



**Cambridge Assessment  
International Education**

# Example Candidate Responses – Paper 4

## Cambridge International AS & A Level Media Studies 9607

For examination from 2021



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## Introduction

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The main aim of this booklet is to exemplify standards for those teaching Cambridge International AS & A Level Media Studies 9607, and to show how different levels of candidates' performance (high, middle and low) relate to the subject's curriculum and assessment objectives.

In this booklet candidate responses have been chosen from the June 2021 exam series to exemplify a range of answers.

For each question, the response is annotated with a clear explanation of where and why marks were awarded or omitted. This is followed by examiner comments on how the answer could have been improved. In this way, it is possible for you to understand what candidates have done to gain their marks and what they could do to improve their answers. There is also a list of common mistakes candidates made in their answers for each question.

This document provides illustrative examples of candidate work with examiner commentary. These help teachers to assess the standard required to achieve marks beyond the guidance of the mark scheme. Therefore, in some circumstances, such as where exact answers are required, there will not be much comment.

The questions, mark schemes and inserts used here are available to download from the School Support Hub. These files are:

**9607 June 2021 Question Paper 42**

**9607 June 2021 Mark Scheme 42**

Past exam resources and other teaching and learning resources are available on the School Support Hub:

[www.cambridgeinternational.org/support](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/support)

## How to use this booklet

This booklet goes through the paper one question at a time, showing you the high-, middle- and low-level response for each question. The candidate answers are set in a table. In the left-hand column are the candidate answers, and in the right-hand column are the Examiner comments.

Example Candidate Response – middle	Examiner comments
<p>For this analysis regarding the reflection of organisations and how they represent social groups I will be focusing on two media products, the 1915 film Birth of a Nation and the 2018 music video This is America. <b>1</b></p> <p><b>2</b></p> <p>For Birth of a Nation, it is credited as the first ever blockbuster movie and while a modern audience would find the film highly disturbing, the audience that would have seen the movie in the year it was released and onward, it</p> <p>... was injected</p> <p>... that the <b>3</b></p> <p>... KKK were the</p> <p><b>Answers</b> are by real candidates in exam conditions. These show you the types of answers for each level. Discuss and analyse the answers with your learners in the classroom to improve their skills.</p>	<p><b>1</b> The candidate sets out their approach which will include a comparison of texts from one or more case study.</p> <p><b>2</b> The candidate includes a historic example.</p> <p><b>Examiner comments</b> are alongside the answers. These explain where and why marks were awarded. This helps you to interpret the standard of Cambridge exams so you can help your learners to refine their exam technique.</p>

## How the candidate could have improved their answer

- The candidate offered a clear analysis of texts from one or more case studies to respond appropriately to the question, however their answer focused on two significant producers but did not refer to the institutional structure within which they created the texts.

This section explains how the candidate could have improved each answer. This helps you to interpret the standard of Cambridge exams and helps your learners to refine their exam technique.

## Common mistakes candidates made in this question

- Many candidates struggled to answer this question well, and often ignored the organisational aspect. Candidates needed make sure their answers fully engaged with all parts of the question.
- Candidates showed a distinct lack of media theory. They frequently cited Henry Jenkins but did not usually explore the theory beyond the use of the term 'participatory culture'.

Often candidates were not awarded marks because they misread or misinterpreted the questions.

Lists the common mistakes candidates made in answering each question. This will help your learners to avoid these mistakes and give them the best chance of achieving the available marks.

## Question 1

### Example Candidate Response – high

New media forms have become inevitable in light of the exponential growth in computing power seen in the late 20th century. As Robert Logan theorised, we have entered an age of new media, passing the age of electronic mass media. This refers largely to the booming sector of social media, including companies such as Facebook. As well as this, we have recently experienced a massive shift in the cultural norm regarding the film industry with the introduction of VOD in 2007 by Netflix. Both social media and online streaming services are extremely relevant to modern life, and both a practice self-regulation as their main form of regulation. The reason behind this is that the regulatory bodies responsible for media regulation are archaic when compared to new forms of media, and great measures need to be taken in order to control and regulate new forms of media, lest they cause social unrest as a result of moral panic or simply manipulation, as demonstrated through the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar. <sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The Global Village was an idea coined by Marshall McLuhan in 1964, a prediction

### Examiner comments

<sup>1</sup> The candidate uses evidence from multiple case studies to explore the chosen area in depth.

<sup>2</sup> The candidate chooses an insightful and fully appropriate selection of examples.

