



GCSE

MEDIA STUDIES

8572/2 Media Two
Report on the Examination

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Overview

In spite of a time of difficulty and uncertainty leading up to this examination series, students performed well in this paper. This is a testament to their tenacity and to the dedicated professionalism of their teachers.

The 2019 equivalent of this report noted a number of misconceptions and misunderstandings in relation to this specification. Although the 2022 examination was the first full cohort sitting the qualification since 2019, it was clear that centres have developed a much better understanding of the specification's scope and demands since then.

Nevertheless, there are still areas for improvement in terms of performance on this paper. The mean mark was below half marks, the proportion of questions not attempted was higher than expected and there were weaknesses in the responses to the higher tariff (12 and 20 mark) questions. These will be covered in the question-specific parts of this report.

The first section of Media Two deals with television and is prefaced by a short screening from one of the Close Study Products (CSPs). This year's screening was of 'Co-owner of a Lonely Heart.' Students responded well to the screened extract and their analyses (questions 1.3 and 1.4) showed a good understanding of the codes and conventions of television. Question 2 invited comparisons between the two television CSPs and answers demonstrated a well-informed familiarity with both *Dr Who* and *Class*.

The second section of Media Two deals with either Online, Social and Participatory Media/Video Games or Newspapers. On this occasion it was Newspapers. Clearly, students benefitted from the Advance Information and many answers revealed breadth and depth of understanding of the two CSPs: *The Times* and the *Daily Mirror*.

Question 1.1

Briefly define the term enigma. [1 mark]

Just short of half of the answers to this question provided a satisfactory definition of enigma. Some answers were excellent, but far too long given the mark tariff. Very brief answers such as 'a mystery' or 'an unanswered question' were perfectly acceptable.

Question 1.2

Give one example of an enigma in the extract. [1 mark]

On this question, the number of acceptable examples seen far exceeded the number of accurate definitions provided in question 1.1. There were only a certain number of events in the screening that could possibly constitute an example of an enigma, so many students picked the most dramatic event. 'When the swords spring into April's hands' (or similar) was a popular acceptable answer, as was 'April's eyes turn red'.

Question 1.3

'Co-owner of a Lonely Heart' includes Science Fiction, Science Fantasy and Teen Drama genre conventions.

How are these genre conventions used to create meanings in the extract? [8 marks]

This was a really well-answered question with most students able to show a good grasp of genre as well as good analytical skills. Approximately 40% scored marks in the top two levels. Weaker responses often analysed the text with some proficiency but were unable to establish links between specific components of the extract and the conventions of the genres indicated in the question.

Eight marks equates to no more than ten minutes writing time, so there was a premium here on being brief and concise. Concise answers often produced no more than three examples, such as:

- human bodies being 'taken over' is a convention of science fiction, as when April's eyes glow red
- supernatural happenings are common in science fantasy, like the swords magically appearing in April's hands
- teen dramas conventionally show family breakdowns and generational conflicts, as shown by the relationship between April and her father.

Question 1.4

How effectively are April's feelings about Ram and her father communicated in the extract?

Answer with reference to:

- camerawork
- non-verbal communication. [12 marks]

As with question 1.3, this question played to the strengths of many students, with approximately half of them scoring marks in the top two levels. Most students were able to recognise and carefully illustrate the contributions of camerawork and non-verbal communication to the communication of April's feelings. There was a really good understanding of the different components of both camerawork and non-verbal communication. Some wrote at length about sound effects and music, both of which were acceptable instances of non-verbal communication.

Weaknesses included the inclusion of irrelevant material such as the communication of Ram's feelings, Huw's feelings or verbal (rather than non-verbal) communication. Sometimes there was a tendency to try to do too much, for example by describing the whole extract in detail. A few answers incorporated examples from elsewhere in the episode. Examiners were unable to reward these examples.

Question 2

'Science fiction on television always reflects the social and historical contexts in which it is produced.'

How far do you agree with this statement? [20 marks]

This was the first and best answered of the three 20 mark questions, with approximately a third of answers scoring marks in the top two levels.

This is an area of considerable improvement over 2019 and many more students were familiar with the idea of 'contexts of the media'. Most good answers contrasted the diversity of representation in the two CSPs. These focused on the breadth of representation of gender, ethnicity, ability and social background in 'Co-owner' compared with a much more restricted range in 'An Unearthly Child'. Stereotypes of age, class and gender in *Dr Who* were attributed to the context of a patriarchal society. It was also good to see so many answers recognising that representation is a matter of what is excluded as well as what is included by pointing out, for example, the absence of ethnic diversity and disability in *Dr Who*.

