about three minutes of the episode during the exam. You will see the extract twice, with a five-minute gap between the screenings. During this whole time, you can make notes on what you have seen. Altogether, the screenings and note-taking could take up about 15 minutes of the 90-minute exam. Once the second screening has finished, you can start to answer the questions.

There will be some questions that are about the television programme in general, and these might ask you to refer to the other television CSP as well. There will be other questions that ask for direct analysis of the extract you have just seen. You may be making notes during the screenings in order to answer more than one question. The sample Media Two paper has two questions that refer directly to the extract and two others on the television CSPs.

In the two minutes before the extract is shown, you can use the time to make sure you understand exactly what the questions on the television CSPs are asking and which one(s) should be answered solely in relation to the extract. This will be made clear in the wording of the question. It could include phrases such as 'how is this demonstrated in the extract' or 'how is this constructed in the extract', or 'in an analysis of the extract'. Alternatively, the question could ask you to answer with reference to the full named episode(s). Make sure you check this carefully. Also use this time to interpret the questions for yourself, putting them into your own words if it makes them clearer for you.

For example, a question on the sample Media Two paper says:

'Narrative features grab and hold the audience's attention.' How far does an analysis of the extract of 'Co-Owner of a Lonely Heart' show this to be true? [12 marks]

Let's look at this question in detail.

You can see that you are being asked about the *extract* only, so you know that you shouldn't be referring to details from within the rest of the episode or from the other television CSP.

Before you see the extract, you might want to remind yourself what 'narrative features' means. You will be looking for elements within the extract that move the story forwards. This could include the representation and actions of the characters, the way the characters interact, and the function of those characters within the storyline (you might see something related to Propp's theories). You could also look at how obvious the main plotline is within this segment, any sense of threat or conflict to disrupt the equilibrium, and the use of enigma. Or perhaps you might focus on the use of editing to create clarity or confusion.

The question asks about how these features 'grab and hold the audience's attention', so you are not only going to be discussing the narrative features themselves, but you must also write about how the audience will respond to each aspect you mention. Will this aspect help the audience to be sucked into the storyline and want to watch more, or will it be somehow off-putting? Although you're not referring to details from the rest of the episode, you are expected to know where this extract fits into the narrative as a whole, so if it is, for example, the opening sequence, you could refer to how it sets the audience up for the rest of the episode.

Finally, the question asks how far you think this extract shows the statement to be true. You are being asked for your opinion. You can agree that in this extract the narrative features do grab and hold the audience's attention, or you can disagree and say that they don't. Both answers are acceptable, as long as you give good reasons, based on specific details from the extract. Although this is the final part of the question, this does not mean you should answer it only at the end. Instead, the question is inviting you to give your opinion *throughout* the answer as you write about each 'narrative feature'.

After reading through the paragraphs above, you should be able to see that your answer could be much longer than you have time and space for – remember, this is an example of a 12-mark question. The sample question paper has allowed about a page and a half for the answer. This is why we are referring to the questions as 'open-ended'. No one is expected to write about every possible aspect. In your answers, write about what you consider to be the most relevant details in support of the opinion you are putting forward.



## Media Two Section B – newspapers or online, social and participatory media and video games

In Section B you will answer questions on either newspapers or online, social and participatory media and video games. Remember that the specific products assessed by this paper are all 'in-depth CSPs' so you could be tested on any area of the theoretical framework, as well as the contexts: historical, social, cultural or political. Longer-response questions will tell you which CSPs you should refer to.

### Key term

#### Synoptic question

A question that requires you to bring together learning from across the whole course of study. In this case, your answer should refer to any appropriate areas of the theoretical framework and any appropriate contexts.

The final question on the paper will be a **synoptic question**, for which your answer will need to draw together your knowledge and understanding from across the full GCSE Media Studies course. This question will also ask you to refer to at least one of your CSPs.

As with the extended response question on Media One, you will be expected to make judgements and draw conclusions, using relevant examples from your CSPs to support what you are writing.

Consider this example of a longer-answer question from Section B of the first sample Media Two paper:

'Gender representation in video games is fair and balanced.' How far do you agree with this view? Your answer should refer to Kim Kardashian: Hollywood and Lara Croft GO. [20 marks]



Although the question asks specifically about representation, it would be possible to also discuss audience and industry to some extent. You might refer to these aspects to explain how and why the different representations within the games have been constructed. As with the newspaper question discussed earlier in this chapter, you will use the named CSPs as examples to make more general points about the question – in this case about gender representation in video games. You could make a general

point about different character types being appropriate to different genres of games, no matter what gender they are, and then refer specifically to the differences between the representation of Kim Kardashian in the Hollywood simulation game, and Lara Croft in the adventure puzzle game.



