Year 11 Revision Booklet Media Studies

The exam is 1 hour 45 minutes long.

There is a DVD to watch in which you will watch a scene 4 times and make notes as we have practised in class.

This will leave you with 1 hour 15 minutes to answer the questions which means you will have to make sure you allow enough time for each question. For each mark you should spend approximately I minute so a 20 mark question should take about 20 minutes.

There are 2 Sections to the exam.

Section 1 :The Action Film (based on a scene you will watch)

Q1. A question on conventions of the genre

Q2. A question on mise-en-scene, editing, camerawork and sound

Q3. A question on representations of a social group

Section 2 :

Situation Comedy

Q1. On Scheduling, channels days and times your show or shows were broadcast.

Q2. A question on audience pleasures.

The Action Film

Question 1 : Conventions : for this question you should consider the character and narrative conventions you notice in the clip. You may wish to discuss how the elements of setting , character and narrative conform to or subvert audience expectations.

Keywords : conventions genre conforms subverts hybrid subgenre Propp

Narrative ambiguous antagonist protagonist

Example response : Hancock : Scene 1

A number of conventions are used and subverted in this scene. In terms of narrative we see a protagonist in conflict with aggressive and violent immoral antagonists who shoot and try to kill without conscience or mercy. There's a simple cause and effect linear narrative involving Hancock's conflict with the criminals.

In terms of setting it conforms to other contemporary superhero films such as Batman and Spiderman in being set in a contemporary urban realistic  setting with  crime and danger.

However, the characterisations are more ambiguous than we might expect and the conventions of the superhero are in some ways converted. While Hancock certainly has superhuman skills and bravery he doesn't conform to the noble and responsible superheroic qualities we might expect. Although he apprehends the criminals he causes more damage than he prevents including destroying several police cars. He is disinterested in morality telling the criminals he doesn't care what they did but simply wishes them to stop talking as he has a hangover.

In this way he seems more like the 'false hero' of Propp's schema than the hero. The traditional helpers to the hero in this setting might be the police but in this case, as stated, he causes them  more trouble than he prevents, although in their antisocial and violent behaviour the criminals he captures would certainly represent Propp's villain.

Question 2

Q2. Key features of m/e/c/s

It is important to use the key terms for m/e/c/s, e.g diegetic, ambient, rapid editing, screentime, low angle, long shot, etc.

It is also important to explain the effect of these choices of m/e/c/s.

Example response. (Hancock Scene 1)

Explain how mise-en-scene, editing, camerawork and editing are used in this scene.

The mise-en-scene includes the location. This is a realistic modern urban setting setting we have seen in other contemporary superhero films (Batman) in which we can expect the kind of violent actions that create suspense and tension in the narrative. The protagonist's clothing is shabby and not the sleek and stylish outfit we might expect of a superhero. He wears broken shades, old tatty shorts and shirt and a beanie. He is dressed deliberately unglamorously and his main prop is a bottle of alcohol to further connote his lifestyle.

The editing pace is fast throughout which is conventional for an action scene. Hancock as the hero is given the majority of the screentime. CGI and green screen are evident throughout the scene and help dynamise the action and lend excitement to the scene.During his conflict with the antagonists the editing pace increases to lend further excitement and emphasise danger and destruction. The conflict between Hancock and the criminal antagonists is indicated by the shot reverse shot.

In terms of camerawork  shot types are selected carefully for effect with longshots indicating the scale of destruction and close ups allowing us to witness Hancock's confused hungover state and later his anger. The camerawork is frequently handheld which connotes panic and frenzy throughout the scene. When Hancock crashes into the antagonists' car a zip pan connotes their panic and terror at his unexpected arrival.

The sound is also effective in building atmosphere. A non-diegetic rap score as opposed to a more typical orchestra seems suitable for the unconventional hero. There are diegetic sounds of screaming, crashing and explosions to connote the chaos of the conflict. Hancock's irreverent and occasionally obscene dialogue helps represent the character while the subtitles used when Hancock is trying to 'negotiate' with the antagonists create humour.