<sup>3</sup> This is a relevant theory.

Example Candidate Response – high, continued	Examiner comments
<p>that communication barriers would break down as the proliferation of media and media technologies continued. This idea has come to be a reality in the modern world, and although humanity has now accessed the global village, we lack a global regulatory body to control it. A prevelant example of this is Ofcomm, created in 2003 to regulate programmes after the Watershed was proving to be ineffective. Although useful to the extent of being able to regulate television programming, they have no ability whatosover to influence large companies such as Netflix, who stream to 190 countries globally, a reach surpassing even certain news channels. This is because Netflix makes the claim to operate in ordinance with Norweigan regulations, a loophole which certainly requires patching. Additionally, Netflix's application of the Longtail theory means that they are churning out content at an unprecedented rate, content which requires regulation.</p> <p>The more pressing issue arises from the king of new media, social media, with a total of 4 billion users, covering over haf of the world's population. The Facebook company has grown to a size which is threatening to society. A pertinent example of this in the third world is the 'Free Basics' programme which was set up in Myanmar, which originally intended to provide internet through Facebook, was used as a tool by the government to spread anti - Rohingya campaign, leading to a modern genocide where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya muslims were turned into refugees. This growth certainly is not only threatening to the third world though. Cambridge Analytica, a company accused of assisting the swaying of the 2016 US elections had over 5000 data points on 87 million Americans. The statistics are</p>	<p>4 The candidate demonstrates a clear understanding of the wider contexts and the critical debates raised in the question.</p> <p>5 The company is registered in the Netherlands.</p>

## Example Candidate Response – high, continued

## Examiner comments

staggering, teen suicide rates have shot up over 100% in older teens over the past 10 years, and 72% in younger teens. However, this is not to say that attempts have not been made to regulate new media. Australia attempted to enforce the News Media Bargaining Code in 2019, attempting to monetarily compensate struggling news companies by forcing companies such as Facebook to pay an agreed fee for posts taken from news sources. This failed miserably, as Facebook pulled all news articles from their website, causing panick as information regarding the Covid 19 pandemic was taken down as a result. This led to a renegotiation of terms and a cementation of Mark Zuckerberg as a gatekeeper in the theory of cultural **6** hegemony, where he is able to manipulate the burgeoise in order to maintain disproportionate control over media. This does demonstrate that not only does new media require new forms of regulation, but it needs to be done extremely quickly in order to prevent this new, powerful technology from inciting violence as well as mental damage to the detriment of our society. **7**

Such radicalisation of our population can also be attributed to new media technology, which is inextricably linked to new media forms. The AI algorithm **8** systems used by Facebook among other companies are wildly successful. A survey of Netflix users found that there was a 94% satisfaction rate with algorithm recommendations. Users are likely as a result of these advanced algorithms, to fall into though bubbles, leading to events such as the raiding of the American capitol in 2020. **9**

It is therefore clear that immediate regulation is required for the new media in the

**6** The candidate uses media terminology appropriately to make some clear points.

**7** The candidate offers a contemporary example which is insightful and fully appropriate.

**8** The candidate uses media terminology appropriately to make some clear points.

**9** The candidate demonstrates a clear understanding of the wider contexts and the critical debates raised in the question.



Example Candidate Response – high, continued	Examiner comments
<p>modern world. Our regulatory bodies are not suited to cope with the global nature of new media. The Lindstone and Lunt theory has made it clear that new media regulation is a daunting task, and so at this moment in time, this statement is true more than ever.</p>	<p>10 The correct names are 'Livingstone and Lunt'.</p> <p><b>Total mark awarded = 14 out of 15</b></p>

### How the candidate could have improved their answer

- The candidate showed a high level of engagement with the debates as demonstrated in the range of case studies they presented.
- The candidate made some minor errors with important references, for example names of theorists. They also made a clear error in reference to Netflix being regulated by Norway when the company is registered in the Netherlands. Otherwise, this answer would have been awarded full marks.