# Exam techniques and preparing for exams

There is no preferred blueprint or outline plan for answering any of the questions on the two papers. The number of points you need to cover, or the formats of your essays, are not mentioned in the marking criteria.

What is most important is that you **know** the information and skills you have been taught, and can **apply** these to the questions that are set.

You will need to know the four areas of the theoretical framework – Media Languages, Media Representations, Media Industries and Media Audiences – and all the CSPs. In looking at these products during your GCSE Media Studies course you will also have covered different media contexts.

## Look at sample or past papers

You will probably feel less stressed as you head into the exam room if you are familiar with the overall style and layout of the exam papers. The first papers will be taken in 2019, so there will be no past papers before this, but sample papers have been available since 2017 on the AQA website, under GCSE Media Studies. Past papers are usually available on the AQA website from about a year after they have been taken by students. Your teacher will have access to past papers earlier than this.

Make sure you look at some sample or past papers when you are preparing for the exam. You will see how the questions are laid out and how much space you are given for the answers.

The unseen sources and print extracts from CSPs are not always allowed to be included in the exam papers online, for copyright reasons. If this is the case, there will be a link or an explanation on the paper. Rest assured that in the real exam you will have a good quality version of any products you are asked to look at, in full-colour.

Mark schemes can be downloaded from the same webpage for any papers that have been posted there. You can use these to see what the examiners were looking for and how they are going to be marking *your* answers. For the sample papers, there is a lot of 'indicative content' in the mark schemes. These are aspects that the examiners think students might write about in response to the set question. Remember that the analysis questions are often open-ended, giving you choice about which aspects you want to write about. For this reason, there is much more here than any individual student would be expected to write. Even so, there could be students (including you) who select specific details to analyse that are not in the indicative content. If these details are just as relevant to the question, the examiners will mark them in the same way, according to the set criteria.





## Revise your close study products

Make sure you know all of your products in relation to the relevant areas of the theoretical framework. You could create a table such as the one below, filling in the names of your CSPs. This will help you to remember what to revise for each of the CSPs, and you can use this as a checklist to ensure you cover all of them during your revision period.

Media form	Your CSPs	Paper One: Languages and Representations	Paper One: Audiences and Industries	Paper Two: All four areas
Magazines	e.g. <i>Tatler</i>	✓		
Advertising and marketing		✓		
Newspapers		✓	✓	✓
Online, social and participatory media		✓	✓	✓
Video games		✓	✓	✓
Radio			✓	
Music video			✓	
Film			✓*	
Television				✓

\*Media Industries only

## Practise your analysis: unseen source

As you are already aware that there will be at least one unseen product in Paper One, you should practise analysing products in print form. Try to think of as many possibilities as you can, such as:

- print adverts
- webpages
- magazine and newspaper pages
- screengrabs from films and tv programmes
- screengrabs from video games
- video game covers.



You are surrounded by such products every day – you can practise this skill almost anywhere and at any time. Remember that your practice analyses only need to focus on Media Language and Media Representations.



## Activity 2

Choose one product, such as the Christmas print advert for Age UK shown below. Analyse the product to see how its different elements communicate meaning.

- Make notes on the denotations and connotations in the product.
- Remember to look at all aspects of the mise-en-scène, as well as the copy (if any): vocabulary, fonts, colours, size and positioning.
- Look at the juxtaposition of the different elements within the product.
- Look for the use of stereotypes and consider why these have been used.
- You could also see how Propp's narrative theory could be applied.

If you know the historical, cultural, social or political context for a product, consider how this has influenced the representations within the product. In the advert on the right, for example, how has the time of year affected the representations?

Print advert for Age UK

### no one should have no one at Christmas

No one to hang the tinsel with.  
Or mistletoe for that matter.  
No one to share a sherry, a gift or a cracker.  
No one to say Happy Christmas to.  
Or bring you mince pies in bed.  
No one to make one day any different from the rest.  
No one, but no one, should have no one at Christmas.

Will you send a text to help provide companionship,  
advice and support for a lonely older person?

**TEXT CHRISTMAS to 70111 to give £3  
and help answer a call to the Age UK Advice Line**

Age UK provides a range of services and your gift will go wherever the need is greatest.  
Age UK is a registered charity and company. Registered company number 1125257 and registered charity number 2621786. For more information go to [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk). Age UK is a registered charity and company. Registered company number 1125257 and registered charity number 2621786. For more information go to [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk).



