**REVISION OF AUDIENCE - Component 1**

**Writing an answer for...Audiences**

**You will have a question(s) in the exam on audiences, so you need to identify what content you could include in your answer...**

Any audience question will be asking you to show understanding of the following. **It does depend on the question as to which of the topic areas you will include in your answer** (you may use more than one of the following topics):

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| **Categorising Audiences**  This includes how audiences can be identified through their demographics (age, gender, ethnicity and social class) or their psychographics (lifestyles, hobbies, beliefs etc.). This will include the audience’s needs and uses that they may seek from media texts and how this affects how they interpret the media texts. This will also include how a national or international audience can be categorised by a media text and its producers. For example, for the newspaper topic *The Daily Mirror* clearly targets a more working class, left wing reader, which can be identified through the lower reading age with its vocabulary, the use of political stories (sympathising with more left/centre left politics) and the celebrity content. | **Targeting Audiences (Interpreting Media Texts)**  Once you have identified who the target audience is, you will need to identify how the media text has specifically targeted this audience. This is through its content, marketing, distribution and circulation. This may include how the producers target, attract, reach, address and maybe even potentially construct their own audience. This will also include how audiences may interpret the media text in similar or different ways (preferred and oppositional readings) and the role of specific niche and fan audiences for media products. For example, *Straight Outta Compton* for the film topic targets a specific niche audience by hiring two original NWA members Ice Cube and Dr Dre, as it will appeal to fans of the original NWA band. But it also appeals to mainstream audiences through its viral marketing campaign, using big-named celebrities. |
| **Digital Convergence (Impact of Technologies)**  Link an ‘Industry’ question, this relates to how technologies have had an impact on the media product, but for an ‘Audience’ question it is more specifically about how technologies have impacted on marketing, distribution and circulation when targeting audiences. This will include how audiences can interact and engage with media texts (active audiences), how the media text may be digitally distributed to audiences through different media platforms and how media platforms may impact marketing (viral marketing) for generating audience appeal and interest. For example, *Assassin’s Creed III: Liberation* for the video game topic used the internet to create online communities and downloadable content (DLC) to improve audiences’ experiences with the game and create fan bases. | **Active Audiences (Interacting With Media Texts)**  This is the concept of audiences no longer being passive interpreters of media texts but being much more active engagers and producers of media texts. The term ‘prosumer’ has been coined from active audiences; a mixture of the words producer and consumer, it assumes that (due to the rise of the internet) audiences now produce and consume media texts. This will also largely be affected by different social and cultural contexts, as audiences interpret media texts differently due to their own different experiences. It will mean that audiences create their own identity and ‘cultural capital’ based on their interpretation, engagement and production of media texts. For example, with *Late Night Woman’s Hour* for the radio topic, audiences can interact with the producers of the radio show through the website or other digital forms of communication to engage with the producer’s discussion or create their own online communities based on what they’ve interpreted from the radio show. |

You will also need to identify which theories you can use within your answer from the following audience theories:

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| **ALBERT BANDURA** | the media can implant ideas in the mind of the audience directly  audiences acquire attitudes, emotional responses and new styles of conduct through modelling  media representations of transgressive behaviour, such as violence or physical aggression, can lead audience members to imitate those forms of behaviour. |
| **GEORGE GERBNER** | exposure to repeated patterns of representation over long periods of time can shape and influence the way in which people perceive the world around them (i.e. cultivating particular views and opinions)  cultivation reinforces mainstream values (dominant ideologies). |
| **STUART HALL**  **(RECEPTION THEORY)** | communication is a process involving *encoding* by producers and *decoding* by audiences  there are three hypothetical positions from which messages and meanings may be decoded:   * the dominant/hegemonic position: the encoder’s intended meaning (the preferred reading) is fully understood and accepted * the negotiated position: the legitimacy of the encoder’s message is acknowledged in general terms, although the message is adapted or negotiated to better fit the decoder’s own individual experiences or context * the oppositional position: the encoder’s message is understood, but the decoder disagrees with it, reading it in a contrary or oppositional way. |
| **HENRY JENKINS** | fans are active participants in the construction and circulation of textual meanings  fans appropriate texts and read them in ways that are not fully authorised by the media producers (‘textual poaching’)  fans construct their social and cultural identities through borrowing and inflecting mass culture images, and are part of a participatory culture that has a vital social dimension. |
| **CLAY SHIRKY** | the internet and digital technologies have had a profound effect on the relations between media and individuals  the view that audiences are passive consumers of mass media content is no longer defendable in the age of the internet, as media consumers have now become producers who ‘speak back to’ the media in various ways, as well as creating and sharing content with one another |