### Common mistakes candidates made in this question

- Many candidates did not address the question which focused on new media.
- Many candidates relied solely upon UK regulation, usually of films and videogames. Therefore BBFC (British Board of Film Classification) and PEGI (Pan European Game Information) were cited. This was compounded by potted histories of the organisations which were largely irrelevant.
- Where a candidate used domestic case studies, they often offered no cultural context for the examiner to assess their argument. These were often accompanied by historic examples that were frequently incorrect, for example *A Clockwork Orange*.
- There was a wide body of media specific research on Effects Theory available but many candidates chose Bandura and the Bobo doll experiment which they delivered without comment or analysis. They then made some unsubstantiated claims, for example, that *13 Reasons Why* led to a surge in teen suicide.
- Some candidates preferred to use centre taught case studies which were repeated in their answers in varying degrees of detail often at great length; these tended to ignore the requirements of the question.
- The use of an occasional historic example in order to make a point about contemporary texts was acceptable, but the main focus needed to be on new media. This was particularly true of this question which asked students if new media required new forms of regulation. Many candidates wrote lengthy accounts of censorship of printing by the Church in the 16th century.
- Time management was an issue for some candidates. Answers for Question 1 were often far longer than for Question 4 which was worth double the marks of Question 1.
- Some candidates offered 'common sense' answers such as 'kids are weak willed and copycat video games' with hypothetical examples rather than actual case studies.

## Question 2

### Example Candidate Response – middle

### Examiner comments

Post Modernism is a late 20th Century movement ~~also~~ concerning the philosophy and the literary theory aimed against elitism and the views of modernism. Post Modernism advocates that there is no originality and that all media texts are a copy of copy of a copy. Post Modernism looks at individuals and challenges the structuralism view which looks at the society. Post Modernism claims that reality ~~to~~ is subject to change and only limits individuals.

One of the most well-known example of Post Modern media texts is The Matrix. The Matrix <sup>1</sup> is a movie which revolves around the concept of <sup>2</sup> hyper reality and has has a very futuristic theme with the movie having a loss of reality. These are the some of the most common features of Post Modernism which can be found in a lot of post modern texts.

<sup>3</sup> Irony is a feature of Post Modern texts and there are elements of this found all over the plot in The Matrix where the dialogues also consist of ambiguous concepts and imagery. Throughout the movie, it can be seen that something is taking place but something entirely different occurs. The irony in the plot and dialogues becomes evident. Another feature of the Post Modernism is the Fragmented Narrative where the movie shifts between the past, present and the future and can even begin with a part of the future and then go back to the past. This also takes place in The Matrix. Time travelling is a very common element used in Post Modern texts. The Matrix ~~was~~ utilizes this element to create a sense of mystery and suspense. Theorist Jean Francois Lyotard <sup>4</sup> emphasized on this element where a part of the story is left unanswered to create a

<sup>1</sup> The candidate picks an example from pre-2016. Examples should be from no earlier than 2016.

<sup>2</sup> The candidate demonstrates a clear understanding of and makes appropriate reference to the concept of hyper reality.

<sup>3</sup> The candidate demonstrates a clear understanding of and makes appropriate reference to the concept of 'irony'.

<sup>4</sup> The candidate refers to a relevant theory.

## Example Candidate Response – middle, continued

## Examiner comments

sense of mystery and is revealed at the end of the story. The Matrix ~~has a~~ shares a common theme with other Post Modern texts ~~as~~ as it consists of futuristic elements. There is a lot of Hyper Reality in the movie as it is a mixture of Reality and Simulacrum. The theorist Jean Baudrillard <sup>5</sup> proposes the theory of Hyper Reality where he explains how the elements of Reality and Simulacrum are mixed. Another example of this is the celebrities who have their life managed by their companies or specific managers.

<sup>5</sup> The candidate refers to another relevant theory.

Propp's Narrative Theory and Levi Strauss's Theory of Binary Oppositions explains how a similarity exists in the plots or the stories or the characters in a film or video. Usually, there ~~are~~ is a Hero, Villain, Princess, Dispatcher, the King and so on. Levi Strauss explains how the plot is always a contradiction that exists within the movie such as Man Vs Woman or Humans vs Aliens and so on. The Matrix also uses a similar elements where the system is challenged. The Similarity in the plots further states a lack of originality and that all texts are a copy of a copy of a copy. The famous British <sup>reality</sup> show "Britain's Got Talent" is also a Post Modern text with an <sup>6</sup> active audience that plays a part in the results of the show and acts as a producer. There is a lot of hyper reality as the contestants are managed and flashy stages, dancers, lights, scripted lines are used in the show showing a mixture of reality and Simulacrum.

<sup>6</sup> The candidate chooses a clear and appropriate example.

