Welcome to A-level Media Studies 2026

We follow the AQA specification, and will study:

- Critics and context
- Online, Social and Participatory (Taylor Swift and The Voice online newspaper)
- Television (No Offence and The Killing)
- Music Videos (Ghost Town and Old Town Road)
- Film (Blinded by the Light)
- Radio (War of the Worlds and Newsbeat)
- Computer Games (Sims FreePlay)
- Advertising (Score Hair Cream and Sephora 'Black Beauty is Beauty')
- Magazines (GQ and The Gentlewoman)
- Newspapers (The Daily Mail and The Guardian)

Your examination will consist of two papers which are each 2 hours and worth 35% (each) of the course. You will also complete a Non-Examined Assessment (coursework) worth 30%. You can find the specification here.

Bridging Work

Total time: approx. 2-4 hours plus reading time.

TASK 1: Contextual Research – Complete a paragraph of research for each of the numbered sections below. Include key information about social and historical events that may have influenced audiences of the era.

Media Studies: Key Eras & Milestones

1. The Print Era & Early Broadcasting (1920s – 1950s)

- 1920s: Rise of commercial radio and the golden age of Hollywood studio systems.
- 1936: Launch of the BBC television service, pioneering public service broadcasting.
- 1950s: Widespread adoption of television in households. The post-WW2 era sparked the rise of consumer culture and modern advertising.

2. The Golden Age of Television & Print (1960s – 1980s)

- 1960s: The "Swinging Sixties" brought cultural shifts. Rise of pirate radio and the introduction of colour television.
- 1970s – 1980s: Deregulation of media and the advent of independent local radio (ILR) and Channel 4 in the UK.
- 1989: Tim Berners-Lee invents the World Wide Web, laying the groundwork for the digital age.

3. The Digital Transition & Web 2.0 (1990s – 2000s)

- Late 1990s: Commercial internet becomes mainstream. The start of the decline in traditional print circulations.
- 2004 – 2006: The launch of major social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube), shifting audiences from passive consumers to active "prosumers" (a concept explored by theorist David Gauntlett).

4. The Algorithmic & Streaming Age (2010s – Present)

- 2010s: The explosion of smartphones, global SVOD (Streaming Video on Demand) platforms like Netflix, and algorithmic curation shaping audience consumption.
- 2020s: The dominance of short-form video (TikTok), the AI revolution in content creation, and the rapid evolution of media regulation.

How to Apply Context in Your Exams

- Social/Cultural: How does the product reflect societal values, diversity, or cultural shifts?
- Political: How does the product respond to current affairs, political climates, or dominant ideologies?
- Economic: How have funding models, budgets, and ownership shaped the text?
- Historical: What were the historical events or technological limits of the era?
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TASK 2: Create one advertisement poster for a cosmetics product of your choice that would be suitable for one of the eras specified in the Key Eras and Milestones

Come to class in September with your advert printed out. Be ready to justify and explain your choices based on the research work in Task1

Use the following sources for help:

Front Page | Media-Studies.com

MASSOLIT Search - Media studies

Media studies resources, textbooks and revision guides | Hachette Learning