

# A-LEVEL MEDIA STUDIES

(7572)

**Paper 1**  
Media One

Understand how the highest levels were achieved and how to interpret the mark scheme.

Version 1.0 May 2020

# EXAMPLE RESPONSES



Please note that for copyright reasons we are unable to display the sources, figures, etc which correspond with the exam questions in this resource. To view the question papers and inserts for A-level Media Studies, please visit Secure Key Materials on [eAQA](#). Student responses have been reproduced exactly as they were originally, therefore any errors in spelling and grammar are the student's own.

## Section A

### Question 1

0	1
---	---

**Figure 1** shows an album launch poster for Marissa Saroca.

Analyse how media language constructs meaning in **Figure 1**.

[8 marks]

#### Mark scheme

Level	Marks	Descriptor
4	7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Excellent analysis of the product that is detailed and critically engages with the nuanced aspects of how media language is used to construct meaning in the album launch poster</li><li>• Excellent and judicious use of the theoretical framework (media language) to analyse how meanings are generated</li><li>• Consistent highly appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li></ul>
3	5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Good analysis of the product that is clear and sometimes engages with the nuanced aspects of how media language is used to construct meaning in the album launch poster</li><li>• Good use of the theoretical framework (media language) to analyse how meanings are generated</li><li>• Frequent appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li></ul>
2	3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Satisfactory analysis of the product that engages with generally obvious or straightforward aspects of how media language is used to construct meaning in the album launch poster</li><li>• Satisfactory use of the theoretical framework (media language) to analyse how meanings are generated</li><li>• Generally appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li></ul>
1	1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Basic analysis of the product that engages with more straightforward aspects of how media language is used to construct meaning in the album launch poster</li><li>• Basic, if any, use of the theoretical framework (media language) to analyse how meanings are generated</li><li>• Occasional appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li></ul>
0	0	Nothing worthy of credit.

## Response A

Within this media product, meaning is created in different ways.

The denotation of the red, glossy lipstick is demonstrated in this poster. This connotes the idea of sexualisation of women, as red lipstick is a traditional way for media products to demonstrate the idea of sexualisation. This imagery supports the meaning created through the title of the album, 'Boys Write Love Songs Too'. By using the image of a female here and the costuming of the bold lipstick, it creates the impression that this is the type of person which the 'boys' write about, suggesting a feeling of sexualisation being conveyed by these writers which the artist tries to explore within the cover of the album, through the bareness of her body/vulnerability. Media language is also used here to create meaning through the use of positioning. The model is not given any sense of personality of specific features connoted from the close-up shot of her nose, mouth and neck. By doing this the artist suggests that any female can be spoken about in this 'love song' or sexualised context by any boy, as no specifics are given to the model of the 'boys' which she highlights in the title.

This is a Media Language question.

The description of the question for markers was as follows: 'This is about showing knowledge and understanding of Media Language and using this to analyse this compact and intriguing text. This is 10 minutes work or typically two to three paragraphs'.

Here the work is in the top band (notionally 'excellent') because its work is better than 'good'. It exceeds 'good' in specific ways by efficiently addressing the question in all respects from start to finish. The first part of this is a consistent focus on media language (visual and verbal) in the choice and combination of signs. The second aspect is the active reading which seeks to show how meaning is constructed (it is, if briefly, engaged). The specific interpretation is not important (there is no answer for the meaning of the text to find). All of this operates within the technical requirements of the specification.

It has an answer and a little evidence and the evidence helps the answer rather than displaying what the student knows

**Band 4**

## Question 2

0	2
---	---

Explain how representations of musical artists and their work communicate information about their cultural and political contexts.

Your answer should refer to **Figure 1** and the Close Study Product, Common's *Letter to the Free*.

