# GCE 2004
*June Series*

AQA

ASSESSMENT and
QUALIFICATIONS
ALLIANCE

# Mark Scheme

# Media Studies
*(MED1)*

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# AS MEDIA STUDIES (MED1)

# MARK SCHEME – JUNE 2004

This paper asks candidates to employ their knowledge and application of the Key Concepts – most particularly Media Language, Representation and Media Audiences – when analysing a media text. It also suggests that reference could be made to the remaining Key Concepts – Values and Ideology and Media Institutions – whilst also anticipating that an element of evaluation should take place, in terms of the appropriateness, success and effectiveness of the extract.

There is a great deal for candidates to do in the one and a quarter hours of the examination and it is highly unlikely for a candidate to manage every possible aspect of the analysis and evaluation suggested by the list of sub-topics. Examiners should be aware of this when marking papers and reward candidates for what they have achieved, **not** penalise candidates for what they may have omitted.

It is also important to allow the candidates as much critical autonomy as possible. The point of this examination is to give candidates a springboard for the analysis and evaluation of a media text. While the sub-topics below give the candidates a scaffold upon which to formulate a response, it is also to be hoped that some candidates will have the confidence, and the understanding of the media text being examined, to perhaps explore areas that are both **unpredictable and unexpected**.

It is also important to note that an holistic approach is often utilised by candidates in the higher levels and the scaffolding can on occasions be ignored entirely.

The areas below represent a general guide to the areas suggested in the list of sub-topics, and as such cannot hope to be definitive.

****Please note that the notion of a 'balanced' response to the text – utilising all the Key Concepts – has been replaced. Whilst some candidates will tackle all Key Concepts, the likelihood of this happening in a 'balanced' fashion in what amounts to 60 minutes of writing is unlikely. It is far more likely that candidates will tackle aspects of the text which seem most appropriate and in some cases this may well mean that other Key Concepts seem less well handled.

**Please note the instruction above –** *examiners should reward candidates for what they have achieved, not penalise candidates for what they may have omitted.*

**GENERAL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

**Level 6   51 – 60 marks**

At Level 6 candidates will have an obvious confidence in their approach to the text.  The response will be well structured and contain an organised understanding of the Key Concepts, which will be used in the analysis and evaluation of the text.  They may well ignore the scaffolding in the question paper but take their own path towards revealing a clear understanding of the concerns of the question – but they may also engage in a debate, challenging commonly held viewpoints on occasion, using the text as a starting point.  There will be a sense of the ambitious and engaged.

The response will be detailed yet avoid the descriptive at the top of the band.  Reference to ideas or theories will be made where relevant and useful to the argument being proposed.  Level 6 candidates will show clear evidence of critical autonomy.

**Level 5   41- 50 marks**

Level 5 candidates will show a clear ability to analyse and evaluate the text in question.  They will reveal a good understanding of the media Key Concepts, which they will handle well in their reading of the text.  Their response will be thorough and detailed but without the confident grasp of Level 6.  Their manipulation of the Key Concepts will not be total and in places may well be a little simplistic.  However, the textual analysis will be good.  Ideas will be experimented with and a sense of the candidate's true voice will be evident.  There will be a sense of debate and some reference to media theory where relevant.

**Level 4   31 – 40 marks**

Candidates at Level 4 will generally speaking show a solid/sound understanding of the media Key Concepts, although some concepts may be treated rather better than others.  There will be a sense that the typical Level 4 candidate understands the Key Concepts but not in their entirety and in a rather simplistic way at times.

Analysis and evaluation will be sound but there will be some irrelevant description and repetition of school based learning rather than an individual grasp of the text.  Media terminology will exist but will not always be utilised properly and may sometimes be misplaced.  Candidates at this level will tend to look at the text concept by concept.

**Level 3   21 – 30 marks**

Candidates at this level will display a competent understanding of the media Key Concepts and will probably be better at dealing with Language, Representation and Audience than the other Key Concepts available to them.  They will make attempts to analyse and evaluate though this may be rather limited and answers will tend to appear rather broad and unfocused.  There will be points of merit made which will need to be rewarded.

Candidates at this level will frequently work their way through the text from start to finish and will also use phrases taken directly from the question paper.  At this level it is often the case that candidates confuse description with analysis.

**Level 2   11 – 20 marks**

Candidates at this level will have a rudimentary understanding of the media Key Concepts and may be limited to an answer which really only looks at one or two of them anyway.  Analysis and evaluation (if it exists) will be limited and often seem to repeat what has been learnt in the classroom without any real sense of understanding taking place.  There may be a lack of relevance and answers may lapse into the very generalised response.  There is likely to be a large amount of description with the occasional critique attached.

