

Media Studies A Level – Preparatory Work 2026

The below are a selection of materials designed to give you an insight and introduction to elements of the course. Reading them and carrying out the activities will help prepare you for studying Media A level. There are also some articles for you to read to give you a brief overview of different aspects of the course.

Introduction

Read this article for some reasons why Media Studies gives you invaluable skills

<https://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/news/2019-07-30/media-studies-should-be-made-mandatory-schools-tackle-fake-news-research-finds>

ACTIVITY 1

Imagine seeing a character first in a very modern, richly furnished room and then the film cuts to the same character in a rather dingy and run down part of town. Discuss what connections and predictions might you make about this character and what might happen to them. List as many different ideas as you can about the possible story lines that this change of scene could suggest.

ACTIVITY 2

Imagine a room. Think carefully about how you'd introduce it to an audience to create different scenes and moods. Give each scenario as much detail as possible. Think about colours, props, lighting, costumes, gesture codes, facial expressions, costumes, character positioning and the cinematography – angles, framing etc. Also consider what sounds you'd hear. Complete details for the following inhabitants:

1. A poor and destitute couple in the 17th Century

2. A middle-class couple in the 1940s

3. A spy in the year 2040

4. A businesswoman in 2023

5. A group of students

Iconography is the signifiers that you associate with a particular genre of TV or film, it includes props, settings and sounds. For example, you may expect to the following iconography, in a Western; guns, spurs, chaps, boots, saddles, horses, Native American costume, feather headdresses, Stetsons, set in a Saloon, sounds of gun shots etc. You don't need to see all of these items, but would expect to see at least some of them to confirm your belief that you really were watching a Western.

Shared cultural codes from advertising, books, TV, the internet, for example, mean that even if you've never seen a Western before, you can recognise at least some of this iconography.

Activity 3

Detail the iconography for the following TV and film genres, include props, settings and sounds.

Crime drama	Sci Fi	Horror

Activity 4

Design a film poster for a genre of your choice, think carefully about all your choices, ensure that you clearly use the iconography of your genre so it's recognisable to your audience. Also, think about how you'll convey key aspects of your narrative through your use of mise-en-scene, who are the key characters? What type of character are they? If there's more than one character what relationship do they have? How is that evident? Film posters have to quickly convey the narrative through one still image. Also make sure you include other conventions of film posters:

- Film name
- Tagline
- Reviews
- Release date
- Film and distribution studio logos
- Billing block (names of crew and staff you always see at the bottom of film posters)

At college you'll use Photoshop but if you don't have this or other suitable software, or app on your phone then you can sketch it. The most important thing is that you think carefully about how you'll represent characters, themes and genre.

Magazine industry

Read this article to give you an overview of the development of the industry and how it's been impacted by technology <https://www.theguardian.com/media-network/media-network-blog/2013/mar/07/fall-rise-magazines-print-digital>

TV industry

Read this article for a quick insight into how streaming services have effected British TV industry <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-44862598>

Gaming industry

Read the attached for an overview of the issues around representation in the gaming industry <https://www.theguardian.com/games/2019/aug/07/video-games-do-not-cause-violence-but-makers-do-need-to-think-about-it>