[12 marks]

Level	Marks	Descriptor
4	10-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent and accurate understanding of the theoretical framework that is demonstrated by consistently appropriate explanation of the representations of music and musical acts in the products</li> <li>• Excellent knowledge and understanding of the influences of the political and cultural contexts on media products that is consistently supported by highly appropriate and effective reference to the set products</li> <li>• Consistent highly appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li> </ul>
3	7-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good understanding of the theoretical framework that is demonstrated via frequent appropriate explanation of the representations of music and musical acts in the products</li> <li>• Good knowledge and understanding of the influences of the political and cultural contexts on media products that is usually supported by mostly appropriate and effective reference to the set products</li> <li>• Frequent appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li> </ul>
2	4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfactory understanding of the theoretical framework that is demonstrated by generally appropriate explanation of the representations of music and musical acts in the products</li> <li>• Some satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the influences of the political and cultural contexts on media products that is sometimes supported by generally appropriate reference to the set products but inconsistently effective</li> <li>• Generally appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li> </ul>
1	1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic understanding of the theoretical framework that is demonstrated by occasional appropriate explanation of the representations of music and musical acts in the products</li> <li>• Basic knowledge and understanding of the influences of the political and cultural contexts on media products that is generally unsupported by appropriate reference</li> </ul>

		<p>to the set products with limited effect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occasional appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li> </ul>
0	0	Nothing worthy of credit.

## Response B

Marissa Saroca is represented as confident through the denotation of her lack of clothing on her album poster, connoting a lack of embarrassment and possibly power. However one could argue that Male Gaze could be expected with the paradigmatic choices of the red glossy lips and perfect smooth skin. An audience may decode these choices as representing her as sexually desirable, and so Marissa may be objectified in her album poster, appealing to a male audience. Where culturally women are used to a great deal, sexualised in order to sell products. Though in the culture where fourth wave feminism is arguably happening, the woman's lack of clothing and parted red lips could signify she has power over her own body and it is her choice to be sexualised on her own album cover; this is her.

In Letter to the Free, black artist Common raps in an empty prison wearing smart but casual black clothing, representing him as calm and intelligent as he raps about freedom of black prisoners. This is a countertype representation of the racist stereotypical view black men are loud and ignorant, due to slavery and segregation occurring with lasting effects on people of color, like Common. The denotation of his hand movements connote a measured and controlled and serious nature as he speaks "trees my grandmother hung from", "now you want to trump me", connoting the seriousness of his song regarding recent political power, such as President Donald Trump's racist behaviours and not speaking out about KKK's rallies. Common's seriousness and significance is further represented in the female singers as they sing Blues/gospel style in the prison. Unlike Marissa Saroca's album poster, they are denoted in black casual clothing as they sing, which is unconventional as commonly in western music videos women have a lack of clothing, connoting sexual desirability. However these women sing "Freedom come", representing themselves as earnest and concerned with political issues such as mass misconception. The hybridity of their video, using jazz and Blues elements also references then criticizes slave history, another political and cultural issue. Were Marissa Saroca does not do this, the text 'boys can write love songs too' represents her as wanting equality, with feminist ideals, going against the view of the masculine hegemonic male.

This is a Media Representation question.

The emphasis here is on a couple of the explicit contexts: cultural and political.

The description for markers was as follows: 'This is a question about representation and what it might reveal about cultural and political contexts: in other words how representations carry information about the world around them. 15-20 minutes work'.

This is the follow up question for the paper's unseen text which links the unseen with a CSP. This is not a comparative study but students are asked to 'refer to' both texts. Here the response does play a little on the comparative but this isn't necessary.

The key once again is that the student makes an answer that is 'about' the question and makes a genuine attempt to consider the specific unique dynamic of the combination of texts) in the secure knowledge that they are addressing the familiar, central and straightforward ways representations are constructed.

So what we get here is the 'how' of representation, which is about identifying details and then interpreting them in political and to a lesser extent cultural contexts, with more attention to the known CSP than the entirely open unseen.

#### **Level 4**

## Question 3

0	3
---	---

How useful are ideas about narrative in analysing music videos? Refer to Close Study Product *Billie Jean* in your answer.

