AQA A Level Unit 9A Close Study Products Student Workbook 2024 Exam Onwards

Paper 1 Section B Magazines
GQ & The Gentlewoman

This is the Workbook for use with **EDUSITES AQA SET PRODUCTS UNIT 9A A Level MEDIA STUDIES**. All of the notes refer to the content of this unit of work. They are designed to help you create a useful set of notes to help you with understanding the ideas covered in this examination, to support you in your Home Learning and be a clear revision aid in your preparations for the final examinations that you are required to take. You need to always keep in mind the examination board Assessment Objectives that your work is to be assessed with.

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- the theoretical framework of media, contexts of media and their influence on media products and processes.
- Analyse media products using the theoretical framework of media, including in relation to their contexts, to make judgements and draw conclusions.
- Create media products for an intended audience, by applying knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to communicate meaning.

Create products for intended audience and evaluate communication of meaning

- Demonstrate K&U of theoretical framework – *the Key concepts*
- Contexts of media products & production
- Analyse products by application of the framework/concepts/context

Lesson 1

Magazines

- As with all the AQA set products, study of the magazine set product is a means by which to study broader ideas and concerns of the QCA Media Framework.
- The set product enables us to explore these ideas in a practical manner. We use examples from the product to illustrate our understanding.
- The magazine industry is highly significant in terms of its cultural and social impact. It can be seen to illustrate some sense of the values of society or sections of society.
- In looking at the cultural industry through the example of a mainstream magazine and one outside the mainstream, we may consider how the ideas of cultural theorists are relevant in explaining elements that shape contemporary

Lesson 2

The Genre

- Genre is a relatively simple description of the many elements that might link two or more media products – *the presence of aliens in a sci-fi; of saloons in a western.* As your learning progresses, you should be coming to understand that genre is a complex part of the study of how and why media products are made.
- For magazines, we can focus on the surface features of this genre, what we call the conventions of the genre, before looking in greater detail at how this concept highlights more complex ideas such as audience, institution, and the values that magazine products communicate.

Genre is an industrial process:

- To guarantee **an audience who found pleasure in similar products**.
- To **offset financial risks of production** by providing collateral against innovation and difference.

Genre is a meshing of audience expectations and hypothesis (what they believe the product to be about/contain based on prior knowledge of similar products) which interact with the products during consumption.

To the production team, genre provides **a template for construction of messages and content.**

Neale states that genre is based on instances of repetition and difference. That a product and its genre is defined by two things:

- How much it conforms to its genre's conventions and stereotypes - *a product must obviously match the conventions of a particular genre if it is to be identified as part of that genre.*
- How much a media product subverts the genre conventions and stereotypes – *the differences it establishes in order to be seen to be considered unique and not just a clone of all the other existing products in that genre.*
- Genre is an important concept for magazine publishers. Audiences use the probable content, ideas, and narrative of a magazine based on its genre as a means of filtering the probability of enjoying each magazine, the likelihood of a magazine satisfying a particular need we have of it – *we are in a mood for something entertaining; are seeking gossip; are seeking knowledge etc.*
- Knowing this, publishers ensure that every **element of a magazine's cover informs the audience as clearly as possible of its genre**, especially if it is a popular genre such as **lifestyle.**
- A magazine's cover is **carefully designed** to inform audiences **of the pleasure** to be found in their magazine.

A good way of thinking about the impact of a cover and its audience is to strip away language and focus on the message conveyed by the content, the font choice, and the colour

- Who is this magazine aimed at?
- How do you 'know' this?
- What is the effect of the main image in this?
- What is the effect of the font choice?
- What is the effect of the colour palette in this?
- What is the '*message*' of this cover?
    - Is it serious or playful – what does this say about the audience it is aimed at?

- What does this say about how the magazine wishes to represent itself to that audience?

Magazines are a brand. Key in promoting this idea is the masthead. In the sea of magazines on the news-stands they need the brand to stand out among the other competing genre products.

The masthead must capture the publication's character, its attitude.

It should fit the intended readership – *serious, light, modern etc*.

The ideal is that the title masthead is so recognisable it can be obscured by images on the cover and still be recognised.

They go to great lengths to select the proper typography – the font – which all express ideas: *Is the publication a modern one, is it more traditional: is it cutting edge, challenging, cosmopolitan, urban, conservative*

Lesson 3

Set Products

- The exam tasks requiring knowledge and understanding of the set magazine products may involve you in responding to any of the core elements of a study of the media framework – *media language; representations; audience; media industry*
- They involve your familiarity with the different theoretical models that can help support or challenge the ideas outlined and defined by the task
- They require a deep study of the set products to demonstrate your understanding
- They require a knowledgeable awareness of the influence of contexts on content, audience, representations and the cultural industry of print.