However, there is a lot of criticism against Post Modernism and Post Modern

Example Candidate Response – middle, continued	Examiner comments
<p>texts. Post Modernism claims that there is no reality and that everything is true yet challenges Modernism and its elements. Post Modernism focuses on more on the aesthetic rather than the direct message that is produced. It claims that there is no originality which is one of the statements which is criticised a lot. A lot of movies do not consist of any Intertextual References or Bricolage and do not share any common themes of Post Modernism. These scripts are entirely original and the writer writes a new story. Post Modernism claims everything is true yet discriminates Modernism.</p>	<p>7 The candidate demonstrates a clear understanding of the wider contexts and critical debates raised in the question.</p> <p>8 The candidate uses media terminology appropriately to make some clear points.</p> <p><b>Total mark awarded = 9 out of 15</b></p>

### How the candidate could have improved their answer

- The candidate demonstrated a clear understanding of the topic area of postmodernism with their reference to key concepts.
- The candidate’s answer relied upon an analysis of *The Matrix* as a postmodern text and offered arguments about why it should be accepted as such. While this argument was detailed, the syllabus clearly stated that texts should be within five years of the examination so for June 2021 this would mean texts from post 2016. The example of *Britain’s Got Talent* as postmodern text was promising. However, they needed to develop this to the same extent as they did *The Matrix*.

### Common mistakes candidates made in this question

- Some candidates used historic texts which were often centre taught case studies such as Tarantino’s *Inglorious Basterds*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Kill Bill*, pre-2016 episodes of *Black Mirror*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *The Lego Movie*, *The Truman Show*, *Life On Mars* and *Donnie Darko*.
- Some candidates cited theorists by their first name only. This was possibly cultural but it was difficult to identify who they were referring to, which was particularly important in this question because theories were very much linked to the work of an individual, for example, Baudrillard or Lyotard.
- Candidates sometimes offered a list of theories without commenting on them or with no reference to the question.
- Some candidates demonstrated a workable knowledge of theory but this was undermined when they did not apply them to a text to demonstrate their understanding.

## Question 3

Example Candidate Response – middle	Examiner comments
<p>For this analysis regarding the reflection of organisations and how they represent social groups I will be focusing on two media products, the 1915 film Birth of a Nation and the 2018 music video This is America. <b>1</b></p> <p><b>2</b></p> <p>For Birth of a Nation, it is credited as the first ever blockbuster movie and while a modern audience would find the film highly disturbing, the audience that would have seen the movie in the year it was released and onward, it was given a positive reception and the message behind the film was injected into the audience of the time's mind, like a hyperdermic needle, that the <b>3</b></p> <p>African Americans were criminals to be punished and that the KKK were the saviours to protect them and executioners to punish the criminals. The film's representation of African Americans was offensive and horrific, with the African Americans presented as rapists and criminals that were hunted down and lynched by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).</p> <p>The KKK in turn were represented as knights in shining armor, donning white</p>	<p><b>1</b> The candidate sets out their approach which includes a comparison of texts from one or more case studies.</p> <p><b>2</b> The candidate includes a historic example.</p> <p><b>3</b> The candidate includes a relevant theory.</p>

Example Candidate Response – middle, continued	Examiner comments
<p>horses and all. The film's release is credited with being a prime reason as to why even though the KKK had been slowly dying down before hand, after 1915 there was a rise in both activism and popularity, resulting in the Tulsa race riots of 1921, after in a case very similar to one in the film, a black man was accused of either attempting to commit (or fully committing) sexual assault</p> <p>4 to a white woman, and so he was lynched. The reflection that this film gives to the director to the film in a eyes of a modern audience member, is one of two things, either he was a man who did veiw the KKK as a saviour to the innocent white people the African American's harmed, or he was a really racist man, which wasn't rare for the time.</p> <p>Contrasting the representation in Birth of a Nation comes the contemporary</p> <p>5 music video, This is America. In the music video it covers representation in a multitude of ways, starting with a musisian in salve era-like clothing going from peacefully playing his guitar and being relaxed to being hooded and shot in the back of the head by the singer, Donald Glover/Childish Gambino, dressed as America by wearing a mix of confederacy pants with a steryotypical gangsta look of no shirt but wear a gold chain instead, only to be dragged away while the gun is carried away on velvet.</p> <p>Glover dances in the music video in a mix of both modern dance and how the early 19th century and highly offensive character Jim Crow moved, however</p> <p>6 the times he doesn't is when he's dancing a mix of modern dance and traditional african dance with school children and when he is dancing along to the gopple singing in a church scene, that is until the singers say 'Black man' to which he stops, <u>his face drops</u>, <u>then he turns</u> and shoots them all down, as a refrence to the Charleston church shooting that ocured a few years prior.</p> <p>Both these breaks of the mix of modern and Crow feed into his character of</p> <p>7 America with how he is celebrating the fun parts of African culture but in a split second, he shoots. Throughout the video Glover is forever shown in a shallow</p>	<p>4 The candidate demonstrates a clear understanding of the context.</p> <p>5 <i>This is America</i> is an appropriate example.</p> <p>6 The candidate offers a clear analysis here.</p> <p>7 The candidate demonstrates a clear understanding of the wider contexts and critical debates raised in the question.</p>