**[9 marks]**

### Mark scheme

Level	Marks	Descriptor
3	7-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent analysis of the product that is detailed and critically engages with ideas about narrative and how they relate to the CSP</li> <li>• Analysis of the set product is perceptive, insightful, and informed by a detailed knowledge and understanding of narrative theory</li> <li>• Excellent, astute judgements and conclusions that are consistently well supported by relevant analysis.</li> </ul>
2	4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good analysis of the product that engages with aspects of narrative theory and how it relates to the CSP</li> <li>• Analysis of the set product is reasonable and straightforward, and informed by a sound knowledge and understanding of narrative theory</li> <li>• Good judgements and conclusions that are supported by satisfactory analysis.</li> </ul>
1	1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic, if any, analysis of the product that engages with the very straightforward aspects of narrative theory and how it relates to the CSP</li> <li>• Analysis of the set product is superficial and generalised, and informed by little or no knowledge and understanding of narrative theory</li> <li>• Basic judgements and conclusions that are generally unsupported by analysis.</li> </ul>
0	0	Nothing worthy of credit.



## Response C

Billie Jean is a part performance, part narrative video that takes inspiration from detective noir movies and uses corresponding visuals to this genre for example, Michael Jackson's paparazzi pursuer's costume. The use of the large brimmed hat and large overcoat for the pursuer is associated with the noir genre and helps to construct a mysterious untrustworthy atmosphere to the character, setting up a sort of hermeneutic enigma code about who he is/what he is going to do over the course of the narrative. It also used the three act Equilibrium, disruption resolution model, with the equilibrium being Jackson walking down the street, disruption being chased by the paparazzi and resolution being Jackson escaping the paparazzi at the end; a short dance sequence is put in between scenes as it is a part performance video showing that the narrative isn't as important as Jackson appearing as a star performer.

This is a Media Language question.

The description for markers was as follows: 'This is a question about narrative but one that requires students to evaluate the usefulness of narrative theories or approaches they choose to consider. The CSP is a common source of evidence. Just 12 minutes here, on average.'

The enabling ideas, which the mark scheme also calls 'academic theories' are tested here for their usefulness.

This response is an excellent example of a precise appreciation of the question, providing a simple evaluation of what happens when the critical lens 'narrative' is brought to bear on a familiar text (The CSP, Michael Jackson's 'Billie Jean').

Only a little specific theory is needed and deployed to exemplify the approach and the rest from the first line is judgment, 'part performance and part narrative'.

**Level 3**

## Question 4

0	4
---	---

Judith Butler describes gender as “an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts”. In other words it is something learnt through repeated performance.

How useful is this idea in understanding how gender is represented in marketing and advertising products? Refer in detail to the Close Study Products *Maybelline ‘That Boss Life part 1’* and the *Score hair cream advert*.

**[20 marks]**

### Mark scheme

Level	Marks	Descriptor
4	16-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent and accurate understanding of the theoretical framework that is demonstrated by consistently appropriate and detailed consideration of ideas about gender performativity</li> <li>• Excellent and judicious use of the theoretical framework</li> <li>• Excellent application of knowledge and understanding produces an evaluation of Butler’s ideas that is insightful and very well-informed</li> <li>• Judgements and conclusions regarding the validity of Butler’s ideas are perceptive and fully supported with detailed reference to specific aspects of the marketing and advertising CSPs</li> <li>• Consistent highly appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li> </ul>
3	11-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good understanding of the theoretical framework that is demonstrated by frequent appropriate consideration of ideas about gender performativity</li> <li>• Very good use of the theoretical framework.</li> <li>• Good application of knowledge and understanding produces an evaluation of Butler’s ideas that is sound and well-informed</li> <li>• Judgements and conclusions regarding the validity of Butler’s ideas are logical and well supported with reference to relevant aspects of the marketing and advertising CSPs</li> <li>• Frequent appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li> </ul>
2	6-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfactory understanding of the theoretical framework that is demonstrated by generally appropriate consideration of ideas about gender performativity</li> <li>• Satisfactory use of the theoretical framework.</li> <li>• Satisfactory application of knowledge and understanding produces an evaluation of Butler’s ideas that is sensible. In places this may lapse into</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• application of the theory rather than evaluation</li> <li>• Judgements and conclusions regarding Butler's ideas are sensible and supported with some appropriate reference to relevant aspects of the marketing and advertising CSPs</li> <li>• Generally appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li> </ul>
1	1-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic understanding of the theoretical framework that is demonstrated by occasional appropriate consideration of ideas about gender performativity</li> <li>• Some use of the theoretical framework.</li> <li>• Basic application of knowledge and understanding produce a response to Butler's ideas that is generally descriptive rather than evaluative</li> <li>• Judgements and conclusions are not developed and mostly unsupported by reference to the marketing and advertising CSPs</li> <li>• Occasional appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li> </ul>
0	0	Nothing worthy of credit.