The more often you carry out analyses like this, the more familiar the process will be when you are in the exam.

## Practise your analysis: television CSPs

In the Media Two exam, you will be shown an extract from one of your television CSPs that is approximately three minutes long. You will have to analyse it in response to at least one specific question. For example, you may be asked about aspects such as genre, narrative or the representation of social groups or issues.

You will already have studied the whole episode, so will be familiar with the overall narrative, mise-en-scène and characters. You will have analysed many aspects of the episode in class. Make sure you answer the exam questions in relation to the clip you have been shown in the exam. You will not gain marks on these questions for answering about the CSP as a whole, if they specify the extract.

Although you can practise this using your CSP products, you can also practise some of the skills by using a three-minute extract from any TV programme or other video you know well. The key skill you are rehearsing here is focusing your writing on a specific question about the specific extract you have seen.

Remember that in the exam you will watch the extract twice and will have time to make notes from your viewing. You will have looked at the questions about the clip before you view the extract, so will know what to make notes on. Practise this part of the process as well.

## Activity 3

Choose a video you know well, such as a TV show you watched as a child. Watch the first three minutes of an episode, and make notes on the following sample exam question: Explain how age\* is represented in the extract. [8 marks]

\*Instead of 'age' in this question, you could use other aspects such as 'place', 'social class' or 'gender'.



You could analyse a sequence from a programme you watched as a child, such as the CBBC show, *Young Dracula*.

You could be asked to analyse a webpage, such as this one from the Tomb Raider Movie website, as an unseen source.

On the first viewing, even though you already know the episode, you should aim to watch and listen to as much of the clip as possible, while thinking about the questions. This means you should probably only note down key words, spaced well apart on your paper, to remind you of the most important things you have noticed. In the five-minute break between screenings, you can then expand on these key words. You might find that *you* now have specific questions that you want to check on during the second viewing, such as what exactly a character said, how someone else reacted, or at what point a certain detail was revealed. Make sure to check for these during the second viewing.

## Read the questions carefully

Many of the questions will require your analysis or your response to a 'debate' style of question. In these cases, there are going to be many different ways to answer the question. Your response needs to be relevant, well-argued and should use specific, detailed evidence from the required CSP or unseen source. Key to providing a good answer will be that you have read the question properly and made sure that you are answering the question that has been set. It can be tempting to try to write everything you know about a CSP, but some of this information will not be relevant, and will get in the way of you showing what you do know about the issue in the question.

For example, in Media One Section A, as you have seen, you will be asked questions about an unseen source, and about the CSPs related to languages and representations. You will be asked specifically to *analyse* some of these products. Questions like this will usually ask you to analyse the product in relation to something, such as narrative theory, representations of gender or the ability to communicate meaning. You are being asked to write about the product in detail, exploring how individual elements of media language work together to create a specific meaning or effect on the audience, construct a specific representation, or perhaps create a specific appeal. This means that you need to discuss *connotations* rather than simply denotations.

HOME STORY VIDEOS GALLERY PRE-ORDER

ALICIA VIKANDER IS LARA CROFT

Tomb Raider is the story that will set a young and resolute Lara Croft on a path toward becoming a global hero.

STORY

FIERCELY INDEPENDENT LARA CROFT

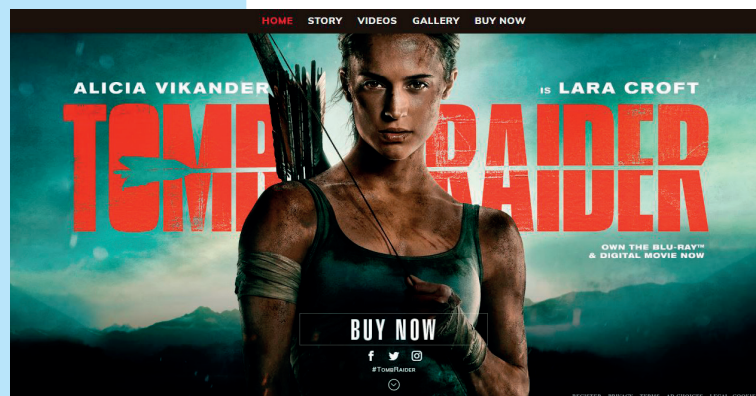
Lara Croft is the fiercely independent daughter of an eccentric adventurer who vanished when she was scarcely a teen. Now a young woman of 21 without any real focus or purpose, Lara navigates the chaotic streets of trendy East London as a bike courier, barely making the rent, and takes college courses, rarely

## Activity 4

Sample exam question: Analyse the 'Story' page from the Tomb Raider Movie website, to show how gender is represented in the Lara Croft character. [12 marks]

Which of these sentences about the images on the webpage feature *analysis* that is *relevant* to the question?

