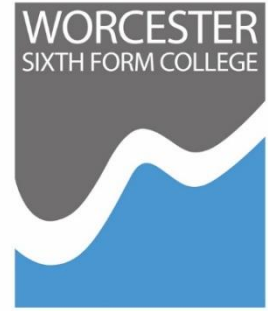# A-Level Media Studies
Summer Study Task.

Task:

Please read the attached worksheets prior to starting in September.
They are factsheets for the first three set texts you will encounter on the course.

They will contain language and concepts that you will not understand at this stage. However, don't worry if you don't understand everything. All will become clear in September.
For now, it will be useful to gain some familiarity with the background of the texts; who produced them, when were they made, what sorts of issues do they raise, etc.

It would also be useful to start watching, listening, reading the media more consciously. Who are the producers of the TV programmes you watch? What radio stations are there in the UK? Which radio station do you listen to? Which station do your parents listen to? How much of the media that you consume is 'online' and how much of it is 'traditional' (TV, print based etc.)? Any interesting adverts, music videos, etc, you saw over the summer? Be prepared to come and talk about summer's media consumption when you start in September.

Enjoy your summer. I look forward to meeting you all properly in September.

Tristan Crawley
Course Leader for Media Studies.

Kiss of the Vampire film poster
(1963)

Everett Collection, Inc. / Alamy Stock Photo

eduqas
Part of WJEC

Kiss of the Vampire film poster (1963)

**AS Component 1:
Investigating the Media
A Level Component 1: Media
Products, Industries and Audiences**

**Focus area:
Media language
Representation
Media contexts**

PRODUCT CONTEXT

- Produced by Hammer Film Productions and distributed by J. Arthur Rank and Universal, *Kiss of the Vampire* was intended to be the second sequel to 1958's *Dracula*, although the film's script actually makes no reference to Stoker's character. This is perhaps to distance itself from unfavourable comparisons to the superior Christopher Lee who starred in the original film.
- In addition to *Dracula*, Hammer had, by 1963, success with other 'monster movie' franchises such as *The Mummy* and *Frankenstein*. Distributers Universal also saw early success with films in this genre.
- Historically, 1963 saw the early stages of 'Beatlemania' and the so-called 'swinging sixties', the assassination of JFK and the Soviet Union launching the first woman into space.

PART 1: STARTING POINTS – Media language

Cultural context:

The 1960s **audience** for this advert could be assumed to be familiar with the **codes and conventions** of 'monster movie' film posters – such as its **composition, fonts** and **representations** of 'the monster' and its (usually female) victims. Interesting **intertexts** for comparative study might include:

The Evil of Frankenstein (1964)
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0058073/mediaviewer/rm2054095104

Blood From The Mummy's Tomb (1971)
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0068290/mediaviewer/rm892444416

Consider codes and conventions, and how media language influences meaning:

- The capitalised, **serif font** of the title creates **connotations** linked to the vampire film **genre** with its 'wooden' styling (referencing the vampire's coffin or the stake needed to kill him perhaps) and the blood dripping from the letter V's 'fang.'
- The use of a 'painted' main image is highly **conventional** of films of the period and links to the poster for Christopher Lee's *Dracula*, but the fact that it's in colour (**anchored** by the text "In Eastman Color") **connotes** that this is a modern telling of an older story.
- The gloomy grey, black and brown **colour palette** reinforces the film's dark, scary **conventions** while the red highlight colour draws attention to the attacking bats, the vampire and the blood – all key **visual signifiers** for the genre.
- **Conventionally**, the stars are listed with the more highly paid male actors first and in order of fame, Clifford Evans having starred in Hammer's 1961 hit *Curse of the Werewolf.*

**Consider theoretical perspectives
Semiotics – Roland Barthes**

- Suspense is created through the **enigmas** surrounding the **connoted** relationship between the male and female vampires (emphasised by the "kiss" of the title) and the fate of their two victims (**Barthes' Hermeneutic Code**).
- **Barthes' Semantic Code** could be applied to images of the bats and their conventional association with vampirism and horror in general.