This is a Media Representation question

The description for markers was as follows: 'This is a question about the representation of gender in media products through the critical lens of performativity as prompted by the Butler quote. Again the key is to evaluate the usefulness of these ideas when applied to familiar texts. This is a high tariff question completed ideally in 30 minutes.'

This question has multiple requirements: to discuss the representation of gender; to do this with reference to two known texts; to apply ideas about gender performativity (Butler); to evaluate the usefulness of this theory in the context of an 'extended response' (so there is an expectation of structure, development and conclusion). The following responses were both marked comfortably in the top band. The examples offer very different approaches to the question and hopefully seen together they will offer a range of ideas about how to approach the extended response question.

## Response D

Judith Butler was a feminist who put forward a theory about gender being a performance created through repeated repetitions. This is apparent in both Score and Maybelline advertising products. This theory can be applied to both products in juxtaposing ways.

Maybelline is an established makeup company that is now moving along with modern times and trying to accommodate for everyone. This can be seen in the advert as two social media influencers are used to promote the product. This was a multi-media platform product which attracts the younger audience to the advert as they are the biggest users of social media. The mise-en-scene of New York represents the idea of “anything goes” and you can now create your own identity. This can be seen in Butler’s theory because the more we see certain representations the more it constructs our ideas. For example, the fact that there is no sensualisation over a man wearing makeup proves that in modern times we are now much more open to different ideas and our traditional ideas about masculinity and femininity are being challenged. This supports Gantlett’s claim that in modern contemporary times gender and identity are much more fluid.

Furthermore these ideas can also be seen in the score. The advert shows how a man with a heightened masculinity sitting on animal skin holding a gun, these signs connote power and strength. This can be seen in Butler’s idea of gender being a performance as the connotations of power and strength were often used in adverts around the 1960’s to reinforce the dominant ideology of masculinity. Furthermore the headline “get what you’ve always wanted” is a semantic code (Barthes). One meaning could be referring to the actual product, whereas the hidden meaning could be referencing to the mass of girls standing round him and worshipping him. Laura Mulvey argues for the male gaze, which can be apparent in the advert. However, it can also be argued that the women are almost mocking the man and are in fact holding him up. This would be the oppositional reading for Hall and would go against Butler’s theory as although it may appear a stereotypical image of femininity it can be interpreted in a way that makes women have the power.

In addition, 1967, when the advert was released, marked a change in attitudes towards masculinity. Homosexuality was decriminalised, in the advert you can see signs of femininity of the man. For example he is very well groomed and looks as if he is wearing makeup. This presents a similarity between the Maybelline and score advert as because of moving away from traditional norms and values we have become more aware of the possibility to construct our own identities. This would again reinforce Butler’s idea of gender being a performance due to repetition of acts as because we have moved away from the traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity our ideas are also reforming.

In conclusion it can be argued that Butler’s theory of gender is useful when applied to advertising products. As representations change and move forward as do our ideas, promoting a more forward thinking society.

This response represents the most common approach to the question whereby Butler is addressed by name, if relatively vaguely and the answer then focuses largely on gender and the two CSPs. However the qualities of this that take it to the top band are the ways in which it enhances the basic approach in specific ways. Firstly, the student gets the simple point about gender as a performance and sets up an argument wherein the two texts demonstrate this in contrasting ways.