- The webpage has a main image and two smaller images, with the main image being on the left.
- The three images all show Lara Croft in different action situations, including using weapons such as a bow and arrow.
- She is physically attractive, and has a skimpy vest top, which helps to make her attractive to the heterosexual male audience.
- However, she is shown to be active and strong, rather than fitting the 'damsel in distress' stereotype, so female audience members might be drawn to the film because they want to be like her.
- The images are obviously set somewhere hot, connoted by the sunlight and the way she is dressed.
- Lara Croft is always looking slightly to one side of the camera, rather than straight at the audience, so there is no direct mode of address.



Other long-answer questions could ask 'how' or 'why' or could ask you to 'explain'. Make sure you understand what you are being asked to do.

Some questions will give you a statement and ask you to debate this. Such questions could use phrases such as 'To what extent ...?', 'How far do you agree with this statement/view?' or 'How far is this shown to be true?' You are being asked for your opinion, but you must show that your opinion is based on evidence from media products or media industries. Make sure you read the statement carefully, and consider what you can draw from the named CSPs, or from the unseen source with the question, that is relevant to that statement. These are *debate* questions and, as discussed earlier in the chapter, you can choose to agree or disagree with the statement. Strong answers will often examine arguments on both sides before deciding that one side is probably *more* correct than the other.

Finally, if you are told in a question that 'you must refer to ...' or 'your answer should refer to ...' a specific CSP or to a list of bullet points, make sure you do exactly that – there will be specific marks for doing this.

## Extended response questions and the synoptic question

There will be one extended response question on Media One – worth 20 marks. This question will give you some bullet points to guide you as to what to include, including which of your CSPs you should refer to, and which of the contexts you need to write about. You should aim to write about each of the bullet points somewhere in your answer, but you don't have to cover them all equally.

Media Two will also have extended response questions, including the synoptic question. Remember to read these questions carefully, ensuring that you answer everything asked, and that you refer to the correct CSPs or the correct aspects of the extract.



On the front of the Media Two paper, the synoptic question will be clearly sign-posted, with wording such as:

Question z is a synoptic question in which you should draw together knowledge and understanding from across your full course of study.

The wording at the start of the question will say something like:

In this question you will be rewarded for drawing together knowledge and understanding from across your full course of study, including different areas of the theoretical framework and media contexts.

This indicates that you will be asked about an issue where you will be able to apply more than one of the four areas of the theoretical framework. For example, you may be asked to relate the media language and media representations used within a given product to the media industries that produced it or the audiences that engage with that product. You might use what you have learned about the target audience for one of your CSPs to explain why certain people or characters have been represented as they are.

Some of your CSPs come from different contexts, so you might be asked to explain how the contexts have had an impact on the products – how an industry, its products or its audiences have changed over time, for example.

Here is an example of a potential synoptic question:

‘The growth of the internet has caused other, more traditional, media forms to change in order to survive.’ How far is this true of the *Daily Mirror* (CSP)?

*In this question you will be rewarded for drawing together knowledge and understanding from across your full course of study, including different areas of the theoretical framework and media contexts.* [20 marks]

Remember that this is an extended response question and, as was shown earlier, this means you will be assessed on the quality of your written response, ‘including the ability to construct and develop a sustained line of reasoning which is coherent, relevant, substantiated and logically structured’. In other words, you need to have a clear and logical argument in response to the question, which you back up with references to the CSP(s) named.

### Activity 5



Before you continue reading, look at the potential synoptic question above, and consider which of the areas of the theoretical framework, and which of the contexts you could bring in to your answer:

- Media Language
- Media Representations
- Media Audiences
- Media Industries
- historical
- social
- cultural
- political.



## Activity 6

Look at the following notes for a response to this essay.

Can you identify which areas of the theoretical framework each statement refers to?

Which of the media contexts can you see being mentioned?

Choose six of the bullet points, and show how each one can be related to the main argument being put forward in the response.

### Main argument

Problem for traditional newspapers: Audiences can now access the latest news and entertainment 24 hours a day via the internet, with many websites and apps being free to use. People don't want to get their news just once a day and don't want to pay for it.

