

## Teacher Resource Bank

A-level Media Studies  
MEST4: Exemplar Titles





## Interesting Critical Investigations

Below are a selection of titles that were of interest over the past two years. It is by no means a comprehensive list but a selection from the literally thousands of areas and titles offered over the past three sessions of MEST4. The topic areas are stimulating and interesting. It must be remembered however that each essay title requires a fairly sharp focus – it is usual to look at no more than three different media products – and all of these titles would have to be checked against the [MEST4 Checklist](#) to ensure synopticity, engagement with the key concepts and wider contexts and a fundamental attempt to ask the question why (explicit or implicit in the question).

These are offered **not** as a template for next summer but as an opportunity to see the variety of possible areas that candidates have chosen to research over the past two years and are offered as a useful means of suggesting to candidates the plethora of topic areas available year by year.

## Topic Titles

- Has the figure of the vampire been reinvented in order to inject new blood into a well-established genre?
- Do cult US animations like *The Simpsons* and *South Park* challenge or reinforce political correctness?
- 'Wars might change but the fears remain the same.' How and why contemporary war films tap into universal fears and anxieties concerning conflict and violence.
- Possible texts: *The Hurt Locker*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Black Hawk Down*
- Do contemporary science fiction hybrids appeal to an audience by tapping into post-apocalyptic fears and anxieties?
- Possible texts: *I am Legend*/*28 Weeks Later*
- Paul Manning in *Drugs and Popular Culture: Drugs Meaning and Identity in Contemporary Society* states that "illegal drugs have moved from the sub cultural to the cultural mainstream. Through an analysis of texts such as *Pineapple Express* and *Shameless* consider if this is an accurate statement and if so why have drugs become an acceptable part of 21<sup>st</sup> century culture?
- In what ways does *(500) Days of Summer* challenge and augment the typical conventions of the romantic comedy genre and what values/ideologies are consequently presented to contemporary audiences regarding romance and relationships?
- Advertisements like the recent ones for John Lewis, M&S and Warburton are typical of the post modern trend in advertising for downplaying the product itself, focusing instead on the creation of a distinctive brand personality.

- Texts such as *The Lovely Bones*, in their foregrounding of religious and supernatural elements, are characteristic of the backlash against the rationality and cynicism of contemporary culture.
- Why have science and technology taken the primary role in TV crime shows?
- "Remakes limit the potential for quality with no regard for the actual product and total regard for its market ability." Have film remakes been as successful as the originals and why?
- How and why has the *Twilight saga* been used to promote conservative ideologies to young people?
- Is there a link between new forms of instant messaging and teenage crime?
- Are the narratives of the *X Factor* more important to its success than the music acts it produces?
- 'The media is increasingly fuelling the climate of fear about the immediate threat of terrorism' using 'Spooks' as a key text.
- What determines brands' public images? A study of media-based brand management techniques employed by M&S, McDonalds, Nike and Virgin.
- Are newspapers a 'dead' media or do they still exert significant influence on society?
- Possible texts: The Sun/The Telegraph/BBC news website
- To what extent do contemporary science fiction hybrids appeal to an audience by tapping into post-apocalyptic fears and anxieties?
- Can musicians ever be truly controversial or is it something record companies utilise to sell records?
- Has the evolution of faster paced editing influenced the validity of modern documentary?
- Is genre still a relevant concept given the post-modern nature of many contemporary texts?
- "Alternative media quickly evolve into the mainstream." Why might this be so? Discuss with regard to the marketing of the artist Dizzee Rascal.
- Why does innovative/ironic advertising appear mostly on the internet but rarely in traditional print based media?
- Why do radio stations increasingly rely upon podcasting, videos and internet streaming to widen their demographic?

- 'Strictly Come Dancing' and 'Dancing on Ice': Fun talent shows aimed at bringing together whole family audiences, or clever marketing tools to further the careers of minor celebrities?
- Britain's press has been using increasingly aggressive journalism in order to maintain its place in the media marketplace. Many legal professionals have called for stricter control of the press through legislation - is this right?