The answer focuses consistently and in detail on the framework focus area, representation, on the key aspect of how gender is represented and on the two CSPs. The fact these are quite nuanced readings, that there is a sense of historical and cultural context and a coherent line of travel, means it does excel in addressing the question. It also is strongly in the critical register of the subject.

#### **Level 4**

## Response E

One might argue that Butler's gender theory is relevant when analysing how score seeks to reinforce the hegemonic zeitgeist of its political context while Maybelline "that Boss life" attempts to challenge it yet, perhaps Baudrillard's theory of simulacrum is more relevant when analysing the presentation of gender in Score. Moreover, the use of stereotypes in 'That boss life' arguably also reflects the representation.

Maybelline attempts to subvert dominant views on gender utilizing Judith Butler's gender performativity to attempt to establish a less binary notion of gender. The advert features MannyMUA, a self-taught make-up artist with 4.9 million subscribers, in order to craft a sense of ethos. In line with Butler's theory Manny through mise-en-scene is seen as feminine, both his body language and facial expressions are used to connote (Barthes) this. One might argue that the inclusion of female make-up artist makeupshayra is used in order to remove the binary oppositions (Levi Strauss) we expect, it normalizes this representation of masculinity. While Score, heavily utilizes gender performativity reflecting traditional masculinity again through the mise-en-scene of the gun connoting masculinity. In this way one might argue that as Score utilizes stereotypes (van Zoonen) in order to portray gender it very much uses Butler's theory while Maybelline uses it to establish a new verisimilitude in terms of masculinity.

However, the use of glamorous mise-en-scene in Maybelline in tandem with gender representations uses simulacrum providing a better idea of how gender is presented. The repetitive use of gold with the mascara arguably in line with Barthes' order of signification connotes wealth leading to the myth surrounding success as a result of wealth. This works alongside the feminine nature of MannyMUA in order to create a simulacrum, one that in line with hyper-reality we will prefer to reality. In this way, the presentation of glamorous lifestyle with MannyMUA's success as the first gay Maybelline ambassador allows us to understand how positive the third nature of gender presented is.

On the other hand, both Score and Maybelline utilize Tessa Perkins' idea that stereotypes aren't always pejorative. For Score the "male" hair cream, the stereotypes surrounding masculinity as portrayed through his muscular figure, gun, as well as female subservience. In this way Perkins argues stereotypes have truth and for a customer this hyper-masculinity aids them in reaching 'self-actualisation' (Maslow). Maybelline similarly portrays stereotypes of gay femininity alongside the backdrop of New York in order to emphasise the positivity of this representation. In this way both utilize stereotypes in order to reflect views of their context.

In conclusion, while Butler's theory is applicable to explain how each CSP reflects context, perhaps Baudrillard's better reflects the representation; while Perkins' view on stereotypes further aids in explaining.

This student takes a conceptually sophisticated approach, privileging the 'enabling ideas' provided by Butler and genuinely testing them out. This approach has a higher degree of difficulty so can be forgiven for some of its inconsistency. This response is engaging from the start, at the very moment it engages with Butler's ideas energetically, even playfully. It recognises that Butler is not offering feminist readings of dominant ideology but rather is problematising the whole ontology of gender (her book was called *Gender Trouble*). Gender is, as the student implies, essentially a simulacrum, an image without an original, though this is not necessarily a level of sophistication that we would expect of students at this level.

Once this is established, the answer explores the inevitable contradictions of trying to apply this theory to a couple of adverts. In the idea that Maybelline subverts gender is the essence of Butler's belief in the 'possibilities of gender transformation...in the possibility of a different sort of repeating'. Score is used less but as it's been exposed as a hyper-reality, it is arguable that there is not much more to say (there is no requirement to focus on the two products equally). This is the kind of address of theory we want to encourage; not as something that is only 'learnt' but as something 'used', ideas that enable us to have greater purchase on the world we inhabit. The mode is exploratory and despite some limitations, it's always going to be top band.