**Level 1   0 – 10 marks**

Very limited responses to the question.  Candidates may really only understand one (maybe two) media Key Concepts and very superficially at that.  Answers will tend to be brief and quite generalised – displaying little engagement with the media or indeed the text.  There may well be moments of isolated merit which must be rewarded.

## QUESTION SPECIFIC MARKING DESCRIPTORS

Attempting to second-guess the ways that candidates will respond to the text in question is an almost impossible task. What follows are some suggested areas that candidates **might** explore. Experience of past examinations would suggest that generally speaking most/many candidates will stick to predictable areas, but there will also be a number of candidates who produce the unexpected and the unpredictable.

Thus the descriptors below are really only a guide, examiners will have to remember at all times to mark as positively as possible and bear in mind that if the unexpected is backed up with specific reference to the text then it must be accorded positive treatment. It is impossible to second-guess every candidate. The list below simply represents some suggested paths and is meant to be helpful when marking. The General Assessment Criteria are your final recourse, and please **do not** think in grades, candidates must be placed in the appropriate level.

What also needs to be remembered is that the format of the question has been altered quite considerably. The bulk of the scaffolding has been removed and candidates are now simply required to "*focus their analysis upon the Key Concepts of Media Language, Representations and Media Audiences*" whilst also being told that they "*may wish to comment on Values and Ideology and Media Institutions*". It is hoped that this may free up the majority of candidates and encourage a more individual response. Certainly it should help candidates avoid simply working their way through the handholds one by one.

Because the format of the question has changed, it seems less necessary to try and second-guess what candidates might come up with in such detail. To repeat what is said above, what follows are suggested areas that candidates **might** explore, it is **not** an all-inclusive list.

## MEDIA LANGUAGE

The extract begins with a brief Iraq war title sequence, predominantly yellow with spinning boxes containing images of wailing Iraqi women, of Bush and of Saddam Hussein spinning from mid-picture off to the sides as the boxes begin to show pictures of artillery and other weaponry, soldiers in gas masks and some shots of the indigenous population. Also there are images of helicopters and then jets which are graphically displayed, seemingly coming in over our heads and shooting off into the distance whilst below us as we look down columns of tanks seem to be advancing towards us. The *Sky News* title music plays in the background and will be recognisable to all candidates who possess *Sky*. Actually this is very reminiscent of a computer game in terms of the graphics used behind the live boxed footage.

This is very much in keeping with the style of music used by all News programmes on the television; there is always a beat and it also seems quite martial. The final image in the box is a graphic of the Middle East which is blue and green and so contrasts considerably with the previous hue of yellow. Presumably the yellow is meant to represent the sand of Iraq but some candidates are likely to interpret the use of this colour to suggest cowardice etc.

We are then told we are going to see the headlines – there are four particular headlines: a battle for a crossroads still raging, a story about planes downed by friendly fire, a four and a half hour battle still raging and damage to Baghdad and another Iraqi city. The footage that accompanies the four stories is interesting. In the first instance a camera pans along a line of lorries etc. moving along the horizon and then settles on two soldiers talking in the foreground with a helicopter behind them. There is nothing really to suggest a battle and in fact it is quite a dull image – scrubland predominantly, and quite static. Shots of planes on the ground accompany the second story, again tinged in yellow but nothing exciting. A plane is taxiing off.

The third story has a long shot of tanks with some smoke pluming and then cuts to a long shot of a village or dwelling and then zooms out to reveal two soldiers lying pointing guns towards said structure whilst little seems to be going on. In fact one of the soldiers actually turns around to look at the camera.

The fourth headline is accompanied by two shots of damage to a town. People are seen going about their business as the damage is being photographed.

What is most apparent about the footage is that it is in complete contrast to the previous title sequence and indeed sits fairly uneasily with the music playing in the background and the stories that we are being told. They speak of battles etc. and actually the pictures are static and completely actionless. We do get the impression of a huge, flat, arid county, sparsely populated, while the only apparent activity is allied vehicles moving about.

Cut to *Sky News* sequence - a computer generated sequence as if taken from orbit around the earth, various sections of the world flash past. The penultimate image is of the Middle East and the final image is of the UK. '*Live from the Sky News Centre…*' sounds terribly important but places the UK as the most important place; the movement is all towards that final image. The sense of movement is interesting, in places it is deliberately speeded up – all very exciting – which links with the excitement of the war graphics at the start, and again the sense of anticlimax at the live footage must be palpable.