Q3 Key features and what to consider

You will not know what the representations are but it is likely to be one of the following:

* Gender
* Age
* Race
* Nationality

It is then important to consider these issues.

Are they represented positively or negatively?

Are representations stereotypical, countertypical or ambiguous?

Are representations empowering or disempowering?

Useful terms

* Objectified
* Authority/power/control
* Dominance
* patriarchal (if about gender)
* Stereotype/countertype
* Conform/subvert
* Positive/negative
* Empowered/disempowered
* Audience positioning (to sympathise with or object to)
* Antagonist/protagonist

Example response : on representation of gender in Avengers Assemble



The scene has a number of representations of age, gender and nationalities. I will make gender my primary focus. At the beginning of the scene men are represented as being in control. The only woman may be said to be sexually objectified. A young and attractive actress has been chosen. She is wearing revealing clothing, a low cut and short cocktail dress, all of which initially seems like a traditional and sexist way of signifying gender. This may seem as if her role is to be looked at, almost a sexual fantasy figure for the primarily young male audience of action films.

She is physically disempowered at the beginning of the scene, represented as a victim to the dominant three males who surround her and she is symbolically and literally tied down to a chair, immobile and seemingly unable to defend herself. The men are relaxed and seem to enjoy their positions of authority.

It could also be added at this point that the satisfaction the males take in their dominance coupled with the indications of violent behaviour signify rather negative stereotypically masculine characteristics of a need to dominate and a predisposition towards violence.

However, all of these negative representations are subverted when a phone call is received. It is from the woman’s male superior which may initially seem to reinforce this patriarchal theme. Firstly, she is in no way subservient to him, ‘Are you kidding.’ Secondly, her dialogue reverses our perceived understanding of who was in control within the scene. ‘I’m working. This moron was about to tell me everything.’

The subversion of our expectations and the empowering of women is then emphasised by action. It becomes clear from her rapid escape and disposal of the three men that she was in fact ‘allowing’them to think they had control. Her actions are decisive and pitiless as she quickly overcomes the antagonists demonstrating her power, skill and force – all qualities that are stereotypically associated with men.

In conclusion, although the woman seems initially objectified and disempowered this impression is quickly subverted as she gains control of the scene becomes empowered and dominates the men, thereby creating a positive representation of women being not only the equal of, but superior to men. Interestingly enough, the scene also has the effect of making the audience question its own potentially underlying sexism through this subversion of expectations.

**Situation Comedy :**

 Q1 Key Facts

The BBC and Channel 4 are both publicly owned broadcasters. As they are publicly owned they have expectations of their content which is known as their remit.

The I.T Crowd

* Shown on Channel 4 which has a young and upwardly mobile audience demographic
* Channel 4’s remit is to provide innovative, experimental and distinctive programming such as Ali G and Brasseye.
* It had 4 series and 1 special
* Traditional format may have seemed rebelllious in the ‘fly on the wall’ age of comedy (e,g The Office) thereby satisfying the channel remit
* Post watershed timeslot at 9.00 Fridays hailing the start of the weekend for a young audience
* Lower ratings than TRF but in line with the channel and which steadily rose
* Specials shown as themed nights on Christmas eve demonstrating the show’s importance to the channel’s brand identity. It was programmed to appear before ‘
* Also shown on E4 (repeats) creating synergy and helped publicise 4OD
* Presigious Baftas
* Precursor to Alan Carr helping to maintain audience for his show

Question 1 : Example Question and Answer

Question : On what channel, days and times was a sitcom of your choice broadcast and what is the relevance of this?

The I.T Crowd was broadcast on Channel Four on Friday nights at 9 pm, running for four series. The nine pm Friday slot is traditionally associated with comedy programming on this channel and is designed to appeal to the young and upwardly mobile audience of the show at the start of the weekend. Thus it benefits from a prior expectation of the genre and is more likely to be in tune with audience expectations. The show would also help to provide an audience for other shows aimed at a young upwardly mobile audience in search of weekend entertainment that followed, such as Alan Carr Chatty Man which followed it at ten. The timeslot of 9.00 had the added benefits of allowing time for its audience to go out after work before watching it as well as allowing it to feature more adult language and content mas it was scheduled after the 9pm watershed.