Result: print newspapers are losing readers. They are trying to compete, and maintain their audience appeal, by providing something of value in the print edition, and by providing digital and online products themselves.

Could include these points, to tie into the main argument:

- Print newspaper sales falling – *Daily Mirror* sales fell almost 19% in 2017.
- Have to keep the cover price low, to compete with free online products.
- Lower sales means less advertising income for print newspapers.
- Some newspapers have a paywall for their websites. The *Daily Mirror* keeps its online site free to use.
- Initially, websites weren't too much competition, because they could only be accessed from computers – newspapers could be carried around and read anywhere.
- Rise of smartphones has increased the problem, as now digital media is even more portable than newspapers.
- More interactive 1 – stories on the *Daily Mirror* website can be shared via social media, using link icons – helps to market the newspaper.
- More interactive 2 – online readers can contribute to discussions about the articles directly on the webpage – easier than writing letters or emails to a newspaper.
- There is a digital version of the paper (for phone and tablet) – for a subscription fee.
- Demographics of users of *Daily Mirror* print newspaper, digital edition and website.
- *Daily Mirror*'s online advertising is rising, but not as fast as print advertising is falling.
- Buying and printing other newspaper titles has helped to keep print costs down.
- The *Daily Mirror* uses the expected conventions of a newspaper, which are familiar to and appeal to certain parts of the media audience. For example, older people are much more likely to buy newspapers than younger people.
- For some people, reading a newspaper over breakfast or on the way to work is a habit they have always had and will continue with.
- Ageing of print audience could lead to further falls in sales in the future.
- Uses and gratifications theory – people buy newspapers for more than just 'surveillance'. They also value other aspects of the paper, such as puzzles – 'diversion'.
- The *Daily Mirror* represents news stories from a left-wing perspective, which attracts a specific audience, who may not get left-wing news elsewhere.

## Tip



*Ashes to Ashes* was a BBC drama series first broadcast in 2008, following on from the earlier series *Life on Mars*, and was a hybrid of police procedural and science fiction genres. In the first episode, the main character, Detective Inspector Alex Drake, was shot in 2008 and then woke up in 1981. The series followed her struggle to take part in police activities in 1981, which she saw as key to her regaining consciousness in 2008.

## Tip



You could use the same question as written for *Ashes to Ashes* to analyse an extract or the full episode of either of your television CSPs. Remember that an extract used in the exam will be about three minutes long.

## Use detailed examples

In an extended-response question, you may be given a statement and asked how far you agree with it. If so, you can argue the case for or against the statement (or a bit of both). Neither one will be the 'correct answer'. Instead, an important part of your response will be providing evidence for the point of view you are putting forwards.

For example, if one of the television CSPs were *Ashes to Ashes*: Episode 1, in Media Two Section A you could be asked:

'TV dramas engage an audience's attention through the use of narrative devices.'

How far do you agree with this statement? Answer with reference to *Ashes to Ashes*: Episode 1. [12 marks]

A partial response could be:

The narrative arc in a TV drama often starts with a disruption to the equilibrium and a search to repair the damage caused. Audiences want to know how this will happen, and whether all the characters will come out better in the end. For example, in the first episode of *Ashes to Ashes*, the main character, DI Alex Drake, is shown apparently being shot in the opening few minutes, so the audience will want to know whether her death can possibly be prevented. They will continue to watch in order to find out. This is also an example of an enigma. Audiences enjoy these because they make people guess ahead, and become actively involved in the story.



Publicity still from *Ashes to Ashes*

## Use media-specific terminology

You already know that you will be asked short-answer questions that test your understanding of media terminology. You will also be expected to use subject specific terminology in each of your answers on both papers. One of the assessment criteria for the exams will be about the appropriate use of subject-specific terminology, with the expectation that students who are working at the highest level will be using this consistently and effectively throughout their answers.

In an unseen source question in Media One Section A, for example, you could be given a magazine cover such as the one on the next page, and asked to analyse it. You should use media terms throughout your answer to make your response as detailed and effective as possible.



## Activity 7

Read the question and partial response below. How could you improve this response through the use of media terminology?

