



## Bridging Unit: A Level Media Studies Exam board: AQA

**What are the bridging tasks?** These have been designed to give you a sample of a range of things we do in Media.

1. You will start with a 'Warm up task', using a bit of Media terminology, and researching what the words mean.
2. The 'Main tasks: Engaging with the frameworks' section is made up of four different tasks that relate to the 'frameworks' we study. Here, there is an where extension you can choose to use by applying some Media theories. You will find these in a box at the end of this document.
3. The final task is a practical task where you get to be a bit creative and use some media software.

**What am I looking for?** I want to see close engagement with the tasks, with evidence and examples used, and clear explanations given. This should give me an idea of how you are beginning to think like a person who analyses the media and reflects on how the media communicate ideas, and how and why you are using it. Finally, I'd like to see a bit of creativity in the practical tasks, with you pushing yourself towards more professional looking pieces of media, showing some developed skills in photography, filming and graphics.

### Warm up task: Media Terminology

A Level courses are full of new and often unfamiliar words that are crucial to learn. This will introduce you to a few we use in Media. **Find definitions and examples of the following media terms:**

Mise en scene <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>  
Iconography <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>  
Common conventions <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>  
Diegetic sound <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>  
Non diegetic sound <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>  
Representations <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>  
Stereotype <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>  
Colour connotations <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>  
Moral panics <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>  
Hypodermic Needle Theory <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

For example, if I'd asked for a definition and example of 'mean world syndrome' you might write this:

*Mean world syndrome: when people watch too much negative news, they begin to think the world is 'mean'.*

*Example: most of the news about teenagers in some newspapers is negative, calling them 'thugs' and linking them to crime. This might make some people believe all teenagers are bad.*

### Main tasks: Engaging with the frameworks

There are four 'frameworks' on the Media course (Media Language, Audiences, Representations and Industry). The four tasks below will give you a flavour of each of these. **You can do these in any order you choose.** You also have the option of reading and applying some Media theories (these are under these tasks).

#### Media Language:

Find a front cover of a magazine that targets a specific gender (i.e. Vogue, Men's Health, GQ Magazine, Elle). These can be found by doing a search on Google images. Annotate it in detail to show what ideas are being created about that gender. Alternatively, you can describe them. If you like, you could use some of the Media theory below (Barthes). Make sure you pick out a range of evidence – precise details of photographs such as colours, poses, the way they look at the camera, lighting, clothing, props, words etc.

## Media Representations:

1. Decide on a specific group in society (for example, teenagers, black women, Muslim men, disabled people, elderly people, men, women... etc). Think about some different examples of how you have seen them represented in the media. Make some quick notes on this – your examples could be a range of different types of media from news to films, soap operas to documentaries, YouTube to newspapers – the broader the range the better. For example, I might choose teachers, then look at a teacher doing a blog for other teachers or their students, a news article about teachers that says they are all terrible, and another praising a teacher for being a hero, then a TV drama such as *The Inbetweeners* I might pick out some pictures to think about, and a few different quotes from each, or a scene in *The Inbetweeners* to think about how they are represented.
2. Using your examples, explain how you think the media might be able to influence the ways people see that group.

## Media Industry:

Another important areas for Media students to develop are research skills. This next task will help you. Ensure that you use clear search terms, and double check that your information is correct. Then you need to think carefully about what you learn from your research.

1. Find out who owns *The Daily Mail*, and *The Guardian*.
2. Research these people (one person for *The Daily Mail* and a trust for *The Guardian*. Do a little reading about them. *The Guardian* has an excellent video on its website about its trust.)
3. Find out the differences between a *tabloid* and a *broadsheet*, and what each of these newspapers is.
4. Pick a front page from *The Daily Mail*, and one from *The Guardian* – find one that is covering the same event. The PaperBoy <https://www.thepaperboy.com/uk/> is useful to help you find them. The ones on Trump's visit to the UK are very interesting – search dates for events, then look up the date on The PaperBoy to find the papers for that day.
5. Explain how you think their ownership and genre (tabloid and broadsheet) have influenced the way they have written their stories. Look at their use of language, and photographs. Think carefully about the choices of photographs – they often have thousands to choose between – why pick those? What ideas did they want to create, and what do they suggest about what they believe? Aim to link this back to their owners.

## Media Audiences:

This part is all about you – how and why you use media, and how it might influence you. You are going to read two media theories. Then you are going to think about a range of media you use, and explain the reasons (using the theories) that you use it. I will give examples below.

**Theory 1: Dyer's Utopian Theory** suggests that we use media to fill a 'gap' or a 'lack' in our lives. For example, if we lack power, we might enjoy watching superhero films where people have incredible power. If we don't have much money, we might use media that allows us to see lives filled with luxury. If our lives feel completely safe, we may even enjoy media that shows unstable lives.

**You can do some further reading about this theory online – there are lots of explanations of it.**

### Dyer's Utopian Theory Task:

Using at least four different pieces of media you use, explain why you use them, using this theory. *i.e. one of mine could be - I like watching 'Race Around the World' at the moment because I don't have any adventure in my life.*

**Theory 2: Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratifications.** They suggest that there are four reasons why

we use media texts:

1. **Diversión** (escapism): The audience use the media for escapism or emotional release from everyday pressure (*i.e. I like watching sci-fis like 'Future Man' as it is a complete escape from the real world into a fictional world – it is also funny.*)
2. **Personal Relationships:** The audience use media texts to form relationships with 'known' TV programmes or characters, as well as relationships with other people who can discuss the same media texts. "Did you see East Enders? I really felt for poor Peggy/Sharon, Little Mo....." (*i.e. Twitter: lots of people enjoy following footballers, or celebrities on Twitter. They may also enjoy talking with their friends about them.*)
3. **Personal Identity:** The audience use media texts to compare their own life with characters' lives and situations, or to further develop our own sense of identity. (*i.e. News – The Guardian: when I see people whose lives are really difficult, it makes me recognise how lucky I am. Or, when I watch Masterchef, it helps me learn new cooking techniques.*)
4. **Surveillance:** The audience use media texts to see what is going on in the world. (*i.e. Twitter: some people love to follow what celebrities are doing; others like to follow the news to keep up to date with current affairs.*)