Finally the war map. The newscaster stands in front of a giant video screen whilst below him is a huge map of Iraq on the floor. Again the map is yellow though interestingly the video screen is tinged with red.

The entire sequence will have been repeated hundreds of times as the war continued. Interesting to note how news companies attempted to "sex-up" the war in a sense when in fact the live footage is so dull (and as we now know censored and embedded and appropriated by the Allies anyway).

**REPRESENTATION**

There is no particular representation that stands out in the sequence, instead there are several areas that candidates may comment upon.

Iraq itself will no doubt be seen (as above) as a barren flat stretch of desert. Certainly little is seen in the sequence to suggest anything else. Any members of the indigenous population are also seen predominantly as relatively poor and dressed accordingly. (I suspect we only see the 'general public' when the cameras are present at ruined/bombed buildings.) There is a shot of Saddam Hussein in full uniform in the very opening titles but the general picture of Iraq conveyed by the sequence is of a poor 'third world' country. This of course could be considered as deliberate since the coalition would want to be seen to bring wealth along with liberation. It must also be pointed out however that sanctions will not have helped the prosperity of the nation.

War is conveyed two ways. The opening sequence makes it look like a computer game on *Playstation 2* (or whatever) whilst footage of the 'action' reveals that it is far from that. Of course, pictures were controlled so the action was always what the coalition wanted us to see and there is a debate raging right now about the nature of the footage seen in the West and the contrast with the bloodshed that actually took place.

The soldiers seen are all quite laid back, happy to pose for cameras etc., which could also be construed as part of the propaganda machine in action.

There is an emphasis on the machinery of war, whenever possible. Frequent shots of tanks, helicopters, planes, guns; all the hardware that could be construed as exciting for certain viewers.

Mention might also be made of the newscaster and his position in front of the video screen and above the map of war. Some candidates might choose to comment upon the opportunities news teams took at this point to almost revel in real live happenings, almost becoming a part of the coalition in some cases since so few media institutions took an anti-war or even questioning stance. Certainly it must have been a scenario that most of them professionally enjoyed, despite the implications.

## MEDIA AUDIENCES

The extract was actually broadcast on a Sunday morning which should have some bearing on the nature of the audience. There can be little doubt that any major event such as a terrorist attack and/or armed conflict and war is the lifeblood of 24 hour rolling news channels and there is evidence to suggest that viewing figures were high in the early weeks of the conflict, especially the bombing of Baghdad.

In this particular case candidates may talk about age groupings and class groupings but many of these will be strictly irrelevant. What should be rewarded is reference to *Sky* ownership (predominantly C to E groupings but with a greater take-up of As and Bs over the past two years). *Sky News* is itself rather tabloidish in style (reference to Murdoch may be made here and his newspaper ownership) although *BBC24* is more likely to be viewed by an audience who purchase the quality broadsheets. At the same time *Sky News* has many more journalists in Iraq and the surrounds and have won praise for much of their war footage, so real war aficionados may well have tuned to *Sky* despite their tabloid style.

Reference might also be made here to the fact that *Sky News* had far more uncritical reporting of the war at this stage than many of the other news channels (though interestingly this was to change as the war continued).

## VALUES AND IDEOLOGY

Of course when the paper was set there was little indication of the controversy that has since erupted about what led us to war and the WMD debate etc. It is important that candidates try to stick to the text in question when they tackle this section of the paper (if in fact they do at all) but candidates who can place the extract within the context of media treatment of the Iraq war, both the lead up to war and future events should be rewarded.

Looking at the text the tone is very much that of a 'necessary war of liberation' at this stage. Dissent had quietened because the general line was 'like it or not we should support our troops' and there is no sign of a critical perspective in the extract, except that the 2nd news headline is about a British plane being downed by friendly fire, so it is not all embedded propaganda. Candidates may well choose to discuss the style of the extract and the contrast between the images in the first half and the footage in the second and suggest that the notion of war as a 'good' thing can be read into the general tone of the piece.

It is interesting to note that we see hardly any signs of armed resistance in the sequence but civilians are shown frequently, again this could be construed as emphasising the nature of 'liberation' that the Allies were so keen to promote.

## MEDIA INSTITUTIONS

Some candidates may talk about *Sky News* as owned by Rupert Murdoch, may discuss the links with the newspapers that he owns and may also note the link with *Fox News* in the United States which has of course become famed for its partisan pro-Bush views. (It did almost become a mouthpiece for the Republican administration at the time.)

The nature of *Sky News* being available to *Sky* subscribers but now available on '*Freeview*' may also be commented upon in terms of its increasing availability in homes.