#### **Level 4**

## Question 5.2

0 5 . 2

What is meant by the term 'fandom'? Identify two examples of fandom in action.

[3 marks]

### Mark scheme

#### Marking guidance

##### AO1 1a

Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical framework of media (3 marks)

Award 1 mark for identifying that fandom is 'the state of being a fan' / 'what fans do' / 'fan activity'.

Award up to 2 more for appropriate specific examples.

- attending fan conventions
- publishing and exchanging fanzines and newsletters.
- creating, contributing to and visiting fan-based websites (on-line communities)
- sharing commitment and opinion on forums and discussion boards
- writing fan fiction ("fanfic"), stories based on the universe and characters of their chosen fandom
- creating videos and video edits related to their fan focus
- purchasing / accumulating / collecting merchandise / memorabilia
- engaging in 'cosplay' (roleplaying in costume)
- creating fan art

This is not a definitive list.

This question assesses knowledge of the theoretical framework of audiences particularly focusing on:

- the role and significance of specialised audiences, including niche and fan, to the media



## Response F

'Fandom' is how people who are interested in a product express their interest in it. Be in through 'fanfiction' conventions, cosplay. Examples of this are Star Wars, which has a huge fandom. Comic-con is for all fans interested in comics. Lara Croft has a large fandom, in support of Jenkins theory.

This is a Media Audiences question.

A low tariff question which checks knowledge of useful terms from the specification.

The description for markers was as follows: 'Two or three sentences are required here to describe fandom and identify examples. Approximately 4-5 minutes.'

This is not a place where formal or learnt definitions are required as the example shows. The danger is to waste time on elaboration when all that is required for the three marks is knowledge. Students will never need more paper or more than three sentences. This response has all 3 marks before the end of the second line with a loose description of fandom followed by two examples ('cosplay' is an unnecessary third).

**3 marks**

## Question 6

0	6
---	---

 Explain how independent films are produced and distributed. Refer to the Close Study Product *Chicken* in your response.

**[9 marks]**

### Mark scheme

Level	Marks	Descriptor
3	7-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Excellent knowledge and understanding of the influences of the media contexts on media products that is consistently supported by highly appropriate and effective reference to the set product</li><li>• Consistent highly appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li></ul>
2	4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Good knowledge and understanding of the influences of media contexts on media products that is sometimes supported by generally appropriate reference to the set products that is sometimes effective</li><li>• Frequent appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li></ul>
1	1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Basic knowledge and understanding of the influences of media contexts on media products that is generally unsupported by appropriate reference to the set products with limited effect.</li><li>• Occasional appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li></ul>
0	0	Nothing worthy of credit.

## Response G

Independent film are produced and distributed usually at low cost and small scale because of their Budget. Chicken had a microbudget of £110,000 therefore their production had a lack of theatrical distribution. It also had a cheap mis en scene, this being mainly in a field to keep production costs down. They also usually have lack of known actors because they can't afford to pay them big money. The filming quality sometimes isn't the best because of the expense of high tech recording equipment and is usually produced in a very short period of time to reduce production costs. Chicken was distributed on various platforms but mainly on youtube because it reaches out to the coming of age genre. Fans and younger demographic but its also free. They also have a website and created various posters. These were all cheaper but affecting to reach out to their audiences. Chicken also went to 8 music festivals to advertise their film and ended up winning 3 awards. Overall independent films are usually produced and distributed on a small scale with lack of money to spend.

This is a Media Industries question.

The description for markers was as follows: 'A question about media contexts and their impact on this CSP as an example of a film. About 12 minutes'.

The question requires knowledge, application and understanding in a limited time scale. This response does exactly that: addressing the question and showing knowledge of the most restricted CSP (restricted in that knowledge can only be Industries knowledge) in a way that keeps the focus on production and distribution. It is detailed and coherent and is clearly in the upper band of the three. The CSP is used effectively as evidence to support the student's explaining.

**Level 3**

## Question 7

0	7
---	---

“Media audiences always respond to media products in the way that producers intended.”