- The **Symbolic Codes (Barthes)** of horror, darkness and fear are more widely reinforced through **signifiers** such as the moon and the male victim's 'submissive sacrifice' **gesture code**.

Genre theory – Steve Neale

- Neale argues that audience pleasures are derived from generic **repetition and difference**. This film poster *repeats* much of the symbolism associated with Hammer and Universal horror films and the wider 'monster' and vampire genres, but adds *difference* through the **connoted power** of the female **protagonist** and the implied romantic **narrative**.

A level only:
Structuralism – Claude Lévi-Strauss

- The idea that texts are constructed through the use of **binary oppositions** could be applied to the opposing **representations** of the vampires and their victims, and the romantic **connotations** of "kiss" opposed in the film's title to the **stereotypical** "vampire" monster.

PART 2: STARTING POINTS – Representation

Political and social contexts:

The 1960s is often seen as the start of women's sexual liberation, aided by events such as the introduction of the contraceptive pill in 1960. More women than ever were entering the paid workforce and sixties feminists were campaigning for equal pay, an end to sexual harassment and more equality between men and women in wider society. In America, equal pay legislation was passed in 1963.

'Older' **stereotypes** of women as passive victims of men and more modern 'male fears' of women challenging male dominance could both be seen to be encoded in this film poster.

Consider how representations are constructed through processes of selection and combination:

- Both women wear pale dresses made of light materials and these **dress codes** serve to reinforce their femininity by highlighting the curves of their bodies and revealing the flesh of their upper chests and arms.
- The **gesture code** of the woman on the left is that of the **stereotypical** passive victim of the 'monster', his power highlighted by the fact that he's holding her by just one arm.
- Baring her teeth and with her arm raised

almost fist-like as she's being bitten by the bat, the second woman's **gesture codes** are more aggressive, and the submissive pose of her male 'victim' (including being on his knees with his head back and throat exposed) **represent** her in a **non-stereotypically** dominant way.
- The vampire himself seems uncharacteristically fearful in his **gesture codes** with his arm thrown across his body in a defensive gesture, perhaps protecting himself from the female vampire.

Consider theoretical perspectives:

- **Stuart Hall's theory of representation** – the images of a castle, bats, the vampire's cape and dripping blood form part of the "shared conceptual road map" that give meaning to the "world" of the poster. The **audience** is actively encouraged to **decode** this familiar **generic iconography**.
- **David Gauntlett's theory of identity** – perhaps the female vampire acts as a **role model** for women struggling against male oppression or desperate to be seen as the equals of men, whatever the narrative or environment.

A level only:

- **Liesbet Van Zoonen's feminist theory** – by assuming this '**co-antagonist**' role, the female vampire is perhaps contributing to social change by representing women in non-traditional roles (**Van Zoonen, 1989**) though the passive female victim does reinforce these.

Tide print advert

(1950s)

Image Courtesy of The Advertising Archives

Tide print advert (1950s)

AS Component 1:
Investigating the Media
A level Component 1: Media
Products, Industries and Audiences

Focus areas:
Media language
Representation
Audiences
Media contexts

PRODUCT CONTEXT

- Designed specifically for heavy-duty, machine cleaning, Procter & Gamble launched *Tide* in 1946 and it quickly became the brand leader in America, a position it maintains today.
- *The D'Arcy Masius Benton & Bowles* (DMB&B) advertising agency handled P&G's accounts throughout the 1950s. Its campaigns for *Tide* referred explicitly to P&G because their market research showed that consumers had high levels of confidence in the company.
- Uniquely, DMB&B used print and radio advertising campaigns concurrently in order to quickly build audience familiarity with the brand. Both media forms used the "housewife" character and the ideology that its customers "loved" and "adored" *Tide*.

PART 1: STARTING POINTS – Media language

Historical context:
The post-WWII consumer boom of the 1950s included the rapid development of new technologies for the home, designed to make domestic chores easier. Vacuum cleaners, fridge-freezers, microwave ovens and washing machines all become desirable products for the 1950s consumer. Products linked to these new technologies also developed during this time, for example, washing powder.