Example Candidate Response – middle, continued	Examiner comments
<p>8 depth of focus where he stays in focus throughout while the background that shows chaos is blurry, reflective of how when looking at history or current events, America doesn't like looking at the chaotic background, just the interesting and fun to look at foreground. 9</p> <p>The difference between these two forms is that <i>This is America</i> reflects the creation of a man who was either blinded by the glory he saw the KKK as or was narrow sighted by his racist views of the African American social group, whereas for <i>This is America</i>, Donald Glover used a multitude of ways to not only represent African Americans but their experience with his character of America through history, and while I only talked about the first half of the music video, it has a beautiful way of representing the struggles African Americans have gone through while not hiding that it was horrific, just that it was blurred from view. 10</p>	<p>8 The candidate uses media terminology.</p> <p>9 The candidate offers an analysis.</p> <p>10 The candidate shows a clear understanding of and appropriate reference to some key concepts.</p> <p><b>Total mark awarded = 10 out of 15</b></p>

### How the candidate could have improved their answer

- The candidate offered a clear analysis of texts from one or more case studies to respond appropriately to the question, however their answer focused on two significant producers but did not refer to the institutional structure within which they created the texts.
- The candidate could have developed their answer by looking at the use of social media in the BLM (Black Lives Matter) movement and how the viral success of *This Is America* extended its reach. The video was a product of the conglomerate Sony and an exploration of the apparent tension between a major label and a polemical track like this would have been interesting.
- The candidate used *Birth of A Nation* as a comparison. They could have used it more as a minor focus, because the comparison between this and the film industry of 1915 might be too distant to be entirely useful.

### Common mistakes candidates made in this question

- Many candidates struggled to answer this question well, and often ignored the organisational aspect. Candidates needed to make sure their answers fully engaged with all parts of the question.
- Candidates showed a distinct lack of media theory. They frequently cited Henry Jenkins but did not usually explore the theory beyond the use of the term 'participatory culture'.
- Candidates tended to see social media as a universal good, but a discussion around its impact and structure could be usefully examined. YouTube and Google are a media conglomerate, TikTok is a media institution, yet candidates cited them as 'good' opposition to 'bad' conglomerates.
- Some candidates referred to 'cancel culture' but did not challenge the term which could legitimately be considered a 'moral panic' by many media theorists.
- There was often lack of contemporary examples. *Sonic the Hedgehog* was popular but was not always related to the question and candidates used hypothetical examples, for example stating 'What if an actor...' rather than using actual case studies.
- Some candidates cited the Netflix film *The Social Dilemma* as academic research. However, they did not analyse any of the institution's same approaches towards data collection/algorithms as the social media companies it appeared to criticise.

