

AS Media Studies - MS1 (Exam): a Summary



MS1: Media Representations and Responses

(This unit is worth 50% of your AS marks)

This unit will prepare you for an **exam** that will question you on your knowledge of: **texts, representations** and **audience responses**.

The **two and a half hour** examination will assess your ability to:

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates

AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding when analysing media products and processes, and when evaluating your own practical work, to show how meanings and responses are created

Question 1 requires an **analysis** of an audio/visual or print-based extract (40 marks)

Questions 2 and 3 will be based on representation and audience issues and may be subdivided where appropriate (30 and 30).

IMPORTANT: For questions 2 and 3, you will be expected to **draw on your own studies** of representation and audience response issues (which will be covered in lessons).

OVERVIEW:

You will be required to explore **representations** and audience/user responses through the study of genre, narrative and representation. You will also need to consider **users and their interactions with texts**. You will be provided with a range of examples to enable you to understand and interpret the media independently. You will need to explore the representations of social/cultural groups, events, issues and their underlying messages and values.

CONTENT:

You will need to study how media texts are constructed and how audiences and users respond to and interpret them, using the following framework:

TEXTS

- genre conventions
- narrative construction
- technical codes such as camerawork, lighting, editing and sound for audio-visual media and graphic design elements for print based and interactive media
- language used and mode of address

REPRESENTATIONS

- the role of selection, construction and anchorage in creating representations
- how the media uses representations
- the points of view, messages and values underlying those representations

You will need to study a range of representations of:

- **gender**
- **ethnicity**
- **age**
- **issues**
- **events**
- **regional and national identities**

AUDIENCE RESPONSES

You will need to consider the ways in which different audiences can respond to the same text in different ways. This will involve studying:

- the ways in which audiences can be categorised (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, social and cultural background, advertisers' classifications)
- how media producers and texts construct audiences and users
- how audiences and users are positioned (including preferred, negotiated and oppositional responses to that positioning).

Any media can be explored but the media texts used in the examination will be selected from the following:

- **advertisements**
- **radio sequences**
- **film extracts**
- **television sequences**
- **music videos**
- **computer game extracts**

EXAM DETAILS

- **2½ hour exam.**
- **You will spend the first 20-30 minutes viewing the text(s) and writing notes.**
- **On the first viewing, just watch the extract(s); on the second viewing, take notes. Then spend 10 minutes writing and improving your notes. You will then be shown the text(s) a third time, when you should check through your notes and add to them.**
- **100 marks** (spend roughly 1.2 minutes per mark) e.g. 5 minutes on a 4 mark question.
- **3 questions** (although question 2 or 3 may have sub-sections).
- **You will be expected to write 2 or 3 sides of A4 per question (7-9 sides in total).**
- **Usually two unseen texts to study** (IMPORTANT: If there is more than one text, look very carefully at which text each question is asking you to refer to. You will score no marks if you refer to the wrong one).
- **Questions 1 and 2 will ask you to refer to the unseen materials.**
- **Part of question 2 and all of question 3 will ask you to refer to 2/3 of your own examples.**
- **One question will be focussed on audience.**
- **The other question will focus on representation.**
- **You will not be able to take notes in with you to the exam** - so you will need to have a good knowledge of your texts.

QUESTION 1

(40 marks = approximately 45- 50 minutes)

Question 1 will typically ask you to study one or two of the unseen texts and comment on *at least three* of the following:

- visual codes
- audio codes
- technical codes
- layout and design
- genre codes
- language
- mode of address
- narrative construction

You must organise your response into paragraphs - bullet points will not be acceptable. Relate your points to the purpose of the text and how they have appealed to the target audience. Make reference to oppositional readings. Also refer to media theory (if relevant).

Relevant Concepts:

visual codes	iconography, signifiers, non-verbal, connotation, juxtaposition, mise-en-scène, etc. (could also include some technical codes - see below)
audio codes	diegetic and non-diegetic sound, voice-over, music, juxtaposition, sound-effects, etc.
technical codes	close-up, establishing shot, titles, graphics, special-effects, foreground, background, mise-en-scène, etc.
layout and design	masthead, cover-lines, etc.
genre	tropes, codes, repertoire of elements, motifs, iconography, intertextuality, etc.
language	formal, informal, friendly, etc.
mode of address	direct-address, formal, informal, shared values/ ideologies, etc.
narrative construction	equilibrium/disequilibrium, binary opposites, spheres of action - hero, villain etc.

QUESTION 2

(30 marks = approximately 35-40 minutes)

Question 2 is usually subdivided into mini-tasks (worth between 4 and 15 marks each). It will ask you about the unseen materials and your own examples. It usually asks questions on audiences (although it could ask you to consider representations). **Look carefully at how many marks each question is worth. This will give you an indication as to how much time you should spend on them.**

If the focus is on audience, you will be expected to:

- discuss an audience/more than one audience for the media texts and appreciate that texts may be 'read' in different ways by different audiences,
- analyse the stimulus material in detail for the earlier parts of the question,
- be aware of the issues related to a study of audience and be able to apply these to specific examples.