As we can see from the past paper tasks, **context** works as a means of structuring a response to tasks, demonstrating to examiners that you possess understanding of the shifting underlying influences on media products:

- Context shapes the industry in terms of producing product **relatable** to their readers.
- Context shapes how magazines show a sense of **audience values** and ideas in society are in constant flux and susceptible to those ideas and content they read.
- Contexts shape the language of signs and **iconography of popular culture** that will appeal to readers.
- Contexts shape **identity** of readers in their alignment to **the brand identity** of magazines.

Though we look at contexts in a defined lesson, you should be constantly seeking ideas and insight into how the contexts are shaping the set products in every element of the Core Media Framework

Media Language is the set of understandings about images and content and the way the media presents these to us.

For the set magazines we need to add into the usual elements of semiotics and narrative the more specific technical magazine industry conventions of layout, colour palette and the actual content of these products.

To do this, we must be able to show to examiners a clear understanding of the impact of any selections of media language. It is not enough to know information about font selection or the layout of a page. We need to demonstrate an understanding of why it is like this (Media Industry; Representations; the audience; the context) and the effect of this on readers (values; ideology; identity; actions).

Lesson 4

Set Products

The two magazine set products have been selected because they come from two different sectors of the magazine publishing industry. *GQ* represents the mainstream lifestyle magazine products produced by the large publishing houses. Such products target a broad spectrum of the market. In the case of *GQ* this is– *ABC1 males 18-40 interested in fashion, sport, culture, entertainment and relationships*.

Teacher's Standards
Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The Gentlewoman represents the smaller independent publishers. These products target a smaller, more clearly defined niche audience. In this case *female 25-40 seeing themselves as fashion innovators, interested in politics, culture and relationships*.

AQA, require a study of both products in a manner affording you the ability to use each product individually or to make comparisons between them.

As you deepen your knowledge and understanding of each product in relation to the Core Media Framework and contexts you should keep in mind the ways in which they present similarities or differences on their production and promotion as well as their ideologies and audience.

Although magazines have been in decline for many decades with predictions of its disappearance, the industry still manages to thrive and to produce new brands.

The lifestyle magazine remains a '*hands on. me time*' product – products perceived most often as better to be read in print versions and associated with leisure time.

They are most often glossy and substantial products that are expensive to produce. They remain affordable, subsidising their cover price by selling advertising space. The lifestyle magazine remains a desirable platform for many expensive consumer brands, especially those linked to fashion, cosmetics, entertainment and celebrity culture. This may be because of their association with private browsing time and products we consume when we are relaxing and more liable to spend.

Of course, given the competition from influencer social media platforms, most magazines run a website linked to their brand.

Lesson 5

Institutions

Some media products take an approach to their content/purpose/concerns that challenges or rejects conventional mainstream values.

In doing so, the media language, representations, and values they apply to their product constructs a new audience, one that is either sympathetic to their ideas/purpose or an audience simply seeking something different from the needs addressed/fulfilled by mainstream conventional media.

Teacher's Standards
Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

If successful, this alternative media often provokes a response from the mainstream. This is how the genre is evolved - repetition and difference.

Usually this occurs when mainstream institutions, driven by commercial pressures of profit and financial return, are producing products that target the broad mass of audience. The alternative media are most often the product of small independent organisations seeking to create a space for themselves in the market by being 'different'. Whilst still requiring revenue from sales and advertising to survive, their costs and overheads are low and they can construct a profitable, previously untapped, niche audience.

Hebidge's book **Subculture: The Meaning of Style**, published in 1979 argues that Britain's post-war subcultures challenged the established dominant values and ideas of a culture through style, the adoption of defined elements such as their choice of clothing, music, dance, make-up, and drug use.

Hebdige saw these elements as symbols used to represent who the group are and the ideas and values they stand for.

We see this expressed in the non-mainstream cultural products such as independent magazines who find a demographic that is often uncatered for by the mainstream.

Modern technology means that some small companies are now able to produce magazines that meet these needs. Such magazines rely on word of mouth or a feature in other style magazines to construct an audience.

Lesson 6

Financing Magazines

The focus for industry for the *GQ* close study product is Condé Nast, the multinational conglomerate which publishes *GQ* and a range of other fashion and lifestyle magazines.

