



GCSE

MEDIA STUDIES

8572/2: Written
Report on the Examination

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Overview

Students coped very well with this first Media 2 examination of the reformed specification. There was ample evidence that Close Study Products (CSPs) had been studied in depth and Section A revealed strong analytical skills in relation to a moving image product. The questions on the paper proved to be accessible and very few answers demonstrated misinterpretation. However, it was not uncommon to find partially complete responses or instances of questions not attempted.

Overall, students seemed to be more confident and well-informed when tackling Section A's Television questions than they were with the Section B questions on Newspapers. Nevertheless, many students relished the opportunities provided in Section B to demonstrate just how well-prepared they were to discuss aspects of the press. A number of students used the opportunity to assert, with some justification, that the print press is a 'dying industry' as readers desert print in favour of online sources of information. They may be right, but Newspapers are and will remain a key area of GCSE Media Studies, not least because of their powerful agenda setting influence, their historical significance and their comprehensive integration within multimedia organisations and formats.

With so much evidence of good teaching and learning, it may seem a bit negative to dwell on all those things that went wrong rather than what went right, however that's always the way with these reports. Now that the first live examination is over, all of us, examiners as well as teachers, will want to learn from the experience so that we can improve our future performances.

Undeniably, the demands of the reformed GCSE specification exceed those of their predecessors. In this Media 2 exam, this is especially true because of the requirement for 'extended response' answers to the three 20 mark questions. Additionally, 36 of the 84 marks are allocated to Assessment Objective AO2 1b which relates to students' ability to 'make judgements and form conclusions'. It is critical, therefore, that students are able to write highly focused argument-based essays which are 'coherent, relevant, substantiated and logically structured', to quote from the exam rubric. Here, 'substantiated' means 'based on evidence' and this evidence will usually be drawn from the CSPs. Simply stating a view or opinion is of little or no value without this kind of support. Students will always benefit from time spent practising this sort of disciplined and structured writing.

Some questions (A1.2, A1.3 and B4) limit the scope of the required response by setting out specific areas or elements which must be incorporated into the answer. This device is designed to help students by telling them how to structure the answer. Unfortunately, many students disadvantaged themselves by ignoring this component of the question or, perhaps, by treating it as a set of suggestions rather than a requirement. Hopefully, students will learn how to deal with questions such as this by carefully mapping their responses against the checklist in the question.

Question B5 will always be something of an exception to the above because of its synoptic nature. Here, students will always have some scope to set their own agendas by drawing on relevant material from anywhere within the theoretical framework, the contexts or the CSPs.

SECTION A

Questions A1.1-1.3 refer to the screening and answers should refer explicitly to the screening. Material drawn from elsewhere in the same episode may be acknowledged as context but will not be rewarded in the same way as examples and references drawn directly from the screening.

Question 1.1

Most students tackled this task effectively and were able to identify two science fiction/science fantasy conventions illustrated in the extract. Some students unnecessarily wrote at length even, in some cases, requiring additional paper for their answers. In tasks such as this a short sentence or phrase is all that is required. One-word answers, however, did not always suffice. For example, 'swords' was not rewarded with a mark though 'swords magically appearing' was fine. Some answers were not rewarded because they did not appear in the extract. These included, for example, spaceships, astronauts and portals between worlds.

Question 1.2

On the whole, this proved to be an accessible and well answered question. Nearly all students were proficient and practised in reading a text; confidently identifying meanings attached to the camerawork, sound and editing. Good answers tended to use these three categories as an organising principle, for example by devoting paragraphs of roughly equal length to each of them. Answers which dealt with only one or two of these categories were effectively self-penalising.

Although examiners have some discretion in balancing the merits of breadth and depth, a response which omits elements required by the task will not have access to the full range of marks. Weaker answers identified only vague meanings or focused solely on description rather than interpretation of the extract.

Most answers used subject specific terminology very effectively, for example by identifying various different camera shots, camera movements or editing techniques utilised in the extract. It is always difficult to describe sound effects and music with precision, but many students demonstrated great skill in descriptive writing as they referenced the various types of music and sound effects employed in the extract.

A few students wrote convincingly about the actors' delivery of the dialogue, referring to volume, pace and tone of voice. More though concentrated on the electronic manipulation of the Shadow Kin voices.

Question 1.3

Many students coped well with this item, carefully observing the requirement to deal with non-verbal codes, characters and storylines. The format of the question, a somewhat contentious statement followed by a "how far does an analysis [...] show this to be true?" question was designed to elicit responses that addressed the 'Make judgements and draw conclusions' assessment objective (A02 1b). Students argued successfully for or against the statement or offered more nuanced responses. All these approaches were rewarded in accordance with the quality of the argument and, most importantly, the quality of supporting evidence drawn from the extract.