## Question 4

### Example Candidate Response – high

### Examiner comments

<p>In the modern world, the media is our main source of information regarding international events as well as most general knowledge. Not only this, but it is our main platform of communication and connection to most external parties. In light of this, we should consider David Gauntlett's identity theory (2002) to understand how media shapes not only our understanding of the world but also influences our development and interactions. Gauntlett theorised that, among others, we possessed personal, social and collective identity. Stryker elaborated on this by theorising that identity negotiation was inevitable, that interactions with media would shape our personal identities through a desire to remain part of the collective and therefore socially accepted. This means it is certainly the case that the 4 billion people who now have access to social media (an even larger number is reached by news), are strongly affected by it. This effect is exacerbated in young children, who increasingly have access to stronger technology which pervades larger aspects of</p>	<p><b>1</b> The candidate directly addresses the question.</p> <p><b>2</b> The candidate refers to a relevant theory.</p> <p><b>3</b> The candidate uses relevant theories in a sophisticated way to explore the question.</p>
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Example Candidate Response – high, continued	Examiner comments
<p>their lives.</p> <p>The influence of media over how we perceive and connects to the world has also increased in light of the exponential growth in computing power seen in the late 20th century. Moore's law, coined in 1965, which predicted a doubling in computing power every year, has been consistently met to date, and in some cases surpassed. As Robert Logan theorised, we have entered an age of new media, passing the age of electronic mass media. This refers largely to the booming sector of social media, including companies such as Facebook. The Global Village was an idea coined by Marshall McLuhan in 1964, a prediction that communication barriers would break down as the proliferation of media and media technologies continued. This idea has come to be a reality in the modern world, where our nigh unlimited access to a global audience and information has led us to be reliant on the media in order to stay connected and relevant.</p> <p>The Facebook company, a modern social media giant, is a good place to look to for examples. The Facebook company has grown to a size wherein it is able to conduct massive influence over contemporary events. A pertinent example of this in the third world is the 'Free Basics' programme which was set up in Myanmar, which originally intended to provide internet through Facebook, was used as a tool by the government to spread anti - Rohingya campaign, leading to a modern genocide where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya muslims were turned into refugees. This growth certainly is not only threatening to the third world though. Cambridge Analytica, a company accused of assisting the swaying of the 2016 US elections had</p>	

## Example Candidate Response – high, continued

## Examiner comments

over 5000 data points on 87 million Americans. This demonstrates the massive power which social media holds over the populus. **4**

However, the argument can be made that under section 230 of the communications decency act, Facebook is considered a platform rather than a publisher, and is therefore not responsible for manipulating our opinions. This would **5**

place the users under scrutiny rather than media itself, yet this view cannot be taken because of the aggressive algorithms applied by Facebook. These are conducive to leading users, particular politically biased ones, into an echo chamber where their biased opinions are repeatedly reaffirmed. Facebook does this in order to maintain growth, engagement and monetisation, the three cornerstones of social

**6** media. Facebook has also practiced horizontal integration by buying Instagram for \$1 billion in 2012 and WhatsApp for \$16 billion in 2014, revealing their desire to control the communication aspect of media. McLuhan had also quipped that 'The Medium is the Message', suggesting that the information was less relevant than the package it is presented in. If we apply this to Facebook, they have branched out to multiple mediums in order to establish a monopoly on controlling our connections to each other. **7**

It is also the case that audiences have been much more involved and invested in media. In recent times, there has been a shift from 'Hot' to 'Cool' Media, meaning that audiences need to become more actively involved in creating and deducing meaning. Although this would suggest a less single minded approach to forming understanding, this transition also changes audience members from passive to

**4** The candidate chooses an insightful and fully appropriate selection of examples from a wide range of texts about Rohingya and Cambridge Analytica.

**5** The candidate demonstrates an insightful understanding of the wider contexts and critical debates raised in the question, for example, key legislation in the debate around online hate and misinformation.

**6** The candidate demonstrates a sophisticated understanding and goes on to develop their argument which is clearly linked to McLuhan.

**7** The candidate makes an insightful analysis of McLuhan and applies it to Facebook.

## Example Candidate Response – high, continued

## Examiner comments

active audience members because they now have an ability to choose what they view. This means that media now has a much larger impact on audience, who are active and therefore far more likely to participate and be emotionally invested in media products. An example of where this has been applied is Netflix's "Bandersnatch", an interactive film where 94% audience interaction was recorded. **8**

This suggests that a modern audience has shifted to become more invested in media, and are therefore far more likely to have their understanding of the world shaped by it.

With this in mind, it is useful to consider Private vs Public personae. Because the line has been blurred between social media and reality, we find that increasingly, especially pertaining to younger generations, that there is a disconnect which is detrimental to mental health. Because of the way that teens connect with the world, largely through social media, there is an inability for them to decipher what has been encoded as an ideal, decoding it as an expectation. The statistics are staggering, teen suicide rates have shot up over 100% in older teens, and 72% in younger teens. It is also the case that we have an 'infodemic' in the modern world, where fake news is 6 times more likely to be spread than real news. **9**

Yet it is the case that humans are still free thinkers. We are free to adopt oppositional readers to media texts, there is no way of truly preventing this, even through extreme pandering, which itself can lead to an oppositional reading. It is therefore the case that at this moment in time, media is unable to exert complete control over human understanding of events, nor the way in which we communicate