To what extent do you agree with this statement? In your answer, refer to your Close Study Products *War of the Worlds* (1938) and *The Surgery* (BBC Radio 1).

[20 marks]

### Mark scheme

Level	Marks	Descriptor
4	16-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excellent and accurate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework that is demonstrated by consistently appropriate evaluation of the extent to which intention guides reception</li> <li>Excellent, astute judgements and conclusions that are consistently well supported by relevant examples from the set products</li> <li>Consistent highly appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li> </ul>
3	11-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework that is demonstrated via frequent appropriate evaluation of the extent to which intention guides reception</li> <li>Good judgements and conclusions that are often supported by relevant examples from the set products</li> <li>Frequent appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout</li> </ul>
2	6-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework that is demonstrated by generally appropriate evaluation of the extent to which intention guides reception</li> <li>Satisfactory judgements and conclusions that are sometimes supported by examples from the set products</li> <li>Generally appropriate use of subject specific terminology throughout.</li> </ul>
1	1-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basic knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework that is demonstrated by occasional appropriate evaluation of the extent to which intention guides reception</li> <li>Basic judgements and conclusions that are generally unsupported by examples from the set products</li> <li>Occasional appropriate use of subject specific terminology.</li> </ul>
0	0	Nothing worthy of credit.

## Response H

Although media products are encoded by the producer to convey a preferred reading, I fully disagree with the passive audience notion saying that audiences always respond well.

The Surgery was targeted at a younger adult/teenage audience. Hence, topics such as FOMO (fear of missing out), anxiety and depression were discussed. However, the format and presentation of the show meant many people took what Hall would describe as an oppositional reading. The lengthy discussion without music breaks turned out to be unappealing to its target audience. In addition to this, although the producer wanted it to be informative to meet the need of the audience and the BBC's public service remit, the presenters were also interpreted to be patronising and cringeworthy as opposed to relevant and helpful. This is also good evidence for active audience theories such as Hall, arguing there can be a number of different readings, which is the opposite of the passive audience statement if audiences 'always' respond to media products in the way they intended.

War of the Worlds was a much more successful (although notorious) radio product. However, although the broadcast was meant to be a satirical drama, newspapers reported that people took the broadcast as fact and it caused widespread panic. This firstly may be to do with the audience not being media literate, meaning they did not understand the mediation of the product and took it literally. Also, the rise in radio had led to a battle between radio and newspaper, so the reaction was most likely exaggerated to make radio look bad. The fact this was broadcast a day before Halloween also shows Orson Welles saw this as a Halloween prank, so in fact the panic may have been an intended reading, thus agreeing to an extent to the initial statement.

In conclusion, the preferred reading encoded by the producer can often be the majority reading of the audiences, thus respond to the way the producer had intended. However, oppositional and negotiated readings often can take place, shown explicitly by The Surgery (as it was cancelled) and by the reported panic caused by War of the Worlds. Personally, I believe that no audience is wholly active or passive, however if there is a proportion of media literate, active population media products are definitely not always responded to as intended by the producer.

The point is to consider the proposition and draw conclusions across a series of paragraphs which work on the evidence. This response recommends itself as a top band response by being more than good in the mark scheme's three aspects: in its knowledge and understanding of Media Audiences as a quadrant of the theoretical framework, by its ongoing and informed evaluation of the proposition in context and in this case in a well-structured fashion. It is not only comfortable conceptually but also in inhabiting the subject register and vocabulary, deploying ideas about active and passive audiences productively rather than ostentatiously. The CSPs are used as case studies in this structured evaluation with just enough detail (with *The War of the Worlds* there is always a temptation to present far too much material, so this is very much a positive). The student also delivers their own judgments and a conclusion. This response takes on the proposition with knowledge and intent and is secure in the top band.