You will also need to be aware of:

- the different ways in which audiences can be described,
- how texts construct and position audiences,
- how different audiences respond to, use and interpret media texts,
- how different audiences can respond to the same media text and how that response can be analysed.

Question 2: Sample Questions

Shorter questions:

- Suggest two different audiences for this text. Give brief reasons for your suggestions.
- Explore how audiences are attracted to this text.
- Explore how this audience has been targeted.

Longer questions:

- With reference to your own detailed examples, explore how media texts target different audiences.
- With reference to your own detailed examples, explore how media texts position audiences and/or users.
- Explore why audiences may respond differently to the same media text.

Relevant Concepts:

Suggest two different audiences for this text	age/gender/ethnicity/interests/ fans of.../ demographic/psychographic
Explore how audiences are attracted to this text	Uses and Gratifications, Dyer's 'Utopias', the text's construction
Explore why audiences may respond differently to the same media text	Stuart Hall/Reception Theory/polysemy
Explore how this audience has been targeted	age/gender/ethnicity/demographic/ psychographic/Uses and Gratifications/Dyer's 'Utopias', the text's construction
With reference to your own detailed examples, explore how media texts target different audiences	primary and secondary audiences/audience segmentation
With reference to your own detailed examples, explore how media texts position audiences and/or users	preferred reading, bias, anchorage

QUESTION 3

(30 marks = approximately 35-40 minutes)

Question 3 will ask you to consider your own examples (the texts we have studied in class), usually within reference to representation (although it could ask you about audiences). This question could also be subdivided into shorter questions. **You need to refer to at least two or three texts in detail (with short references to others). These texts should be from a variety of platforms.**

You will need to:

- be aware of more complex issues of representation, such as stereotyping, ideology, mediation and construction,
- go beyond identifying positive and negative stereotypes and explore *why* these stereotypes exist (e.g. to support hegemonic power e.g. masculinity, or because of political bias, or to intensify drama - e.g. positioning a disabled character as an object of pity).

Question 3: Sample Questions

Shorter questions:

- Suggest two ways in which men have been represented in these texts.
- Explore how the representation of men in one of these texts has been used to sell the product.

Longer questions:

- With reference to your own detailed examples, explore the representation of gender in the media today.
- Using your own detailed examples, explore representations of age in the media today.
- Using your own detailed examples, explore the representation of two events in the media today.
- With reference to your own detailed examples, explore the different representations of men in the media today.

Relevant Concepts:

- Stereotyping - reinforcing or subverting stereotypes
- Positive and negative representations
- Political bias (e.g. left or right-wing perspectives)
- Hegemony -who benefits from this representation? - a male hegemony? - a white hegemony?
- Reflecting and reinforcing the values of the target audience (ideology)
- Alvarado & Stuart Hall - stereotypes
- Tokenism
- Under-representation and over-representation
- The Beauty Myth / The Male and Female gaze etc.
- How stereotypes are used to appeal to target audiences (e.g. sexualised images of women primarily appeal to young heterosexual men)
- How stereotypes are used to enhance the narrative (e.g. the female 'princess' to be saved by the 'hero', according to Propp's theory, or the black villain to provide danger for the white victim, according to Alvarado).
- How stereotypes are used to represent groups of people (e.g. the 'token' black person to represent the 'black community').

TIPS FROM THE EXAMINERS

- Focus your answer on the question.
- Look carefully at which text the question asks you to refer to.
- When asked to refer to your own texts - use two or three key texts in your answers, making brief references to others. Ensure these are all contemporary and are from more than one form/platform (e.g. TV and film, or a magazine and a trailer).
- Make proficient use of media vocabulary (where relevant).
- Look carefully at the bullet points in Question 1 and use these to structure your response.
- Avoid describing the text(s) - answer the question - and do more than point out that an establishing shot has been used - discuss its purpose and effect.
- Avoid writing down everything you know about theory - focus on the texts! Apply theory to support your points (look again at the suggested paragraph structure).
- Make reference to Stuart Hall, when relevant, and discuss why audiences may respond *differently* to the *same* media text.
- Use *detailed* examples to support your points.
- Explore *how* texts are constructed to appeal to a specific audience.
- When discussing representation, try to go beyond just a simple discussion of positive and negative representations (for instance, you could look at dominant and alternative representations or you could discuss how hegemony, patriarchy or political bias may affect representations).
- Plan your answers carefully, using an essay-structure for longer responses.
- Refer to a variety of formats (i.e. not just television).
- Make reference to contemporary (recent) texts as primary examples - use older texts only for historical perspectives.
- Be specific when referring to texts. Do not generalise by saying 'newspapers' - point out *which* newspaper(s).
- Demonstrate awareness of how representations are *created* through selection and construction.
- Avoid repeating yourself. Each question is asking you something unique.
- Avoid generalised descriptions (e.g. using colour to make something 'stand out').