Cultural context:
Print adverts from the 1950s conventionally used more **copy** than we're used to seeing today. Consumer culture was in its early stages of development and, with so many 'new' **brands** and products entering markets, potential customers typically needed more information about them than a modern **audience**, more used to **advertising, marketing** and **branding**, might need. **Conventions** of print-based advertising are still recognisable in this text however, as detailed below.

Consider codes and conventions, and how media language influences meaning:

- **Z-line** and a rough **rule of thirds** can be applied to its **composition**.
- Bright, **primary colours connote** the positive associations the producers want the audience to make with the product.
- **Headings, subheadings** and **slogans** are written in **sans-serif font, connoting** an informal **mode of address**.
- This is reinforced with the comic strip style image in the bottom right-hand corner with two women 'talking' about the product using informal **lexis** ("sudsing whizz").
- The more 'technical' details of the product are written in a **serif** font, **connoting** the more 'serious' or 'factual' information that the '1, 2, 3' bullet point list includes.

Consider theoretical perspectives:
Semiotics – Roland Barthes

- Suspense is created through the **enigma** of "what women want" (**Barthes' Hermeneutic Code**) and emphasised by the tension-building use of multiple exclamation marks (**Barthes' Proairetic Code**).
- **Barthes' Semantic Code** could be applied to the use of hearts above the main image. The hearts and the woman's **gesture codes** have **connotations** of love and relationships. It's **connoted** that this is "what women want" (in addition to clean laundry!).
- **Hyperbole** and **superlatives** ("Miracle", "World's cleanest wash!", "World's whitest wash!") as well as **tripling** ("No other…") are used to oppose the **connoted** superior cleaning power of *Tide* to its competitors.

This **Symbolic Code (Barthes)** was clearly successful as Procter and Gamble's competitor products were rapidly overtaken, making *Tide* the brand leader by the mid-1950s.

A level only:
Structuralism – Claude Lévi-Strauss
* The latter point above links to **Lévi-Strauss' theory**, whereby texts are constructed through the use of **binary oppositions**, and meaning is made by audiences understanding these conflicts.
* In this text, "*Tide* gets clothes cleaner than any other washday product you can buy!" and "There's nothing like Procter and Gamble's *Tide*", reinforces the **conceptual binary opposition** between *Tide* and its commercial rivals.
* It's also "unlike soap," gets laundry "whiter… than any soap or washing product known" and is "truly safe" – all of which **connotes** that other, inferior products do not offer what *Tide* does.

PART 2: STARTING POINTS – Representation

Social and political contexts:
Interesting **intertexts** to consider would be WWII adverts for the 'Women's Land Army' and J. Howard Miller's 'Rosie The Riveter – We Can Do It!' advert for the War Production Co-Ordinating Committee.

The **representations** in these adverts challenge **stereotypical** views of women being confined to the domestic sphere, something society needed at the time as traditional 'male roles' were vacated as men left to fight.

In the 1950s, while men were being targeted for the post-war boom in America's car industry, women were the primary market for the technologies and products being developed for the home. In **advertising** for these types of texts, **stereotypical representations** of domestic perfection, caring for the family and servitude to the 'man of the house' became linked to a more modern need for speed, convenience and a better standard of living than the women experienced in the pre-war era.

Consider how representations are constructed through processes of selection and combination:
* The **dress code** of the advert's main female character include a **stereotypical** 1950s hairstyle incorporating waves, curls and rolls made fashionable by contemporary film stars such as Veronica Lake, Betty Grable and Rita Hayworth. The fashion for women having shorter hair had a practical catalyst as long hair was hazardous for women working with machinery on farms or in factories during the war.
* The headband or scarf worn by the woman also links to the practicalities of **dress code** for

women developed during this time. For this advert, having her hair held back **connotes** she's focused on her work, though this is perhaps **binary opposed** to the full make-up that she's wearing.