This will provide a case study of a commercial media institution where the primary – though not sole – focus is print (*Condé Nast has an increasing presence on broadcast platforms*).

1. Case study of Condé Nast as a conglomerate

2. Developments in new technology mean that many of their brands are now online as well as in print – including the *GQ* website

3. Institutional strategies for keeping print popular and relevant in the contexts of developing technology and competition from other brands

4. Cultural industries, including Hesmondhalgh

- Launched in 1931, *GQ* began its life as a quarterly publication called Gentleman's Quarterly aimed at industry insiders. Its popularity with customers caused its rebranding in 1967 to *GQ*.

- Produced by Condé Nast, today *GQ* is a multi-platform brand. Each issue is published in print and on the iPad; it has its own acclaimed website, iPhone apps and an annual event called '*GQ* Men of the Year'.

- *GQ* has an average circulation of around 212,000 and a reach of 7 million globally through its various platforms with different editions targeting different nations – e.g., *GQ Australia; GQ south Africa; GQ USA etc.*

- *GQ's* catch phrase is '*the magazine for men with an IQ,*'.

- The brand is built around more traditional ideas of masculinity. It includes coverage of cultural concerns and targets a more serious minded, conservative, older reader than some other men's lifestyle magazines such as *Loaded* and *FHM.*

In 1994, in an article for *the Independent*, journalist Mark Simpson coined the term 'Metrosexual' Attending a GQ UK Style exhibition, he stated "*I had seen the future of masculinity, and it was moisturised.*" This term gained global popularity in the early 2000s, epitomised by men like David Beckham who embraced the idea of a new style. This is a key moment in media publishing. From this point on, the idea that it was socially acceptable for men to care about their looks, clothing and skincare regime entered mainstream ideas of masculinity.

Men's magazines soon embraced this through their content and advertising. As commercial products, a primary role of such magazines is to encourage this type of spending amongst its readers. The more GQ readers buy these cosmetic and fashion brands, the more these high spending advertising brands will place further ads in the

magazine. We can see there is a virtuous circle of profit and pleasure in which the magazine attracts the high spending advertising brands and places these in front of readers. GQ exploits their position as style leaders by producing articles that encourage readers to identify with this way of seeing themselves alongside expensive adverts for male cosmetic and fashion brands.

In 2014, Simpson then introduced the term '*spornosexuals*', men who are extremely body-focused, who spend all their time at the gym to make their bodies their best accessory.

Tracking the cover images of GQ indicates how ideas of the GQ masculinity has evolved in terms of messages to readers – celebrity always dominates – *film; sport; culture etc.*

The ideas of Curran and Seaton are dealt with in greater detail in **Edusites Advanced Media Core Unit: Media Institutions+.**

Curran's view falls under what Seaton terms cultural pessimism. ***Cultural Neophilliacs*** (Seaton's classification) view new media as increasing the potential for ordinary people to participate more fully in the democratic process and cultural life. *Cultural Pessimists* suggest that this is false, and that in reality vertical integration and convergence means that the Internet is actually dominated by a small number of media corporations. Curran undertook research that found that more than 75% of the 31 most visited news and entertainment websites were affiliated to the largest media corporations.

despite lack of funding to compete with such institutions, creativity in targeting a demographic indicates that the pessimism of Curran does not mean products outside such institutions have to fail or cannot compete at a different level for audiences. It could be argued that the fact that *The Gentlewoman* is outside the mainstream of media institutions allows it a greater degree of freedom in its message and marketing. A mainstream magazine produced by one of the largest global publishing conglomerates, *GQ* has always been a publication presenting hegemonic ideas that relate to its target demographic. Presenting itself as at the vanguard of modern masculine culture, its ideology and contents tend towards the conservative. The men it features are always successful, the target audience associating with those who show

drive and determination, who are '*winners*' in their field. The advertising represents a world of high fashion and material success. The men and women are always conventionally attractive and desirable. They are life's winners. The narrative is aspiration. That buying the featured products bestows some association to this.

The Conde Nast organisation have a position for *GQ* in the UK market and in other global locations. This extract from the *GQ Media Pack* has the objective of persuading advertisers of leading brands to buy advertising space in the UK magazine.

The readership is 212,00 with 1.8 million social media followers.