**Example question:** Analyse the cover of *Shout* magazine to show how different elements communicate meaning. [12 marks]

**Partial response:**

The cover has a big picture of The Vamps. It shows them from their feet to the tops of their heads. They are wearing casual clothes and have fashionable hair. As well as the band's name in pink, there is a mint-green shape and white writing over the picture saying 'FUNNY INTERVIEW + FIT POSTERS'. This means people will understand that the words are about them, and that there will be an article about them inside. Three of them are looking at the camera and they are all standing in a casual way. Three are making eye contact with the audience, which suggests that they are friendly and would be happy to get to know the reader. The background is a plain wall, which makes The Vamps stand out. This neutral colour might suggest that they are male, compared with the reader who is probably female – the pink lettering and the hand-writing might be related to the reader.



Shout magazine cover, May 2014

## Don't spend too long on the questions you can answer well

Each question will have a limited amount of space for the answer. This should give you plenty of room to respond, if you stick to the relevant information and arguments. The space is intended to give all candidates enough room, including those with large handwriting. If you have small handwriting, you probably won't need all the space you are given. However, as the questions are often open-ended, you may find that you could write far more about some products than will fit into the space.

Use the number of marks to guide you as to how much time you should spend on each question – the more marks given, the longer the proportion of time you should be using. Each exam is 90 minutes long, and carries 84 marks, so if you leave yourself time for checking at the end, you could plan to use as many minutes as there are marks per question. So, for example, on a 20-mark question, if you are still writing at the end of 20 minutes, you should probably move on to ensure you cover the other questions on the paper. In an open-ended analysis response, you wouldn't be expected to write about every single aspect of the product, and after 20 minutes you may have already written enough to pick up all the marks you're going to.

You will not be expected to cover a certain number of points in order to get full marks – remember we said there was no set format for answering the questions. Instead, you will gain marks for the *quality* of what you have written, including aspects such as how well you have answered the question that has been set, your level of understanding of the theoretical framework and of the contexts of media, and your use of media terminology.



## Activity 7.8

Imagine the question about the *Shout* cover on the previous page is worth 12 marks. Time yourself as you write a response to the question. How much can you write in 12 minutes? Remember to use subject-specific terminology, and to focus on the intended meanings created by the use of media language.

## Possible answers to sample questions

Remember that there could be other relevant and correct answers to each question in addition to those given below. These are given as an indication only.

**Q1.** Page 2. Short question example: What is connoted by the size and positioning of the woman in this advert for Age UK? [2 marks]

**A:** The woman is small in size, at the very edge of a large empty space, as far away from the other elements of the advert as she can be, connoting that she is feeling alone, there is no one else around at all and no one is looking out for her.

**Q2.** Page 3. Short question example: Briefly explain what is meant by the term 'stereotype'. [2 marks]

**A:** A stereotype is a simplified, conventional idea of a group in society, such as teenagers. Stereotypes are often negative. The media use stereotypes to get ideas across quickly about what people are like.

**Q3.** Page 3. Analyse the Age UK advert to show how different elements communicate meaning. [12 marks]

If you had to write a 200-word analysis in response to this, which aspects would you choose to write about?

**A:** Possible aspects include the following, but in 200 words you would not cover *all* of these. **Mise-en-scène of the photograph:** size and positioning of the woman; colour; lighting; large empty space; body language; gender (more sympathy because she's a woman and could be someone's mum?); use of a stereotype. **Text:** size and positioning of the main advert slogan; vocabulary; copy text, including small amount asked to donate. **Logo and charity slogan:** colour, positioning, contrast with rest of advert. **Z-reading?:** from 'no one should have no one' to woman to logo.

**Q4.** Page 3. Short question example: Briefly explain what is meant by conglomerate ownership. [2 marks]

**A:** Conglomerate ownership is when smaller companies, such as Marvel, Lucasfilm and Pixar, are owned by one corporate group, such as Disney.

# Summary

In summary, make sure that you:

- Know and can use subject-specific terminology.
- Understand the four areas of the theoretical framework: Media Languages, Media Representations, Media Industries and Media Audiences.
- Understand how media contexts have impacted on media products.
- Revise thoroughly what you have learned during the course, especially about each of your CSPs.
- Can analyse media products, including those you have not seen before.
- Have familiarised yourself with sample or past papers.
- Read the questions carefully.
- Answer the questions that have been set.
- Use your time wisely to ensure you answer all the questions in the right amount of depth.

## Acknowledgements

p6 Kim Kardashian: Hollywood; p7 goodluz; p8 Dragon Images; p9 Age UK; p10 (top) Young Dracula; p10 (bottom) Tomb Raider Movie; p11 Tomb Raider; p14 Ashes to Ashes; p15 (top) Reproduced with kind permission of D C Thomson Media; p15 (bottom) johavel