Consider theoretical perspectives:

- **Stuart Hall's theory of representation** – the images of domesticity (including the two women hanging out the laundry) form part of the "shared conceptual road map" that give meaning to the "world" of the advert. Despite its comic strip visual construction, the scenario **represented** is familiar to the **audience** as a representation of their own lives.

- **David Gauntlett's theory of identity** – women represented in the advert act as **role models** of domestic perfection that the audience may want to construct their own sense of identity against.

A level only:
- **Liesbet Van Zoonen's feminist theory** – while their role socially and politically may have changed in the proceeding war years, the advert perhaps contradicts **Van Zoonen**'s theory that the media contribute to social change by representing women in non-traditional roles and using non-sexist language.

- **bell hooks' feminist theory** argues that lighter skinned women are considered more desirable and fit better into the western ideology of beauty, and the advert could be seen to reinforce this by only representing "modern", white women. This could also be linked to **Gilroy's ethnicity and post-colonial theories** that media texts reinforce colonial power. Contextually, this power has perhaps been challenged at this moment in American history by the events of WWII.

PART 3: STARTING POINTS – Audiences

Social context:
Despite women having seen their roles in society change during the War (where they were needed in medical, military support and other roles outside of the home) domestic products of the 1950s continued to be aimed at female audiences.

The likely **target audience** of increasingly affluent lower-middle class women were, at this point in the 1950s, being appealed to because of their supposed need for innovative domestic technologies and products. The increasing popularity during the 1950s of supermarkets stocking a wider range of products led to an increased focus by corporations on brands and their **unique selling points**.

Consider how industries target audiences, and how audiences interpret and use the media:

- The likely **audience demographic** is constructed through the advert's use of women with whom they might **personally identify** (**Uses and Gratifications Theory**). These young women are likely to be newly married and with young families (clothing belonging to men and children on the washing line creates these **connotations**).

- The endorsement from *Good Housekeeping Magazine* makes them an **Opinion Leader** for the **target audience**, reinforcing the repeated assertion that *Tide* is the market-leading product.

- The **preferred reading (Stuart Hall)** of the advert's reassuring **lexical fields** ("trust", "truly safe", "miracle", "nothing like") is that, despite being a "new" product, *Tide* provides solutions to the audience's domestic chores needs.

Consider theoretical perspectives:
Reception theory – Stuart Hall

- The **indirect mode of address** made by the woman in the main image **connotes** that her relationship with the product is of prime importance (*Tide* has what she wants). This, according to **Hall**, is the dominant or **hegemonic encoding** of the advert's primary message that should be received by "you women."

- The **direct mode of address** of the images in the top right and bottom left-hand corner link to the **imperative** "Remember!" and the use of **personal pronouns** ("your wash", "you can buy").

Cultivation theory – George Gerbner

- Advertising developed significantly during the 1950s and this theory, developed by **Gerbner** in the early 1970s, explains some of the ways in which audiences may be influenced by media texts such as adverts.

- The *Tide* advert aims to **cultivate** the ideas that: this is the brand leader; nothing else washes to the same standard as *Tide*; it's a desirable product for its female audience; and its "miracle suds" are an innovation for the domestic washing market. **Gerbner**'s theory would argue that the repetition of these key messages causes **audiences** to increasingly align their own **ideologies** with them (in this case positively, creating a product that "goes into more American homes than any other washday product").

Water Aid audio-visual advert
(2016)

© Water Aid; http://www.wateraid.org/uk

Water Aid audio-visual advert

(2016)

**AS Component 1:
Investigating the Media
A Level Component 1: Media
Products, Industries and Audiences**

**Focus areas:
Media language
Representation
Audiences
Media contexts**

PRODUCT CONTEXT

- The charity *Water Aid* was established in 1981 as a response to a United Nations campaign for clean water, sanitation and water hygiene education. It now works with organisations in 37 African, Asian and Central American countries plus the Pacific region. Since 1991 its patron has been Prince Charles.

- Created by *Atomic London* in October 2016, this advert (titled *Rain For Good*) stars 16 year-old Zambian student Claudia and aims to show how communities benefit from clean water by depicting everyday chores such as farming and laundry.