**8** The candidate gives an example to support the point they make.

**9** The candidate's evidence does not support the point they make.

Example Candidate Response – high, continued	Examiner comments
<p>these events. Unfortunately the influence of the media is significant enough that it is able to sway masses into bias, and detrimentally tamper with our emotional stability. The media's control of our understanding and connection to the world has breached the safety net of regulation, and is pervading even the most private aspects of our lives.</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p>	<p>10 The candidate makes a sound concluding argument.</p> <p>11 The candidate could develop this point further.</p> <p><b>Total mark awarded = 28 out of 30</b></p>

### How the candidate could have improved their answer

- The candidate's answer addressed the question directly and drew upon a highly developed knowledge of the contemporary media world.
- The candidate analysed arguments around audience theory, particularly why certain groups were seen as more vulnerable or in need of protection than others, for example Sonia Livingstone or Martin Barker.
- The candidate referred to 'Free Basics in Myanmar' which could have been more detailed when stressing Facebook's failure to address the issue when they were aware of it and they could also have expanded on their Cambridge Analytica example.
- The candidate could have developed their point about persona creation through the work of Buckingham, Deuze and Jenkins.
- The candidate referred to statistics linked to the influence of social media, but they could examine these more thoroughly and provide more evidence.
- The candidate could analyse regulation as a 'safety net'. The potentially hazardous aspects of the web such as data collection and closed groups propagating misinformation via Telegram could have been explored in finer detail through use of theorists such as Morozov.

## Example Candidate Response – middle

## Examiner comments

Over the last decade, the world has witnessed the raise in the powers of media and it's ability to alter our lives by through changing our pere views on various matters by the voluminous inflow of information. Media has also rapidly gained control over how individuals interact and therefore the it is very difficult for people to deny that our reality is not impacted by media. ①

Media Ecology suggests that communication mediums and platforms are not just a part in our social environment but instead they are a social environment in itself. Media Ecology ② entails a study of the social, cultural and psychological impacts of the change in environment.

The basis of media ecology is medium theory which is a research that considers the medium of communication to be equally, if not more important than communication of the content of the particular medium. According to Marshall McLuhan "medium is the message". ③

The media create particular communication environment which directly impacts human consciousness and the societal structure. Media is our source of information, entertainment but it also is capable of persuading people and transmitting cultures.

① The candidate directly addresses the question and offers a clear argument.

② The candidate demonstrates a sophisticated understanding.

③ The candidate shows a clear grasp of theory.

Example Candidate Response – middle, continued	Examiner comments
<p><i>Keeping social media in mind, it has found a way to rewire <sup>4</sup> our brains and perceive each matter differently. Social media has allowed consumers to engage with the information which means that the flow of information and content has drastically increased. This allows us to receive and input from multiple point of views which may allows a better understanding of current affairs and better decisions. [political, personal, etc.] However, <sup>5</sup> it is to be noted that the information overload also means that important and urgent news gets buried under the soft news, that is generating continuously on social media. Furthermore, social media is run on algorithms which are controlled by the <sup>6</sup> powerful companies and they have the powers to censor or even shadow ban the kind of content they do not support. It takes very little time to divert us from things that we need to understand about and in real life. Overall media is capable of becoming more informed but also that our understanding of what's actually going on.</i></p> <p><i>Our method of communication has completely evolved and has directly impacted our interpersonal and intrapersonal <sup>7</sup> relationships.</i></p> <p><i>It is important to consider that media isn't our only form of socialisation and the increasing media literacy can help un recognise the ongoing changes and better help us in finding a way out of the growingly powerful impact of media. <sup>8</sup></i></p>	<p><sup>4</sup> This is a contemporary, fertile area to explore.</p> <p><sup>5</sup> The candidate contextualises the topic and looks at wider debates.</p> <p><sup>6</sup> The candidate makes an insightful analysis.</p> <p><sup>7</sup> The insightful analysis returns to the theme the candidate introduced at the start of their answer.</p> <p><sup>8</sup> The candidate's conclusion offers an analysis which directly addresses the question.</p> <p><b>Total mark awarded = 19 out of 30</b></p>

### How the candidate could have improved their answer

- The candidate demonstrated a high level of critical thinking skills and this was reflected in their mark for AO1. They could have used media specific terminology more throughout their answer, for example, they used the term 'soft' news but not the commonly oppositional 'hard' news which could have led on to a debate about how social media uses algorithms to target specific content at particular demographics, as in Pariser's 'The Filter Bubble'.
- The structure of the candidate's answer enabled connections to be made and a clear argument to develop.
- There were significant gaps in AO2. Social media was addressed in general terms albeit very subtly and their case study could have been clearer. For example, '...powerful companies have the power to censor or even shadowban content they do not agree with' was quite a sophisticated concept which demonstrated some knowledge and argument. To improve their answer, the candidate could have supplied the evidence of the corporations involved and supported this with examples of content which had been treated in this manner. The candidate demonstrated an ability to critique ideas and could have explore the theorists in this topic area such as Buckingham, Jenkins and Lanier.
- The candidate could have included some detailed examples of influencers or peers and their impact upon the audience. They could have used Two Step Flow Theory to explore their arguments in the penultimate paragraph which addressed '... interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships'.