**FOR EXAMPLE – *Late Night Woman’s Hour* (Audience Question)**

*Audiences are becoming much more* ***active*** *(check above table to define what this means) and able to engage with media in a way that was not possible with traditional forms of media.* ***Explain*** *how Late Night Woman’s Hour does this by* **identifying how producers use techniques** *to* ***encourage active audience engagement***. [12]

*specific examples*

*what?, how?, why?*

*12 marks = approx. 12 minutes to answer the question*

**INDICATIVE CONTENT**

* The meaning of ‘active audiences.’
* The meaning of ‘traditional media’ compared to contemporary media - how do they differ?
* Radio as a global medium, easily engaged with and circulated to audiences through the BBC website and digital technology.
* The way that *Late Night Woman’s Hour* can be engaged with across different platforms, DAB radio, website streaming and podcasts.
* The website featuring additional content to the podcasts, such as additional audio content, audience polls and blog posts that cover topics similar to those covered in the radio show.
* The show often trends on *Twitter* and other social media platforms based on the debates and topics covered in the radio show - the example text covers Hygge and some of the debates that could spark online discusion due to this topic.
* Host Lauren Laverne having her own social media account (Twitter) in which she shares and comments on BBC Radio 4 posts to her followers.
* The radio show having a panel of hosts that may have different opinions and views on topics - allowing audiences to potentially engage and agree/disagree with many different viewpoints. This would encourage dominant and oppositional readings that the audience could share in different ways with each other using online technology.

Responses may refer to **‘End of Audience’ theory by Clay Shirky**, **Reception Theory by Stuart Hall** and/or **Fandom by Henry Jenkins**.

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| **TASK -** *Write your answer here – 12 minutes* |

**AUDIENCE AND *ASSASSIN’S CREED III: LIBERATION***

**Key theories in relation to text: Stuart Hall’s Reception Theory**



***Stuart Hall*** (active theory) - **the dominant-hegemonic position is that the encoder’s intended meaning (the preferred reading) is fully understood and accepted.** An example of the dominant reading in *Assassin’s Creed III: Liberation,* is that the game is aimed at a more casual or mobile gamer, so the target audience are “on the go” gamers playing mobile games, instead of traditional console and PC gamers.

**TASK -** *Can you suggest another preferred reading of the text?*

Stuart Hall suggests that audiences may also have a ‘negotiated reading’ where the encoder’s message is **acknowledged generally, but is adapted and negotiated to better fit the decoder’s own individual experiences.** The negotiated reading would be that a female audience member would find this game empowering. The game has a female protagonist called ‘Aveline’ a strong, brave representation of female characters. It challenges the under-representation of women in video games. However, the female audience might find that being violent and murdering people are extreme methods for solving problems.

**TASK -** *Can you suggest another negotiated response to the text? (perhaps consider hard-core gamers, technology and financial implications)*

Stuart Hall also suggests a media text may result in an **oppositional reading, when the decoder rejects the message reinforced by the encoder completely**. Many audiences will have an oppositional reading to the video game because audience would not be willing to purchase an expensive hand held device, PS VITA, just to access the game. The game may also be rejected by Assassin Creed fans because the game is a simplified version of the game compared to the PS3 and XBOX versions.

**TASK -** *Consider how the game’s representations may elicit an oppositional response with some audiences.*

***Albert Bandura*** (passive theory: only applies to video games) - **the media injects and implants ideas into the brain. The audience will then acquire attitudes and model themselves on what they see in media texts. Behaviour that is transgressive will be mimicked and imitated by audiences, especially children.** In *Assassin’s Creed III: Liberation*, the protagonist ‘Aveline’ seeks vengeance and takes revenge on slave-owners that have abused her people and killed her family. This implants the negative attitude that victims of slavery and abuse should seek revenge through murdering people. Instead of committing a crime in revenge, these victims should report it to the police. This theory, suggests children may copy the behaviour of sneaking up on other children and hurting them like the main character.

