

Media Studies

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J526**

OCR Report to Centres

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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B322/B323 Textual Analysis and Media Studies Topic

This was the first examination using the new answer booklet, which provided a visual guideline - in the form of spaces in which candidates were to write their answers - as to the expected length of answers to individual questions.

This led to some positive changes:

- Fewer candidates wrote too much for Question One; candidates should be advised that the space provided is easily enough to earn full marks for this question and any greater length is usually wasted time and effort
- Most candidates wrote less for Question Two than in previous years
- Most candidates wrote more for Question Three than in previous years
- All questions were attempted in the majority of responses
- There were only a few examples of rubric infringement.

Separating the answer for Question One into 'Explanation 1' and 'Explanation 2' was designed to give extra support to candidates who needed it to follow the rubric. However, this very often led to repetition where candidates had already given two conventions in the first part of the answer and did not seem to offer the intended support to candidates. Therefore **this format may be changed in the 2013 exam paper** so candidates can structure their answer in their own way.

Candidates should be advised that restricting the length of their Question Two answers means that they need to be concise and focused to achieve the higher mark bands, but they should then gain the advantage of having more time for the remaining questions. To be focused they need to concentrate solely on the use of media language elements and their effects, not on the generic conventions or representation issues that are covered in Questions One and Three.

B322 Textual analysis (action adventure extract)

Section A

Q1

This was generally well answered with a high proportion of candidates able to identify two or more conventions, such as: 'heroes v villains', 'underdog hero', 'quest to save the damsel in distress'. The use of terminology such as 'generic convention', 'antagonist' and 'protagonist' was common among higher end responses.

A few responses dealt with 'the hero' as one convention and 'the villain' as another, this could count as two conventions if dealt with thoroughly, but candidates would be better advised to treat 'hero and villain' as one convention.

Some weaker responses described the extract without explaining how these elements were 'typical' or 'conventions'; such candidates should perhaps be advised to reiterate the point about 'fitting the action adventure genre' and to attempt some textual reference.

Some weaker answers tended to veer off towards a discussion of stereotypes, which did not refer to the sequence in detail but instead formed a more generalised discussion of the action adventure genre. A few answers concentrated more on the effect of the sequence – thus moving towards what is required in Question Two.

Q2

Most candidates seemed well prepared to answer this question, but they should be advised to always consider the connotative effect of the media language element they have identified, as some simply listed technical features with no attempt to explain their effect on the audience. Encouragingly, fewer candidates conflated camerawork and editing in this examination as the two technical areas are now split in the answer booklet.

The instruction in the question to pick examples 'that fit the action adventure genre' appears to be prompting some candidates to repeat their discussion of generic conventions from question one. This was not the intention of this question, which tests candidates' understanding of media language, so **this question will be changed in the future to remove the reference to the genre**. Candidates should still be encouraged to avoid very generalised analysis, such as 'the extract uses cuts', that could be made of almost any extract from any genre.

Soundtrack

- Better answers identified positive features rather than commenting upon what was missing from the soundtrack, often quoting the sound effects of the gunfire or glass shattering
- Better answers did not equate 'soundtrack' to 'music', unlike those candidates who wrongly stated that 'there was no soundtrack', sometimes not writing anything beyond this; a surprising number of candidates heard music that wasn't there
- Most candidates were confident in distinguishing 'diegetic' and 'non-diegetic' sound, but some answers did so without analysing any example from the soundtrack - candidates should be advised that the use of terminology earns marks, but they do need to answer the question
- Some responses identified the absence of sound as being crucial in building up tension along with the song that Grocer sings off screen and how it taunts Martin.

Editing

- Better answers often focused on the changes in pace of editing in the extract. Weaker answers would cite the 'fast pace' or 'slow pace' in the extract as a whole without noting the changes in pace
- Shot-reverse-shots were referenced well, but many candidates confused 'cross-cutting' and 'shot-reverse-shot'
- Better answers made accurate reference to the post-production effects used for gunshots, but weaker answers failed to comment on their connotative significance
- Some good answers explained how editing created perspective and gave the most screen-time to Martin, establishing him as the hero despite the fact that he shoots people.
- Editing is still the most problematic of the four bullets: some candidates dealt inappropriately with aspects of sound under editing; many answers discussed non-existent jump-cuts

Mise en scène

- Many good answers commented upon the contrast between the domestic setting and the violent action, the sense of entrapment, or the use of lighting within the extract
- Comments on props were very often descriptive ('there are guns') or linked solely to generic conventions ('guns are found in action adventure films')
- Comments on dress were often the strongest parts of candidates' answers; however, comments on the colour symbolism of the clothing were not always convincing, and some assumptions about the fashions of the 1990s got in the way of discussing the effect created by the costume.

Camerawork

- Camerawork elicited the best responses from many candidates, with many useful comments on such examples as: the use of a close up in the marriage proposal section, the use of a Dutch tilt in the kitchen, the tracking shot as the threesome run up the stairs, the POV shot as Martin runs down into the kitchen, the tracking shot from one side of the kitchen bar to the other
- However, some responses were very general: such responses might reference the frequent use of close ups, mid shots and long shots;
- In some responses terminology was used incorrectly – in particular there was confusion between 'point of view' shots and 'over the shoulder shots' - or used to cover aspects of camerawork which were not present in the clip, such as the 'bird's eye view' and 'zooms'
- While candidates are not necessarily penalised for small errors of detail, describing a very clear tracking shot as a 'pan' is not rewarded
- Weaker candidates appeared to be applying pre-learned analysis ("lots of close ups to show emotion") and argued that there were 'plenty of close-ups' when there was only one
- Some responses referenced other films in some detail - marks are only available for reference to the extract

Q3

Many good answers to this question discussed how violence is a male activity, unless you are both old and male, in which case you need protection from the violence that frightens you. Many identified that although Debi was the stereotypically weak and vulnerable female 'damsel in distress', she was prepared to protect herself against the enemy and therefore challenged many of the expected behaviours of a stereotypical female character in an action film. Ethnicity was often discussed in terms of the ethnic similarity between the hero and villain.

