

Progression - Media Studies

Welcome to your Media Studies A Level transition booklet

1. What to consider when you choose to study Media Studies at A Level.

2. Compulsory Tasks to complete before September
 - A. Media Language Analysis
 - B. Media Industry Research

3. Extension tasks for wider reading and research
 - A. Political Contexts
 - B. Cultural Contexts
 - C. Social Contexts

What To Consider when you choose to study Media Studies at A Level

We teach the OCR A Level Media Studies specification:

<https://ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-and-a-level/media-studies-h009-h409-from-2017/>

At A Level Media Studies is underpinned by four KEY CONCEPTS that you will learn about:

- **MEDIA LANGUAGE** – How media producers communicate meaning.
- **REPRESENTATION** – How social groups, issues and events are re-presented to us.
- **MEDIA AUDIENCE** – How media products are consumed and interpreted.
- **MEDIA INDUSTRIES** – How the media industry works and is currently evolving.

Alongside these you will also learn a small range of **DIGITAL PRODUCTION** skills

This booklet is going to take you through two introductory activities that are designed to prepare you for studying Media Studies at A Level

What is media studies like to study?

It is important to remember that Media Studies A Level is not predominantly a practical course. It is in fact, closer to Sociology, Business Studies, Politics or Philosophy. Therefore, you will need to have been keen on English Language at GCSE or be willing to learn how to build essay writing skills on the course. Typically, a successful student starts the course with a level 5 in GCSE English.

The course is assessed over three components:

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|--------------------|-----|
| 1) Exam 1: 2 hours | 35% |
| 2) Exam 2: 2 hours | 35% |
| 3) Coursework | 30% |

Therefore, only 30% of your overall grade is assessed using your creative and technical skills. 70% of your assessments is based on how well you can write longer essays under exam conditions.

Compulsory tasks to complete before September

These tasks are checked in the first week of the course to ensure that you have fully engaged with and prepared yourself for A Level study.

Contents

- Media Language Analysis
- Media Industries Investigation

Media Language Analysis

The basis of all study into the media is the *analysis of media products* and how they create and communicate meaning. We use the term '**Media Language**' to describe the techniques used by media producers to communicate meanings, feelings, etc to the audience. This is mainly done through the use of a 'visual language' that you need to become familiar with. The first and most important skill to develop will be the skill of **semiotic analysis**.

Semiotics

Semiotics, or semiology, is the technique we use to analyse media language.

It involves dividing up media products, or '**texts**', into individual '**signs**'. We then divide up these '**signs**' into:

Denotation: What the sign actually consists of.

Connotation: what the sign means.

For example:



Denotation: a shape of a person in silhouette, a triangular shape positioned in between the head and the legs.

Connotation: female toilets, feminine, etc.

Denotation: A red apple with a green leaf sticking out of the top.

Connotation: Healthy, natural, fresh, temptation, adam and eve, snow white



This may seem odd at first, almost **too obvious**. However, it becomes a powerful technique when we are separating what is actually on the screen / page and the meanings that we bring to those signs. In practice, we rarely talk too much about the 'denotation', but focus on the connotations. We use this as a basis for analysing products before moving on to considering representation or how audiences are targeted by the producers of the text.

An Example: This 'Text' is a perfume advert.



We can break this up into signs and then consider their 'connotations':

The clouds **connote** 'heavenly', 'mystical', 'other-worldly', 'beyond the everyday', etc.

The Greek tunic, statues and the word 'Olympea' **connote** 'classical', 'timeless', etc.

The gold colour in this context **connotes** 'luxury', 'wealth', etc.

The use of French in the advert (Le Nouveau Parfum Féminin) **connotes** sophistication, elegance, quality (many perfume brands are packaged as French.)

We could then continue the analysis and discuss the female model's costume, her posture etc, to discuss how women are often **represented** in perfume adverts.

We could also consider who this advert is targeted at. E.g. is aimed at men or women, old / young, wealthy/less wealthy. As well as how different audience members might react to the advert?

Your Task:

To use this 'semiotic' method to explore, discuss and analyse this advert in at least 200 words:

The following questions are there to help guide you.

1. What do the balloons 'connote'?
2. How would you describe her dress (denotation)?
3. What are the connotations of this dress code?
4. The Eiffel Tower is in the background, a famous landmark of Paris, France. What are the connotations of Paris, France?
5. She is being carried into the air by the balloons, what does this connote?
6. How does the advert represent women?
7. How might different audiences react to this advert?



Media Industry Research

In addition to the analysis of media products, we have to consider where these products have come from, who made them and what their intent was. In other words, we have to consider the companies that make media products, how they earn money and where this money goes.

One company that we will be looking at is the Scott Trust who own the Guardian Media Group. They publish the Guardian and the Sunday Observer. The Guardian is a daily UK newspaper that is predominantly *left wing* in its political stance. (We will explore this later in the course.)

Task:

Construct a fact file on the Scott Trust and The Guardian, using the following questions:

- 1) When and Why did the 'Manchester Guardian' start publishing?

- 2) How does the Guardian make money and how do they spend that money?

- 3) Is The Guardian a successful newspaper? E.g. does it sell more than other papers or less?

- 4) The Guardian newspaper is also available as a website:
<https://www.theguardian.com/uk> How can readers interact with the website in a way that they can't with a newspaper?

Extension tasks for wider reading and research

These tasks are optional but should help you to understand the wider contexts that the UK Media operates within.

Political Contexts

- Who is the current Prime Minister and who were the three prime ministers before that person?
- What are the two main political parties in the UK and who leads them?
- What is 'left wing' and what is 'right wing'?

Cultural Contexts

- If I want to listen to the radio in the UK, what are the main BBC stations that I can listen to? Name at least three UK Radio stations not owned by the BBC.
- Who is Rupert Murdoch and what does he own in the UK?
- What kind of music does BBC Radio 1 play?