**TASK -** *Bandura’s theory largely considers the negative aspects of media consumption. Suggest how positive ideas, attitudes and behaviour may be drawn from playing Assassin’s Creed III: Liberation.*

**George Gerbner** (passive theory) **- exposure to repeated patterns of representation over long periods of time can shape and influence the way in which people perceive the world around them.** Repeated behaviour that is transgressive will be mimicked and imitated by audiences, especially children. In *Assassin’s Creed III: Liberation* and the other games in the franchise, the protagonist solves all issues with extreme violence. This repeated behaviour implants negative attitudes. Children that play this game may copy some of the transgressive behaviour that they repeatedly play, such as stabbing people, slashing throats, strangling people and even stealthily assassinating people. He also suggested the idea that cultivation reinforces mainstream values (dominant ideologies). An example of this is how the representation of non-western cultures within video games tend to reinforce western attitudes.

**TASK -** *Suggest some ways in which western attitudes are reinforced in Assassin’s Creed III: Liberation. How may these affect audience attitudes over time?*



**Henry Jenkins** (active theory) - **fans are active participants in the construction and circulation of textual meanings**. The *Assassin’s Creed* **franchise** has a strong, well-developed **fan-base.**The significance of **fan culture** (and in particular **online fan communities**) has been instrumental to the success of video games.  The fan base has over the years provided feedback to the developers and the games have been tailored to some of their requests. Ubisoft, for example, requested the fans to provide feedback on the *Assassin’s Creed* series’ official Reddit page.

He also suggested the idea that fans **appropriate texts** and read them in ways that are **not fully authorised by the media producers (‘textual poaching’).**

**TASK -** *What examples from fan culture surrounding Assassin’s Creed can be used to support Jenkins’ idea that* ***fans construct their social and cultural identities through borrowing and inflecting images from popular culture****?*



**Clay Shirky** (active theory) - **the** **internet and digital technologies have had a profound effect on the relations between media and individuals**.  The *Assassin’s Creed* **franchise** has a strong, well-developed **fan-base.**The significance of **fan culture** (and in particular **online fan communities**) has been instrumental to the success of video games.  The fan base has over the years provided feedback to the developers and the games have been tailored to some of their requests. Ubisoft requested the fans to provide feedback on the *Assassin’s Creed* series’ official Reddit page.

Clay Shirky also states that the view of audience members as passive consumers of mass media content is no longer defendable in the age of the internet, as media consumers have now become producers who **‘speak back to’ the media** in various ways, as well as creating and sharing content with one another.

**TASK** *- In what ways have Assassin’s Creed’s audience used technology to ‘speak back’?*

**FOR EXAMPLE – *Assassin’s Creed III: Liberation* (Audience Question)**

***Explain*** *how audiences are* ***positioned*** *by media producers. Refer to Assassin’s Creed III: Liberation to support your points. [10]*

*what?, how?, why? relationship between product and response of audiences*

*10 marks = approx. 10 minutes*

**Consider**

* institutional info. (who is the producer, franchise history, technology / platform etc.)
* who the target audience is
* how they are positioned by specific aspects of the game (e.g. representations, gameplay, social / cultural context, franchise)
* relevant theorists

**TASK -** *Write your answer here – 10 minutes*

**AUDIENCE AND ADVERTISING (*Tide* and *Water Aid*)**

The main purpose of advertising is to build familiarity for a brand or product with an audience over time. Strategies employed by advertisers developed dramatically during the 1950s and Proctor and Gamble’s *Tide* campaign was typical of the techniques and strategies aimed at selling audiences an **ideology.**

**TASK** *-* Investigate what is meant by the term ‘American Dream’ (this article may help -<https://sandratrappen.com/2014/04/07/selling-the-american-dream/>) – how can this be applied to *Tide*? What attitudes values and beliefs are present in the advert?

**TASK** The only two audience theories needed for *Tide* and *Water Aid* are Hall and Gerbner – how are these theories relevant to the *Tide* advertisement?

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| **Hall (Reception Theory)** | **Gerbner (Cultivation Theory)** |
|  |  |

**TASK** *-* What ‘exposure to repeated patterns of representation’ have audiences of charity adverts experienced over recent years? How does *Water Aid* subvert these representations?

What particular views/opinions have these experiences cultivated about charity adverts? What does the term ‘compassion fatigue’ mean?