PART 1: STARTING POINTS – Media language

Cultural context:

Following 1984's *Do They Know It's Christmas?* single for *Band Aid*, 1985's *Live Aid* was the first global charity event aiming to raise funds for relief of the ongoing famine in Ethiopia. The *Comic Relief* telethon was launched by Richard Curtis and Lenny Henry in 1985 with the same initial famine relief aim, and went on to raise over £1bn for charitable causes across Africa and in the UK. The contemporary **audience** for this advert could be assumed to be familiar with the **codes and conventions** of both audio-visual adverts and those for charitable organisations in particular.

Consider genre – and the significance of subverting genre conventions:

- The *Water Aid* advert reinforces charity advertisement **conventions** by including key information about the concern, a personalised narrative to which this information is relevant, and a direct appeal to the audience for money.

- However, the fact it lacks a **non-diegetic voiceover**, melancholic **audio codes** and black and white **visual codes** could all be seen as **unconventional** of this advertising **sub-genre**.

Consider codes and conventions, and how media language influences meaning:

- The opening **medium shot** with a **pull focus** between the digital radio and the rain against the window establishes the advert in a modern, British setting (the **audio codes** are of an announcer with an English **accent**). It's **connoted** that the scenes that follow (in an unnamed but likely African country) are happening at the same time.

- The **visual and audio** codes work together to construct the narrative of "sunshine" (in Africa) "on a rainy day" (in Britain) with the associated problems of drought and "lack of access to clean drinking water" that the charity is aiming to relieve.

**Consider theoretical perspectives
Semiotics – Roland Barthes**

- Suspense is created through the **enigmatic** use of the **slow-motion, medium close-up, low-angle tracking shot** of Claudia's feet and the swinging bucket (Barthes' Hermeneutic Code) and emphasised by the crescendo of the song in the scene at the water pump over which the informative **on-screen graphic** appears (**Barthes' Proairetic Code**).

- **Barthes' Semantic Code** could be applied to the lines from the song used from 00.34 **diegetically** and then as a **sound bridge** over the **medium**

shot of a group of women carrying water buckets on their heads: "make me feel, make me feel like I belong… don't leave me, won't leave me here". The **connotation** here being that the text's audience can help Claudia "feel like she belongs" and "won't leave" her there / in that situation if they donate to *Water Aid*.

- The **Symbolic Codes (Barthes)** of drought-ridden African countries are reinforced both visually and through the advert's **audio codes** up until about 00.47.

A level only:
Structuralism – Claude Lévi-Strauss

- How texts are constructed through the use of **binary oppositions** – at 00.47, the song's title line "sunshine on a rainy day" is used over shots of children running, playing, laughing and the more positive **connotations** of this section of the advert are emphasised by the **high key lighting** used.
- A further **visual binary opposition** is created between the arid, washed-out, primarily beige and brown **colour palette** of the advert's first third and the more vibrant colours used at 01.02.
- The **on-screen graphic** ("650 million people still don't have access to clean drinking water") creates a **conceptual binary opposition** between Claudia's positive story and that of other, less fortunate people. It's this opposition that the audience is encouraged to be part of the solution to by giving "£3 today".

PART 2: STARTING POINTS – Representation

Social context:
An interesting intertext to consider would be *Water Aid's 'No Choice'* TV advert from 2013 which is more **conventionally** constructed and **represents** the suffering of its main 'character' in a more explicit and emotive way (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szT7grQnHRU).

Launching the *Rain For Good* campaign, *Water Aid* said that it had "deliberately broken away from the traditional charity ad formula" in response to the public's desensitisation to traditional fundraising tactics. The **stereotypical** 'victim' needing our help is an **archetype** with which the **audience** would be familiar from many other charity adverts. This would perhaps make the more positive representation of Claudia as a healthy, independent and musically talented woman stand out to an audience who might otherwise have become immune to the emotive representations **conventionally** deployed by this advertising **sub-genre**.