### **Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratifications Task:**

**Using at least four different pieces of media you use, explain why you use them, using this theory.**

Look again at the examples in brackets if you are stuck There might be some media texts you use for more than one reason

### **Practical tasks**

Remember that I am a fussy Media teacher so I have high expectations of these and don't just want a silly cat video or Tik Tok prank. I'd like you to begin to play with some media software to begin to make some pieces of media by using some editing processes. I want to see some imagination, creativity and care taken over these tasks. Make use of the many free resources available to develop your skills. You could even download the Adobe Creative Cloud and do some lessons before you complete these tasks, or just make use of the millions of YouTube videos showing you how to use different software.

*Note: if you film or take photos on your phones, you may need to use an online video/file converter to convert the file types into mpeg/ .mp4 or another format the software can read. If you have your phone's backup activated, it is often more easy to download videos and photos from a cloud backup than directly from the phone. There is lots of advice online to help you do this from your particular device.*

*If you don't have access to any devices to take photos or film, you could do sketches of what you would have made to show me your creativity. Have a quick look online for 'film storyboard examples', and do these tasks in that format instead. If you can't draw, you could just use simple stick men but focus instead on interesting camera angles. Ensure you pay careful attention to details.*

#### **Task 1:**

All of you - start by taking some interesting photos with your phone, or camera if you have one - look on the Internet for ideas of how to take great photos. Then use [Wix](#), and play with some layouts to turn your photos into a website. We can share these when you start the course, so aim to show off good photography skills.

#### **Task 2 Choices:**

Make a short video using some of the skills you've learned in your photography – it could be a music video starring you or your family, an advert for a real product, or a fantasy one, a commentary on somebody performing a sports activity done in the style of a real sports commentary. Be imaginative. Make sure that you do some editing on this – there are lots of online, free ways to do this, and most phones and computers have it already installed. Then you can use Wix and upload it to your website.

**or**

Make a few pages of a magazine, or a blog using Wix, on a subject of your choice - perhaps fashion for the isolation age, backyard football, travel, cooking, beekeeping... there are limitless options.

**End of tasks**

[Go to the next page to see the bitesize theories](#)

**Bitesize Media Theories:** You do not have to use these but they will give you some interesting new ways to think about Media – and get you a step ahead.

These are all ideas that have been created by academics who we study. There are 17 in total and you can do further research on them if you choose. However, here is a tiny snapshot.

### **Media Language: Roland Barthes – semiology**

- Media products are decoded by readers (we read messages in them, such as red can be decoded as ‘danger’)
- Denotations occur when we recognise literal meanings, or physical objects (i.e. a picture of a man = man)
- Connotations are when words and objects can have associated meanings that we share across culture (i.e. a picture of a muscular man towering over us, with a glow around the edges, would represent him as god-like).
- When words and images are used together they can form complex meanings (think about the different features in the idea above). We call these different words and images ‘signs’ or ‘codes’. (i.e. the word ‘love’ is a verbal code, the colour red is a visual code.).
- Signs can help to reinforce myths in society (i.e. the myth of masculinity reinforces ideas that men should be strong, not have emotions, be violent etc.)

### **Representation: Liesbet Van Zoonen**

- The media has a powerful influence on our identities and can shape ideas of gender. (i.e. there is no ‘truth’ about what a man or woman should be like but we get lots of our ideas from the media).
- In a patriarchal society, women’s bodies are seen as objects and different to male bodies as powerful and strong. The ‘male gaze’ invites women to be looked at which makes them passive, and demeans them (i.e. many media images of women focus on their bodies and ideas of beauty, these encourage them to be looked at, as objects, not people.)
- Gender is performative based on ‘what we do’ not our biology (i.e. as there is not ‘truth’ about how men or women should behave, we can perform how we choose – women can be violent and men can be gentle.)
- Passive women/active male representations reinforce male social dominance.
- Representations can challenge dominant ideas in society.

### **Media Industries: Curran & Seaton – Power & Media Industries**

- Patterns of ownership and control are the most important factors in how the media operates (i.e. big companies with share holders are likely to mostly focus on making a profit – consider the importance of this with news)
- Media industries increasingly concentrate into larger, more powerful conglomerates (for example, in the UK, more than 60% of our national newspapers are owned by two billionaires).
- This narrows the range of ideas represented and lowers quality and creativity in seeking profit
- Big media corporations have power without responsibility (unlike politicians, they do not have to answer for their actions)

### **Media Audiences: Gerbner’s Cultivation Theory**

- The media cultivates beliefs and ideologies and acts as a form of socialisation
- It can be a stronger form of socialisation than real-life experiences – this leads to mainstreaming (where certain ideas, beliefs and trends become mainstream – or normalised)
- If audiences see messages repeated in the media, it becomes an easy sell to audiences. They’ve already been primed for the ideas and so are more likely to agree with messages that have been repeated across the media.
- If ideas resonate with your experiences, it amplifies the effect of the message, encouraging more people to believe them.
- Heavy use of negative media can lead to seeing the world in a negative way: mean world syndrome

**If you want further details on any of these theories, you can search online for them.**

<https://www.essentialmediatheory.com> is an excellent site that has a book you could buy – I will be getting all of you to buy it so now would be a good time if that is possible.