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# GCSE

# MEDIA STUDIES

8572/1: Written  
Report on the Examination

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## Overview

Marking this paper proved to be a very satisfying experience. It became clear early in the marking period that centres had prepared their students well for the examination. Similarly, it was also apparent that, in general, students had coped admirably with the demands of the specification.

The increased demand that all reformed GCSE specifications represent should not be underestimated. This is certainly the case for the 8572 specification as a whole with its focus on the theoretical framework. Understandably, despite the range of support and guidance that has been available to centres, the first year and series of any new specification is undeniably the most difficult to prepare students for. It's a challenge that centres have clearly risen to.

Students faced questions that asked them to respond specifically to six of the Close Study Products (CSPs) from the specification. Generally, students handled all of these at least satisfactorily and often with confidence. This shows that centres had prepared students well to work with both the theoretical framework and the CSPs.

It was also pleasing to note that the 'unseen text' on the examination, the *Games TM* magazine front cover, was handled equally well. Students showed that they could apply skills of analysis not just to media products that they had studied in detail during the course, but also to media products they had never seen before.

Being a new specification, the format of the paper is still becoming familiar to centres. However, this paper should not have presented students with any surprises with its format having been previously been clearly indicated and signalled by the Specimen Assessment Materials that have been available to centres.

There was evidence that all aspects of the theoretical framework have been handled well by students. Centres are reminded that Section A focuses on Media Language and Media Representations and Section B on Media Audiences and Media Industries. In practice, it is very difficult to deal with any of the four aspects of the theoretical framework in complete isolation – nor is this advisable. Indeed, a discussion about Media Language will often naturally lead to a conversation about Media Audiences and vice versa. Despite this, the way the paper is structured does have implications for how students should approach particular questions. This will be referred to later in this report.

The use of appropriate subject specific terminology is rewarded throughout the paper. The vast majority of students used relevant terminology appropriately. There was also little evidence of students misunderstanding the subject specific terminology used in the questions on the paper.

## Question 1

A significant number of students gave the correct answer to this multiple-choice question. Given the nature of such questions, it is worth reminding centres that students should be confident using the vocabulary of Media Studies. Key terms need to be understood and recognised. In a question such as this, knowledge of the relevant term is all that is required.

## Question 2

The question required students to analyse the front cover of an unseen media text, *Games TM*, using the theoretical framework of media language and representations to show how design and

layout were used to communicate meaning. The vast majority of students were able to produce a satisfactory analysis of the magazine front cover. Students demonstrated that they could use denotation and connotation to pinpoint aspects of design and layout.

At the lower end of the ability range, some of the analysis was fairly basic. At this level, comments rarely extended beyond simple identification of features or conventions of magazine front covers. Typically, most students' responses tended to focus on the more straightforward or obvious aspects of design and layout.

Some students were able to produce a detailed analysis. However, few students managed to get to grips with the more nuanced aspects of the design and layout of the front cover. At this level the focus of the meanings created was less confident and convincing overall. Many students concentrated only on generic aspects of appeal. Centres are advised that the unseen task will be a stable feature of this paper and are encouraged to provide students with opportunities to practise the skills demanded by this type of question.

### **Question 3**

Question 3 also required students to analyse the front cover of a magazine. For this task the focus was on a CSP, the front cover of *Reveal*. Most students analysed the front cover at least satisfactorily. However, some student responses didn't extend much beyond identification of different elements of the front cover that might appeal to an audience.

Some students were able to offer an excellent analysis that dealt with the nuances of what the front cover of *Reveal* tells us about contemporary social and cultural values. On the other hand, some students wrote far more generally and less convincingly about social and cultural values. Comments regarding these values were often undeveloped. The study of the contexts of the media is a key requirement of this new specification and there is an expectation that students will be familiar with them in relation to the CSPs.

### **Question 4.1**

Many students were able to identify two conventions of print advertising used in the *OMO* advert. However, there were several examples of students referring to advertising conventions that weren't used in the *OMO* advert itself. Similarly, terms such as 'masthead' were used widely – a convention of newspapers and not print advertising. Some confusion seemed to be evident between 'pack shot' (which does feature in the advert) and 'product placement' (which is incorrect).

Centres are reminded that students need to be confident using the vocabulary of the subject. This is a key way that they can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework.

### **Question 4.2**

This question asked students to explain two ways in which advertisements persuade consumers to buy products, referring to the *OMO* advertisement. There were a range of possible aspects that students could have focused on in their responses. Popular choices included the use of an image with direct address, catchy slogans and the positive representations of the mother.

Most students demonstrated a satisfactory knowledge of the theoretical framework and offered a satisfactory explanation of how consumers might be persuaded. A few students chose to give more

than two examples of the ways that adverts persuade. Students are not penalised for doing so. Having said that, there is always the risk that such an approach is somewhat self-penalising, as there is less focus on effective explanation of how consumers are persuaded.

It was rare that students gave inappropriate or incorrect examples in their responses. This indicates that students had been well prepared for the examination. Most students demonstrated understanding of the *OMO* CSP and print advertising in general.

### **Question 4.3**

This question also required students to refer to the *OMO* advertisement. For this task, the focus was on how the social and cultural contexts of the day influenced the way people understood advertisements in the 1950s.

This ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of contexts of media and their influence on media products and processes are assessment objectives of the 8572/1 qualification. This will be a change for many GCSE Media Studies teachers as contexts of media were not explicitly covered on the legacy specification.

Therefore, it was pleasing to see that students had been very well prepared for this particular question. Most students demonstrated at least a satisfactory knowledge of some of the social and cultural aspects of the 1950s. Many responses focused predominantly on representations of gender in the 1950s and were illustrated by appropriate references to the *OMO* advert.

Some responses lacked focus by concentrating more on how social and cultural contexts have changed since the 1950s and less on how contexts had influenced how people would have understood the *OMO* advert in the 1950s.

### **Question 5**

The question focused on the *Galaxy* television advert, another of the CSPs, in relation to how the narrative was structured.

The vast majority of students identified aspects of narrative structure. The most popular choices were Propp's character types (hero, princess/prize, helper, etc) and Todorov's narrative structure (equilibrium, disruption, resolution, etc). In general, the aspects of narrative structure used were entirely relevant. However, at times, student responses were fairly basic in terms of analysis as comments made merely identified aspects of narrative structure.

Some students struggled to convincingly relate the advert to narrative structure. There were also a number of students who appeared to have little or no understanding of narrative structure at all. Instead, responses simply retold aspects of 'the story of the advert', with no reference at all to narrative theory.

### **Question 6**

Surprisingly, this question was not handled particularly well by students. Students had to give two examples of the work of the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). Many students gave the example of age certifications but the number of students who offered a second correct example was disappointingly low. Several responses left blanks or simply gave titles of films. This came as something of a surprise to examiners, as there is clear evidence from the responses given

elsewhere on the paper of students being very well prepared for the exam. The regulation of the media industry is an important area of the theoretical framework and the BBFC is cited within the specification.

### **Question 7**

This question asked students to consider how a music video helps to develop the relationship between a band and its audience. Students were asked to refer to the Arctic Monkeys' video *I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor* (CSP).

Many students approached the task by analysing the music video, mainly in terms of media language. Centres are reminded that Section B of Paper 1 covers Media Audiences and Media Industries, not Media Language.

Of course, none of the elements of the theoretical framework exist in isolation and comments which were made about how language related to the effect on audiences were therefore creditable. However, a point by point analysis of media language in Arctic Monkeys' music video often didn't enable students to have a consistent focus on an explanation of how the music video develops the relationship between the band and audience.

In contrast, some students took an entirely different approach to the task. Some offered various details from a case study explaining Arctic Monkeys' rise to fame. Such details were often relevant but sometimes came at the expense of appropriate and effective reference to the CSP, the video itself.

### **Question 8**

Most students handled the question with some confidence and demonstrated at least satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework.

Generally, students made appropriate and effective reference to Zoella. This clearly demonstrated that students had been well prepared and had engaged with the CSP. A range of examples of how Zoella uses social media to make money were offered, including paid promotions, Zoella's own brand and product lines and her various partnerships with other brands/retailers.

There was usually a good focus on Zoella's social media presence. However, occasionally, students only made passing references to how social media is actually used to make money. The most effective responses gave specific examples of how Zoella monetizes her social media channels and also explored how she cultivates a relationship with her audience.

### **Question 9**

The extended response question is always going to be a challenge for many students. In this task students were required to construct a sustained line of reasoning and make judgements and conclusions based on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a statement given in the question.

Most students took a balanced approach to the statement, 'It is very difficult for players to resist the harmful effects of video games.' Most students gave some reasons why they agreed with the statement and then gave the alternative viewpoints by offering reasons why they disagreed to some extent as well.

Responses that came down heavily on one side of the argument were also seen. There is no expectation that responses should be entirely balanced, and neither does the construction of a clear argument on either side of the debate preclude students from reaching the higher mark bands. However, typically, the one-side arguments that were seen in response to this question were not always convincing.

The vast majority of students maintained a good focus on the harmful effects of video games and demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of some of the key issues and arguments that exist around the issue.

The three bullet points given in the question were not always covered consistently. The first bullet point, 'social and cultural contexts of video games', was occasionally not explicitly discussed at all. Coverage of contexts was often implicit or lacking any great depth. In contrast, the second bullet point: *Kim Kardashian: Hollywood* was addressed well by students. It was clear that students had engaged with the CSP and had been well prepared on it. Many students chose, successfully, to illustrate their responses with references to other video games, such as the other CSP, *Lara Croft, Go* and *Grand Theft Auto*.

Generally speaking, students were able to construct judgements and conclusions that were at least satisfactory. Where the arguments were perhaps not entirely convincing, students still received credit for attempting to present an argument.

## **Conclusion**

Centres should be congratulated and thanked for their hard work and in preparing students for this paper. We recognise the demands of preparing for a new specification. In terms of content, knowledge, skills and understanding have significantly changed from the legacy specification. Similarly, the demands of question difficulty have been raised too. Despite these challenges and demands, students have clearly been prepared well for the examination and engaged well with the course. It is hoped that the comments and advice contained in this report will help centres to have even more confidence to prepare their students for the 2020 series of this examination.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

### **Use of statistics**

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.