Note how it describes itself to advertisers. It is not just its reach it is selling (the numbers of readers) but its position in the market, **who** it reaches. – *flagship; progressive; cutting edge; progressive new forces shaping culture; a community; inspired; GQ's authority has never been broader or stronger.*

Note the focus on masculinity as: *evolving to the centre of the global pop-culture conversation.*

Hesmondhalgh is a key figure in fostering the idea of cultural industries and exploring the forces that drive them and shape their output. *When considering which project to finance, media producers must take into consideration the fact that in all of the cultural industries risk is high. This is because of the difficulty in predicting success.* Often the issue in publishing is that they are making products requiring significant investment to cover the high production costs.

Hesmondhalgh and **Curran** and **Seaton** have shown this most often means media institutions look for 'certainty', products proven to appeal to largest possible audience.

The way of minimising risk is for institutions to rely on investment in repetition using the 'same' or 'familiar' ideas and popular genres, that have proven successful. This strategy is what Hesmondhalgh refers to as **formatting**.

For mainstream publishing, institutions with many brands under their control the attraction is to produce and publish genres like lifestyle that have a large audience and the capacity to attract the larger advertisers. This offers the chance to reduce marketing costs; to target marketing more tightly; a known 'pre-sold' audience for a brand identity; magazines providing known genre pleasures that can be promoted in the design of their front covers and content.

Teacher's Standards
Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Curran and Seaton: commercial media companies are concerned with maximising profit and minimising financial risk. These priorities impact all aspects of media products from what gets made to the representations and ideas they contain.

- Media industries continually seek areas where profits may be made, and existing content exploited.
- Media industry structures inhibit variety, creativity, and quality as the options for real audience choice are narrowed.
- The internet is not a rupture with past structures, rather it offers new platforms for commercial cultural industries to exploit.
- Competition is reduced to **imitation rather than difference** leading to lack of original voices and diversity. The inevitable outcome is a dumbing down of cultural industry output as ever larger audiences are sought.

Curran and Seaton *argue that media products thus come to feel 'all the same'. The result is that audiences seek the known pleasure from different iterations of film franchises or even from other blockbusters in the same genre. In reality, they simply have less choice, a more limited 'type' of film to select from.*

Lesson 7

Industry

Cultural industries have an interest in making profit. Without profit their products would not be made. Hesmondhalgh sees competition between two forces – do cultural institutions produce products that speak genuinely about the world or do they prioritise serving the interests of their stakeholders, placing profit above making important cultural products. The minimising of risk inevitably leads to formulaic genre products.

However, one of the forces **Hesmondhalgh** *identifies is that the dominance of these cultural industries leads to the production of some products that subvert such values. Products offering ideologies that challenge the prevailing dominant hegemony – the greed and corrupting influence of capitalism, inequalities of gender or racism.*

Hesmondhalgh *sees this as an indirect result of competition. There will always be a market for products that are different to the mainstream, products that appeal to the*

Teacher's Standards
Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

need of some in society for something 'new' or non-generic. They desire the shocking or the subversive. Also, products that appeal to the evolving youth audience seeking separation from the values, ideas, and perceived failings of adult society.

The idea that commercial media companies are concerned with maximising profit and minimising financial risk is one where cultural theorists like Hesmondhalgh and Curran and Seaton find agreement. These are priorities that can be seen to impact all aspects of media products from what gets made to the representations and ideas they contain. In looking at indie publications we need to be aware that for the mainstream:

- Media industry structures inhibit variety, creativity, and quality as the options for real audience choice are narrowed.
- Competition is reduced to imitation rather than difference leading to lack of original voices and diversity.

Hesmondhalgh goes on to state *argue that when all media products come to feel 'all the same' that one result may be the creation of a 'new' market for those who seek something 'different'. That the fact that a magazine can create a new or refreshing approach can be its main selling point to readers who have grown tired of the 'same old' topics and features in lifestyle magazines.*

Often this is the younger readership – the so called 'refreshers' who may shun the established titles simply because they are associated with an older audience and values they struggle to identify with.

Sometimes these 'new ideas' create the next wave of genre imitation – their success in capturing this loose audience may attract the bigger publisher's interest.

In looking at independent or low budget publishing, such marketing is unavailable. The products are magazines that target a small audience, one often limited in the potential to expand. They require a more focused and often subtler form of marketing. They lack the finance to push their product into larger retailers such as supermarket shelves

The elements are thus:

Word of mouth

> Using/creating articles that attract attention, influencers, social media to generate awareness of the magazine

Cover/Star Quality

Teacher's Standards
Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The presence of an established celebrity or personality with known appeal to the target audience who can attract a 'fan' audience appreciative of them or their ideas and work

Subject matter

The focus on an issue or issues of interests that audiences relate to or offers an understanding of.