#### **Level 4**

## Response I

“War of the Worlds” was broadcasted by Columbia Radio Station on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1938 by Orsen Wells. I do not agree with this statement for this radio Broadcast as, since this was not a popular radio channel, many people did not hear the introduction stating that it was a fictional play, and so millions thought it was real. Stuart Hall’s reception theory is linked to this as the intended reading by Orsen Wells was that it was a radio play that was fictional and was to be enjoyed by the audience. The negotiated reading was that some people heard the introduction however knew how inappropriate and misleading the play would be during this already violent time between World Wars. The oppositional reading was most popular as most people tuned into the play at 8:05pm and so missed the introduction, causing 1.2 million people to go into a full-scale panic as they thought the play was real life.

2000 calls were made to the Trenton Police Department in New York within 2 hours of the play was they wanted to know where they would be the most safe during the attack.

Despite the 1938 broadcast being a homage to the 1898 fictional book by HG Wells which is about aliens coming to Earth from Mars, people still believed it was true and simply thought the broadcasters were being ignorant. The audience thought that this was actually an attack from humans however they were being called ‘extraterrestrials’.

The play was also very realistic which caused most of the panic. It started with an interruption Bulletin and had actors be professors from Princeton to confirm the attack The actors also had the same panic as the real broadcasters did during the Hindenburg crash a few months a few month prior. This, along with the hypodermic needle theory, caused people to just instantly believe what they were hearing on the radio without asking any questions, not agreeing with the intended reading.

BBC Radio 1’s “The Surgery” has a better intended response from the audience. Using Stuart Hall’s reception theory, the intended reading of this 1999-2017 radio show was that people should call or text in their worries or problems and the radio producers would try and help. “The Surgery” was on every Wednesday night from 9pm-10pm. It was on at this time as the watershed starts at 9pm which means that hosts Katei Thistleton and Dr Radha Modgil can answer questions on a wide range of topics from relationships to mental health. The audience is successful ins ending in their problems. For example, the “FOMO” episode talked about the ‘Fear of Missing Out’ which many people feel in this media saturated world. It is also anonymous so people feel comfortable sending in their very personal problems whilst still feeling secure. The hosts also talk about their problems to relate to the reader, using phrases such as “I can relate to your decision you are definitely not alone”. They also use celebrity anchorage by saying that “Demi lavato can sit in, so can we” further showing that everyone can relate to each other, even celebrities. This backs up the intended reading of the producers.

In November 2017, the BBC Radio 1 show changed to “Life Hacks” which airs every Sunday between 4-6pm. This agrees with the intended audience slightly less because since it is before the watershed, not all topics can be discussed in the same depth as they were able to be before; possible no longer helping some listeners. The show is hosted by Cel Spellman, Katie Thistleton and Dr Radha Modgil, and is almost identical to “The Surgery” despite the watershed problem.

This second example provides a perfect demonstration of how the CSPs provide an unparalleled degree of security and reassurance to both students and their teachers. Without the CSPs, this is an expansive and potentially very challenging question. With the CSPs it is clearly circumscribed, asking for the application and evaluation of a proposition to two of prepared examples. As the evidence to support the argument is held in common, discrimination comes from how the evidence is deployed in relation to the statement.. This will demand selection and evaluation of how the CSPs throw light on theories and propositions. This student has a successful approach, by establishing that what is needed is a direct answer to the questions' proposition and then support from two sources.

The two sources are introduced in the first paragraph and appear in nearly every other one. They are the knowledge of the theoretical framework and in this case audience theories and the reference to the details of the CSPs. It would probably have been better to have an establishing introduction to set out the response but in thirty minutes, we're not going to get a fully realised essay. More important is the way that the student then deploys the CSPs selectively so that the ongoing discussion about intended and negotiated meanings is not weighed down by all the student has on each of the case studies. Here the student works through them in a selective fashion, selecting evidence to make their point. As a result this is a full and convincing answer.

#### **Level 4**



## Get help and support

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at [aqa.org.uk/7572](https://aqa.org.uk/7572)

You can talk directly to the Media Studies subject team:

E: [mediastudies@aca.org.uk](mailto:mediastudies@aca.org.uk)

T: 01483 556 301