The role of CGI and technological developments in cameras, prosthetics and editing equipment were all cited in relation to non-verbal codes and it was good to see so many answers drawing relevantly on ideas about narrative structure to support discussions of character and storyline. As in QA.2 above, weaker answers were often characterised by a failure to deal with all three of non-verbal codes, character and storylines. Similarly, some students tripped up on another clear requirement of the question indicated by 'How far does an analysis of the extract [. . .]'? Of course, the preceding statement clearly legitimised reference to early Dr Who, but some students offered a

detailed analysis of *An Unearthly Child* followed by only limited discussion of the extract from *Co-Owner of a Lonely Heart*.

On the whole, the extract-based questions were answered well which was gratifying to see.

Question 2

Here the statement/response format was once again designed to encourage answers demonstrating the ability to ‘Make judgements and draw conclusions.’ The reference to ‘society’s values and beliefs’ encouraged students to deal with social, cultural and historical contexts in their answers. There were many strong responses which admirably fulfilled these requirements. Clearly, this is a very well taught area and the majority of students were able to draw on a well-informed fund of knowledge about gender relations and representations of gender in the 1960s and today.

Some answers took the view that *An Unearthly Child* straightforwardly communicated patriarchal ideology in every respect. Others, conversely, argued that there was some evidence of ‘mould-breaking’ with respect to gender stereotyping in this CSP, particularly when considering Susan’s role. It really didn’t matter which of these approaches was taken as long as CSP evidence was used in support. Similarly, some saw *Co-owner* as a starkly contrasting illustration of the ways in which a patriarchal value system has been thoroughly dismissed. Others, however, found evidence of gender inequality and power differences here as well. Once again, examiners looked only for quality of argument.

On the whole, gender is clearly well understood as a concept and the students were broadly familiar with the changing contexts that interact with representations of gender. Gratifyingly, many good answers dealt with the changing representation of both masculinity and femininity. Unfortunately, a minority of answers (though still a substantial number) strayed well beyond the designated topic to discuss ethnicity, age, ability and disability, often with little or no reference to gender. The message from examiners to students is: ‘These are focused questions. Don’t interpret them loosely’.

SECTION B

Question 3

Although many students had a vague idea of the role of IPSO, few were able to answer with precision. Many answers over-estimated the powers of IPSO and the extent of its role.

Question 4

Most students agreed with the statement though some pointed out that target audiences were deserting print newspapers, perhaps due to failures of front page presentation. On the whole, students were more confident and well-informed in dealing with presentational aspects of newspapers rather than the issues of ownership and control raised by Question B5. Answers demonstrated an impressively comprehensive knowledge of the two CSPs, often quoting in detail from the two front pages. With so much to say, a high proportion of responses used continuation sheets in order to consider all the designated elements: layout, use of images, typography and use of language. Weaker answers lacked familiarity with the CSPs but were still able to make some progress by offering generic observations about the different presentational styles of the two newspapers. In spite of some confusion over technical terms (e.g. serif and sans serif) a good range of subject specific terminology was deployed in students’ analyses. Most were able

accurately to describe the two different target audiences and link these to the contrasting front pages of *The Times* and the *Daily Mirror*.

To their detriment, a number of answers moved beyond the terms of reference of the question, straying into areas such as news values, political orientation or the content rather than presentation of the front page components.

Question 5

Understandably, perhaps, this proved to be the most demanding question on the paper. Successful answers needed to draw on a good knowledge and understanding of newspaper ownership as well as an ability to bring to bear material from other areas of the specification in order to fulfil the synoptic requirement. It was difficult to make substantial progress without a recognition of the contrasting political allegiances of the two newspapers. Many of the best answers made effective use of the Muirfield stories and the different ways in which this was approached by the *Daily Mirror* and *The Times*.

A number of good responses challenged the underlying assumptions of the statement. These suggested that other parties such as the readership, advertisers or regulators exercise influence on a par with 'the ownership and control of the organisations.'

The synoptic requirement was successfully met in a number of ways. For example, some responses discussed the audience or the role of the press in influencing public opinion or the government. Another interesting and relevant approach was to contrast the press with other media such as television and online news, particularly with respect to statutory regulation such as the requirement for broadcast TV news to be balanced, when there is no such requirement of print newspapers.

Alternatively, a number of answers drew on the two film CSPs to examine the input of ownership on *I, Daniel Blake* or *Dr Strange*. Music video and video games were also referenced in wider discussions of the influence of owners. However, many responses made no attempt at all to address the synoptic aspect of the task.

Quite a high proportion of students could only make generic assertions with no reference to CSPs or any other evidence. Additionally, this item was not attempted at all by 10% of students either because they ran out of time or because of the demands of the question. This factor contributed significantly to the low mean (average) mark for this question: just under 6 marks out of 20.

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.