The Gentlewoman is an independent magazine published by Dutch publishers, Gert Jonkers and Jop van Bennekom, who publish one other title, *Fantastic Man*.

The product serves as the way for you to explore some of the conventions and issues surrounding independent magazine publishing.

One focus will be how the advances in technology enable small companies to print at a cost-effective price and how they use the internet and social media platforms to construct and sustain an audience. AQA are clear that any study involves consideration of the ideas of Hesmondhalgh and other cultural industry theorists.

Lesson 8

Ideologies

As part of our consideration of the representations offered in the AQA set product lifestyle magazines - *and their possible influence on their readers' values, ideologies and life choices*, - we must think in more detail about what audience needs are of such products.

If audiences are looking for products that they feel satisfy their needs (*entertainment; identity; social identity; news*) we can make the step to accepting that such products represent a set of values and beliefs (*ideologies*) that the audience hold or are led to believe that they need to hold if they are to see themselves being accepted as part of that social group of - *EG: desirable young successful women; attractive, ambitious successful males; mainstreamers; aspirers; etc.*

- The lifestyle we seek to be part of
- How we see ourselves
- How we wish others to see us and accept as who we are.
- Our identity.

Media products reflect values or ideologies. An example might be that in some texts - such as action films like the *Die Hard* or the *Lethal Weapon* series - solving problems with force is seen as acceptable and reflects a certain ideology – *an eye for an eye; crime doesn't pay.*

The media is a successful carrier of ideology because it reaches such a huge audience. In studying media products, we can consider the dominant ideologies of a society and explore the implications of these on how we live.

When studying a media product, you should look to find the dominant or underlying ideology that is represented and consider whose values are represented and which groups - *and their associated values and beliefs* - are not.

Although **the exam does not specifically ask you questions about ideology**, learning about and **understanding ideologies of lifestyle magazines will enable your answers to the tasks of representation and identity to have much more depth** and give you the ability to discuss **connotations** with greater confidence in the statements that you make.

Ideology is the extent to which media products contain and communicate a particular way of looking at the world, a set of values and beliefs that it is assumed audiences share.

These may be **the general values of society** - *such as the importance of human life or attitudes towards crime and punishment.* It might be **specific values that only certain groups in society might share** - *such as different political views about society like capitalism, communism; or ideals such as vegetarianism or anti-nuclear.*

Lifestyle products clearly speak to the wider social values, but within this may then speak to specific sections of society that share its values about the world.

On a simple level, we might see that some genre of lifestyle magazines – *those aimed at male and female fashion and trends* - tend to focus on material objects, the idea that happiness comes from looking a certain way or through possessing certain clothes, cars, or other material goods**. They place a value on physical looks and establish the defining accessories of a modern lifestyle**. Other lifestyle magazines might offer a different set of values, such as awareness of the environment, or of heritage.

Teacher's Standards
Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Ideologies that are held and told to us by important social institutions - the church, the law, education, government, and the media itself - are called **dominant ideologies**. Dominant ideologies are **ideologies or beliefs that we live by in our day-to-day lives and often do not question** – they have become 'natural, common sense' things to do. This acceptance effectively dissuades people from rebelling against these beliefs and keeps a sense of stability in society.

Dominant ideologies, amongst many other things, include **our beliefs about gender roles, the economy, and social institutions such as marriage**.

- **Reception theory** makes the point that with any media product there are preferred, negotiated and oppositional readings. It's all about the way members of an audience might be thought respond to the product.

- This is all about understanding who the audience are and constructing a profile of the demographics and psychographics of the group. We make reasonable assumptions about their lifestyles – their interests, their concerns, their outlook, their cultural references etc.

- From this we can make informed assessments of how they might respond to the style, content and tone of a product.

- This, of course, is not an exact science but it is how all media institutions estimate the likely appeal of their output to their target audience. It is a key element in how judgements of maximising profit and minimising risk are made.

- To fully understand the notion of lifestyle we need to understand what is meant by consumer culture. This argues that societies are organised around consumption.

- **Rising Affluence**. Despite the economic recession post-Covid, inhabitants of Western Societies have money to spend on consumer goods, holidays and leisure.

- **Decreasing work hours.** More time for leisure/lifestyle pursuits.

- **Identity**. People take identity from what they consume and their activities as consumers. Previously, people's work was a marker of identity. Old forms of

Teacher's Standards
Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

identity, such as class, work, and location are rapidly breaking down because of increased globalization.