Many weaker responses seemed very short, often less than a page. Some were very descriptive responses focusing on characterisation and/or generic conventions (what makes Martin a typical 'hero', or Debi a typical 'damsel in distress') with no attempt to consider the

representation of social groups. Some answers still made no reference to stereotypes, which restricted their mark to level two, at best, but often level one.

A number of candidates appeared to have a list of social groups (Gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, class) that they doggedly worked through, whether relevant or not to this particular extract - commenting on their 'absence' from the extract if appropriate. While it is good practice for candidates to arrive in the exam armed with such a 'representation toolkit', they are perhaps best advised to focus on the groups that are *present* in the extract, albeit with a sense of the absences that this implies (for example, to analyse the 'stereotypically able-bodied hero', rather than simply state 'there are no disabled people').

This is often the weakest answer on the paper, with some candidates failing to move beyond 'common-sense' responses. The instruction to refer to stereotypes in the answer does appear to have prompted more representation analysis, so it is proposed to increase the scaffolding for this question in the 2013 papers. The question will suggest a list of social groups for the candidates to consider in their answers.

B323 Textual analysis (lifestyle magazine extract)

Section A

Q1

Better answers discussed and exemplified two conventions of the lifestyle magazine genre as a whole, such as: the direct address to the audience; the use of a cover model dominating the front page; the sense of addressing the implied audience's lifestyle.

Weaker answers discussed the conventions of the women's lifestyle magazine and thus cited supposed conventions such as contents about 'beauty', that do not qualify as conventions of the genre as a whole.

Q2

Most candidates were clear about what constitutes layout, but fewer could explicitly discuss intended effects. The mix of serif and sans serif fonts was picked up by the better answers for the typography section and linked to notions of modernity/tradition and, somewhat less successfully, to social class. Weaker answers tended to generalisations such as: 'the fonts are serif'. Most candidates could discuss the use of colour effectively and could exemplify language use such as direct address and imperatives.

Q3

Answers to Question Three were often quite short, but most candidates addressed the representation of femininity. Surprisingly few addressed the representation of ethnicity. Nearly all answers used the concept of stereotyping and most supplied textual exemplification to back up their arguments. This was often the most successfully answered question on the paper. For this reason, there are no plans to provide lists of possible areas of representation to explore in future examination papers, unlike the Moving Image option.

Section B

Q4a

This question was generally well answered – however some candidates still forgot to mention the programme's day, time and channel, despite being asked for this information in the question, and therefore restricted their marks considerably. The day was the most likely to be missed, even when the candidate had given a date of first transmission (which is not asked for).

Better answers used terminology accurately - watershed, inheritance, stripping, channel ethos, PSB - applied to well chosen case studies, eg QI, Benidorm, Gavin and Stacey, Russell Howard's Good News. There were many good answers with comments on Channel 4's ethos, but candidates sometimes, but not always, struggled to fit a comedy programme into the BBC's 'educate, inform, and entertain'. Responses using channels like DAVE often had less to say, with a lot of marks lost by candidates being vague about day of broadcast ('daily') and time of broadcast ('all day').

The choice of programme disadvantaged some candidates - especially 'Friends' which numerous responses stated was shown at 9pm on Channel 4 on Fridays then the response chronicled the programme's broadcast history, giving the channel of broadcast insufficient consideration because there were three or four channels to consider.

4b

This question was generally well answered. The best answers were more comparative - the more differences between the two programmes the better the response. Good responses analysed and exemplified a range of pleasures and took care to explain why pleasures such as 'familiarity' or 'predictability' might be appealing to an audience.

Less sound answers gave a range of audience pleasures but failed to provide exemplification to support the points made, or exemplification was minimal - eg Smithy in Gavin and Stacey shouting 'Gav-laaar!' being the only piece of textual evidence for 'audience pleasures' in a number of answers. Responses that used Harry Hill's TV Burp sometimes fitted into this category – candidates did not have clear examples from the programme to refer to, instead making general reference to aspects of the show that feature each week and that are quite 'broad' (use of the 'fight' just before the break, and Harry Hill falling off his chair).

Weaker responses tended to describe aspects of the texts which were 'funny' but failed to identify pleasures beyond this. A number of answers simply listed points about programmes without explaining that they were audience pleasures - as with Question One, candidates should reiterate what they are writing about, in this case 'audience pleasures'.

Only a few candidates gave only one text.

Popular programmes included: Gavin and Stacey, Outnumbered, Peep Show, Celebrity Juice, QI, Russell Howard's Good News; Benidorm, Live at the Apollo, My Family, Friends, Have I Got News for You; Phoneshop; Big Bang Theory.

Good combinations of programmes included: Gavin and Stacey and QI; Benidorm and QI; Benidorm and Have I Got News for You.

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