Consider how representations are constructed through processes of selection and combination:

- The **dress codes** of the advert's main female character include a **stereotypical** knee-length skirt and pink **colour palette** in both her top and shoes.
- Her age is similar to the other young women she walks past at 00.30 and those who join her at the water pump at 01.00. This **connotes** that she has perhaps had to "grow up too quickly" because of the tough environment in which she lives. Her independence is **connoted** by the **wide-angled shot** at 00.18 in which she is **denoted** on her own on a long and empty dust road.
- **Close-up shots** using **handheld cameras** (00.16), her open, confident **gesture codes** (00.51) and her **smiling gesture code** (01.09) **represent** her as the advert's **protagonist** and a 'character' with whom the **audience** can positively associate.

Consider theoretical perspectives:

- **Stuart Hall's theory of representation** – the images of a dry, dusty African environment in which people may be struggling to survive form part of the "shared conceptual road map" that give meaning to the "world" of the advert. The more positive **audio codes** then work to challenge these **stereotypical representations**, creating **enigmas** around why Claudia appears to be so positive. The solution to these enigmas is given to the **audience** at 01.00 when we first see the water pump.
- **David Gauntlett's theory of identity** – Claudia acts as a **role model** for the type of lifestyle changes that the **audience** could be responsible for creating if they donate to *Water Aid*.

A level only:

- **Liesbet Van Zoonen's feminist theory** – by assuming the **stereotypically** male roles of '**protagonist**' and 'provider', Claudia is perhaps contributing to social change by representing women in non-traditional roles. The work involved in collecting the water is physically challenging (non-traditional for female roles) though the advert does reinforce stereotypes of women being associated with care of children.
- **Gilroy's ethnicity and post-colonial theories** that media texts reinforce colonial power could

be applied, as *Water Aid* is encouraging its British audience to 'help' those like Claudia who live in 'less developed' countries.

PART 3: STARTING POINTS – Audiences

Social/cultural context:

In December 2016, this advert had been viewed about 47 000 times on *Water Aid's* YouTube channel and this page also actively encourages the sharing of the advert through social networks. Further evidence that the likely **target audience** are literate with technology is that donations are encouraged through the **imperative** "Text SUNNY to 70555" and the use on the YouTube page of a twitter hashtag (#ShareSunshine).

The advert's cover of Zoe's 1990 song *Sunshine On A Rainy Day* could indicate that the **target audience** are in their 30s–40s as they're likely to remember the original and get pleasure from the nostalgic value of hearing a song with which they're familiar.

Consider how industries target audiences, and how audiences interpret and use the media:

- The likely **audience demographic** is constructed through the advert's use of a young woman with whom they might **personally identify (Uses and Gratifications Theory)**. Parents might make similar readings, identifying empathetically with the 'better life' that *Water Aid's* clean water provides for the children represented in the advert.
- *Water Aid* acts as an **Opinion Leader** for the **target audience** who would assume the "650 million people…" statistic (01.14) is true and reliable.
- The **unconventionally** positive **visual codes, audio codes** and **representations** would, the producers hope, give the advert **unique selling points** compared to other charity appeals and therefore make the **audience** more likely to donate.

Consider theoretical perspectives: Reception theory – Stuart Hall

- The use of **handheld camera shots** and **indirect mode of address** made by Claudia **connote** that the audience is following her story, but *Water Aid* rather than she herself have constructed this **narrative** for us. This, according to Hall, is the dominant or **hegemonic encoding** created by *Water Aid*.
- The fact that she's named creates the **preferred reading** that she is a real person and that the **audience** should invest in her narrative, sharing *Water Aid's* **ideologies**.

Cultivation theory – George Gerbner

- This theory might suggest that audiences have become used to the **conventions** of this **sub-genre** of advertising and perhaps somewhat 'immune' to pleading, earnest **non-diegetic voiceovers** by well-known voices and black and white, slow-motion, emotive **representations** of people suffering.
- The **target audience's** likely liberal political perspectives will have been shaped by exposure to previous, generically similar adverts, shaping their world view that the suffering of people less fortunate than themselves can be alleviated by charitable donations.