## Example Candidate Response – low

## Examiner comments

4	B	<p>Media ecology is the concept which was proposed by Marshal McLuhan back in 1964. Ecology refers to the media environment of communication, understanding, feelings and values. Media ecology is the study of environment and the human perception and how people look into it. Media ecology is the <del>media</del> basically talking about the Media environment. Long tail - you can watch a movie, Drama by buying its subscription in Netflix, Amazon. The <del>How</del> and how the media environment changed within years. Long tail theory in which you can watch a movie, Drama by buying the subscription of Netflix, Amazon. It's easy to now open multiple tabs at a time as Web 1.0 came. It's been easy to purchase anything - it's only one click away - you can purchase anything online. Now you can communicate easily. Now everyone has the access over the internet. You can call anyone sitting</p>
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1 The candidate shows some awareness of the field (minimal references to even basic media theory).

## Example Candidate Response – low, continued

## Examiner comments

in different country. you can share anything easily to anyone. you ~~can~~ e-mail is the easiest way to send a message or inform him. Any news can be shared over the internet. first you had to watch a film or movie at a time but now everyone can watch their chosen film at a time. you can ~~pay~~ digital. Now people ~~can~~ can make money on social media by making a channel on youtube. Now you don't have to sit in front of tv and wait for the film/drama to be on air. Now you can just watch it anytime. you can share your views on facebook by commenting down on a post. Now you can connect to the people easily. people now don't have to go in a particular place. anything can be done online like payments etc. people in pre-modern times didn't have access over the internet

and have had no contact with anyone. This is a. The social media is the power now. From the social media people were no that quick as the digital media came the people mild change. Now you can order anything online on ~~the~~ online



**Example Candidate Response – low, continued**

**Examiner comments**

shops like Amazon, Daz 2  
 This is digital media saves  
 time and money also. First  
 you first you had no  
 choice and now you have  
 a choice of going to a  
 cinema and spending money  
 or wait for the print  
 to come online and wait.  
 First people had no smartphones  
 now every person is using  
 a smartphone. Perfit  
 In this digital world  
 movies are made on  
 VFX and the setting sound  
 bed design has changed.  
 The sound is now Dolby atmos  
 and the overall quality  
 of the film improved.

2 The candidate offers a basic analysis, from case studies which may not be appropriate to the question.

**Total mark awarded =  
 6 out of 30**

**How the candidate could have improved their answer**

- The candidate defined the key term of Media Ecology with a McLuhan reference which was promising but they needed to develop this and ensure that key terms (including theorists) were correctly spelt. Although they referred to Long Tail, they did not apply it correctly.
- The candidate offered little beyond some repeated assertions and general comments which lacked supporting evidence. They repeatedly missed opportunities to exemplify the key points, for example ‘...now people can make money from social media...’.
- The candidate needed to offer a specific, detailed case study as it was difficult to determine precisely what the case study was.
- To improve their answer, the candidate needed to use subject specific terminology to address the key concepts and show their understanding through the use of examples or analysis.

**Common mistakes candidates made in this question**

- Many candidates repeated all the information they knew about Media Ecology but did not differentiate useful material from the irrelevant material. Some candidates offered lengthy historical accounts of McLuhan’s theory over hundreds of words without any reference to the question and this was not a successful approach.
- Many candidates struggled with time management. This was the question which offered the highest potential marks, yet many candidates produced their shortest answer for this question.
- Some candidates did not address the question. Candidates must engage with the question in order to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Some candidates did not include detailed examples in their answers.
- Some candidates offered ‘common sense’ or ‘general knowledge’ answers which contained no evidence that they had studied Media. These answers often referred to internet shopping and Uber as evidence.
- Some candidates praised the smartphone and then listed all of the things you could do with it, such as taking photos, tell the time or online shopping.
- Some candidates only referred to theorists by their first name, for example, ‘Henry’ for Jenkins.

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