**FOR EXAMPLE – *Tide* (Audience Question)**

***Explain*** *how producers of advertisements* ***target*** *audiences. Refer to the Tide advertisement to support your points. [10]*

*what?, how?, why? techniques used to reach specific audiences that product is aimed at*

*10 marks = approx. 10 minutes*

Remember to include some of the following:

* Audience Demographics
* The 4C’s
* The specific use of media language techniques to target the audience (with examples)
* Apply Audience Reception Theory (Hall) and Cultivation Theory (Gerbner)

**TASK -** *Write your answer here – 10 minutes*

**FOR EXAMPLE – *Water Aid* (Audience Question)**

How do media producers meet the needs of specialised audiences? Refer to *Water Aid* to support your points. (12)

Consider

* + The **context** and **producers** of the advert
  + Audience (e.g. demographics and psychographics)
  + The specific use of media language techniques to target the audience (with examples)
  + Apply Hall and Gerbner to the advert with examples to support your points

**TASK -** *Write your answer here – 10 minutes*

**AUDIENCE AND NEWSPAPERS (*Daily Mirror* and *The Times*)**

When studying audiences in relation to the newspaper set products you will need to consider a range of points from the specification including:

• How media producers target, attract, address and potentially construct audiences.

• How media industries target audiences through the content and appeal of the media product(s) and through the ways in which they are marketed, distributed and circulated.

• Audience theory - Stuart Hall’s Reception Theory and George Gerbner’s Cultivation Theory.

**A** (Heavily intellectual, highly serious)

***The Guardian / The Observer*** - Centre Left (Labour, some Lib Dem)

***The Financial Times*** - Centrist (Mixed)

***The Times*** */* ***Sunday Times***- Centrist (Mixed / pluralistic)

***The Telegraph*** - Right (Conservative)

**B** (Intellectual and serious, but cut down for the convenience of the reader without much time on his or her hands)

***The i*** - Centre Left (Labour and Lib Dem)

***The Morning Star*** - Left (Socialist parties, some Labour)

**C** (Non-intellectual, sensationalist, often derided by readers of A and B papers)

***Daily Mirror*** - Centre Left (Labour)

***Daily Express*** - Right (Conservative, UKIP)

***Daily Mail*** - Right (Conservative, UKIP)

**D** (Non-intellectual, hugely sensationalist)

***Sun*** - Right (Conservative)

***Star*** - Right (Conservative and far right parties)

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| Tabloid | Broadsheet |
| * Popular press * Advertising aimed at lower social groupings (C2,D & E) * Bold layout (eg colour on the masthead, very bold typeface, easy to read), with large, dramatic pictures * Language is informal, colloquial * Shorter articles, more pictures, less 'in-depth' reporting * Puns and jokes in headlines * More focus on human interest stories, celebrity gossip   Use of gimmicks such as bingo games, free travel tickets, online surveys to attract readers | * 'Quality' or 'serious' press * Advertising aimed at higher social groupings (A,B,C1) * More sophisticated and formal language used in articles * Plainer layout (smaller typeface suggests readers will make more effort to read it), and subtle, possibly smaller pictures * Longer articles, more detailed * Serious headlines * More focus on politics, international news, reviews of "high" culture e.g. opera, art exhibitions |

**TASK** *-* Find examples from the set texts that target each paper’s specific audience demographic (copies in revision section of GOL)

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| --- | --- |
| ***The Times*** | ***The Mirror*** |
|  |  |

***‘Our vision is to be an essential part of people’s daily lives by delivering quality content and services that inform, enlighten and enrich’ (www.trinitymirror.com/our-values)***

Who reads the *Daily Mirror*? According to YouGov sample of 2,868 customers…

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*A screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generatedA screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generated*

**TASK** *–*Investigate who is the target audience of *The Times*. Create a demographic / psychographic profile.

**TASK -** Considering *The Daily Mirror* and *The Times’s* target audience, apply Stuart Hall’s reception theory to the set text editions of each paper*.*

**TASK –** How could the political ideology of *The Daily Mirror* relate to Gerbner’s theory? Provide three bullet points containing evidence from the set text.

**TASK –** Clay Shiky’s ‘end of audience’ theory suggests that new technologies have allowed dialogue to form between audiences and producers. How is this apparent from the online content behind *The Times’* ‘paywall’? Does it allow for a plurality of views and ideas?

You can access the paywall via this direct link to *The Times* website login page:

<https://login.thetimes.co.uk/?gotoUrl=https://www.thetimes.co.uk/>

[times4@godalming.ac.uk](mailto:times4@godalming.ac.uk) – user name

Password; godalmingtimes