The historical context was addressed via events such as the end of post-war austerity, the Cold War and the Space Race in relation to *Dr Who*. There was rather more uncertainty about this in relation to *Class*, though some discussed the significance of the petals and the possibility of human extinction in terms of contemporary fears and loss of faith in progress.

Examiners were able to give some credit to those answers that simply compared the two CSPs in general terms, but these usually scored little more than mid-level 2 marks. All of the 20 mark questions in this paper allocate half of their marks to assessment objective AO2 1b, 'make judgements and draw conclusions'. Understanding this objective is the key to good performance on this paper. The question format of a statement followed by 'How far ...' is the signal that this is a judgements and conclusions question. Evidence must be provided on the statement in order to test the opinion or point of view. It isn't really enough to assert a response to the statement such as 'I agree ...' or 'I disagree'. It's much more important to demonstrate what the evidence is saying rather than students writing about what they personally think.

Question 3

There is a strong trend towards convergence in the media industries.

*Give **two** different examples of convergence involving UK newspapers. [2 marks]*

This question was poorly answered, showing a lack of knowledge of convergence. Few students were able to provide one example of convergence involving UK newspapers, with even fewer able to provide two.

This may, in some part, have been because a lot of students were distracted by the presence of Figure 1, the inside pages of the *Daily Mirror*, immediately below question 3. Many students gave answers such as 'The crossword', 'The weather forecast' or 'Duchess steps in', which were incorrect.

On one hand, there is something for examiners to learn here. We need to think carefully about the layout of the paper; in particular the relationship between visual stimuli and questions, so that

confusion like this does not arise. On the other hand, there is something of an issue for centres if a concept so central to Media Studies as the convergence of forms, technologies and industries is not well understood.

The convergence of forms, technologies and industries is a concept central to Media Studies and should be well understood. Some understanding of convergence was very useful when answering question 5. However, answers to question 5 showed that more students had at least an implicit understanding of convergence than were able to score one mark on this question.

Question 4

'The news values of a newspaper strongly influence the choices made about the construction of every page and every story.'

How far does an analysis of the inside pages of the Daily Mirror (Figure 1) show this statement to be true? [20 marks]

Although many students were able to make at least some progress in the analysis of the product, few were able to make the essential links between this analysis and the statement in the question. Approximately 20% of answers scored marks in the top two levels but there was a higher proportion of students than expected who did not attempt the question and/or scored zero marks.

The problem here did not lie with any unfamiliarity with the CSP as lots of answers referenced the political leanings, ownership and target readership of the Daily Mirror. Much more significant than this was the widescale misinterpretation or omission of 'news values'. Some (a minority) students were able to make use of typologies of newsworthiness, such as Galtung and Ruge, or a simplified alternative, such as Timing, Importance, Surprise, Closeness to home and Human interest. However, it was not necessary to have access to these as long as some thought was given to the nature of 'news values'. These could include, for example, the newspaper's political orientation, a preference for soft news, running stories, 'gossip' or picture-led material, or the newspaper's perception of its audience's preferences. Alternatively, it was creditable to argue that the Mirror's content contained little or any real news value because it dealt with celebrity chit-chat and inconsequential ephemera about the royal family.

Unfortunately, a lot of students simply ignored news values all together and offered only a descriptive analysis of the pages in Figure 1. Furthermore, there appeared to be an antipathy towards newspapers as a media form. Very few students were familiar with newspapers outside of the context of their studies, with many referring to them as 'magazines'.

Question 5

'In order to succeed, newspaper owners must use new technology to produce fresh, up-to-date news products.'

How far do you agree with this statement? [20 marks]

Performance on question 5 was somewhere between the two other 20 mark questions, with about a quarter of students achieving marks in the top two levels.

On this occasion, students' familiarity with the two CSPs served them well and most were able to make well-informed observations of the steps taken by *The Times* and *Daily Mirror* to contract

falling physical sales with investment in their online products. Many good reasons agreeing with the statement and examples of newspapers' use of technology were provided. As this is the synoptic question, some attempt to draw on the wider course of study was necessary for access to the top level. Often, answers achieved this by discussing the changing role of the audience and the expectations of interactive content, whilst others contrasted the performance of newspapers with other media forms in the field of technological innovation. Weaker answers addressed the synoptic requirement with rather less success by including randomly selected material from other CSPs with no obvious relevance to the statement provided in question 5.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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