        Channel 4 is a public broadcast service and as such has a remit that it must comply with to ensure it does not simply mirror the programming of commercial channels such as ITV or Sky 1. Public broadcast services such as Channel 4 and the BBC have specific expectations to justify their existence. Channel 4 has a remit to provide 'innovative and experimental' programming as can be witnessed in previous groundbreaking shows such as Brass Eye and Ali G. Therefore, these channels make way for more experimental and niche programming. Channel 4 certainly has a smaller audience than other mainstream channels such as ITV or BBC1 and The I.T Crowd's early audience figures of under two million were much lower than popular shows on the major mainstream channels.

        At first glance, the I.T crowd may not seem to fulfil this remit, seeming more traditional than fly on the wall comedies such as The Royle Family and The Office which were perceived as the death of the traditional sitcom. The I.T Crowd features traditional elements of comedy such as studio audience laughter and catchphrases but its absurd humour and intertextual references could be seen as contemporary and modern in keeping with the channel's remit. Its success led to Bafta awards heightening the channel's prestige and reputation. It was also features and heavily advertised as a feature on Channel 4s E4 Channel and On Demand service thereby helping to create synergy by publicising other parts of the company.

         The I.T Crowd has also featured whole nights dedicated to it on Channel 4 and a Christmas special indicating its importance as a brand designed to publicise and represent the channel.

            The Royle Family was originally aired on BBC2. This is one of the more niche channels of BBC as opposed to its more mainstream and populist sister channel BBC1. As such, it features more eclectic and distinctive and experimental programming that is designed to fulfil the channel's remit as well as cater to smaller and more specific audiences. It was aired after the 9pm watershed in order to allow more adult language and content.

            The show could be viewed as an attempt at realism moving away from strict linear plotlines and audience laughter and catchphrases. Like The Office it was hailed as groundbreaking for this attempt to avoid sit com conventions and as such would be seen as successfully fulfilling the BBC's remit.

             The first series surprised many people by its high ratings justifying a move in the second and third series to BBC1.

Q2. On audience pleasures offered by one or two situation comedies.

Q2. Key Audience Pleasures

The I.T Crowd

Narrative resolution – equilibrium to disequilibrium or anti-narrative

Intertextual references : references to films and other television shows

Satire (exaggerated representations) : typically of the incompetence of the business world and of managment

Puns/Physical Comedy

Self Recognition : The young upwardly mobile audience may empathise with many of their own professional frustrations.

Absurd / exaggerated situations and non-realistic humour

Catchphrases – ‘Have you tried turning it on and off again?’

Yesterday’s Jam

Reynholm is a satirical parody of a manager, incompetent and erratic. For example, he is misled by Jen that ‘mice and mices’ are specialist I.T knowledge and makes her head of I.T. The office hierarchy is also satirised.

The descent to the basement is highly exaggerated and absurdist, unrealistic . The set design of the basement resembles a horror film with steam rushing out of vents, a lift that you have to climb out of and instructs you to get out, doors opening to grotesque scenes such as the man in the toilet.

Audience recognition : of the frustrations of characters at work. Moss and Roy are clearly frustrated by the mindless tedium of their work signified by the pained expression in Roy’s voice as he repeats ,’Have you tried turning it off and on again?’

The Final Countdown

Intertextual references to ‘Fight Club’ through narrative and dialogue and to The Matrix through dialogue, character and costume. The action references juxtapose with the trivial and ordinary situations creating comedy.

Audience can respond to Jen’s working frustrations of an incompetent boss and little opportunity to progress, as Reynholm Jr spends his time trying to seduce her and she tries to gain respect and prestige at work. In this episode her plotline involves her trying to gain an invite to a HOD meeting only to find it’s an underground aerobics class.