- **The Aestheticization of Everyday Life**. There is far greater interest in identity as the presentation of an image and construction of a lifestyle. The acquisition of certain goods are used as markers of social position. Increasingly, 'We are what we consume'.

Positional Goods. Goods or services have desirability because they are scarce and in short supply. Scarcity can be in both price or through cult status. Ownership of an Aston Martin or a Hermes handbag are examples of positional goods.

Consumption Cleavages. In the 19th and earlier part of the 20th century social class, race and gender were the major sources of social division. Such social divisions have been replaced by consumption cleavages based around patterns of consumption.

Growth of Consumer Power. In consumer societies the consumer gains power at the expense of the producers.

Increasing Commodification of Everyday Life. Shopping has become a leisure activity rather than a chore. Art and music are seen as commodities rather than expressions of creativity.

Lesson 9 No notes

Lesson 10

Mode Of Address

In looking at **language in magazines** we are interested in **the way that the magazine addresses its readers**. We are aware that the **images, graphics, font, layout, and colours construct the way that readers 'feel' about a magazine** but clearly, as a print product, the words used are of massive importance. You will have studied similar elements and effects in GCSE English [*alliteration; direct address; etc.*] and there is an expectation that you will be **able to apply some quite developed knowledge to your analysis of the connotations of language use** on covers and features pages in the set products.

Teacher's Standards
Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Lesson 11

Representations

How lifestyle magazines represent their contents (*what they believe to be of importance, interest and value to their readers***) has a cumulative impact on audience sense of their own identity. As such, when viewed as part of the context of the images of all of the other media products that surround us every day, these lifestyle magazines help establish what each era believe to be images of '***beauty***',** *desirability***;** *what is fashionable or stylish; what it requires to be admired and accepted; what it means to be a woman, to be a man; to be young, to be old; to be British; to be white, to be black; to be Western etc***.**

In Baudrillard's model, society has lost a sense of what is real and what is the image. The audience viewing a product are unable to decide what is 'real' and what 'fiction'. This is complicated when later successive media products raid existing media products and copy their narratives. The sense of the real then becomes further reinforced by a saturation of similar messages – images of images, a succession of images that appear real, so that life comes to resemble a room of mirrors: all reflection and no defining sense of what is real

In Baudrillard's model, society has lost a sense of what is real and what is the image. The audience viewing a product are unable to decide what is 'real' and what 'fiction'. This is complicated when later successive media products raid existing media products and copy their narratives. The sense of the real then becomes further reinforced by a saturation of similar messages – images of images, a succession of images that appear real, so that life comes to resemble a room of mirrors: all reflection and no defining sense of what is real.

A criticism of many mainstream women's magazines is that they are obsessed with sex. **Gauntlett** (2002) investigated coverage in women's magazines and found that in fact women's magazines were too *limited* in their coverage of sex - their articles are almost always heterosexual. He references **Stevi Jackson** (1996) who asserted that such mainstream magazines are *'relentlessly heterosexual'*, observing that

Teacher's Standards
Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

lesbian sexuality is '*not regularly and routinely celebrated in the way that heterosexuality is*'. (**Gauntlett 2002**)

Jackson et al. argue that in men's magazines, 'men and women are (represented as) polar opposites in terms of their sexual identities and desires' suggesting that the magazines' model of masculinity *'acts as a means of enforcing boundaries between men and women'.*

They go on to say:

"The accompanying fear seems to be that, unless men and women are rigidly rendered apart, this would introduce a small grain of uncertainty within the representation of masculine identity, thereby threatening to undermine it all together ..... Representation, as we have seen, leaves no room for doubt, questioning, ambiguity or uncertainty"

Lifestyle magazines, such as those in the AQA products GQ and The Gentlewoman, offer images and feature articles presenting a set of values for their readers to shape their identity around. This may be simply reinforcing or sustaining their own current ideas and values around ideas of gender and interests.

The most common examination tasks around representation in magazines have been tasks requiring a discussion of gender and identity – what it is to be a woman, what it is to be a man. This can often lead to very predictable answers. In your research you should make the effort to offer ideas beyond more common notions of heterosexuality – such as those of the LGBTQ+ communities.

Ethnicity and age are also common representations in examination tasks, though these magazine products suggest there is little in their choice for such tasks as their focus is on ideas of femininity and masculinity and offering more contemporary ideas of gender

- You must be able to **identify** what these representations are.
- The extent to which **they are stereotypes** or **challenge existing representations.**
- Be able to **show that you understand the connotations** of such representations.

Teacher's Standards
Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Ideas about the self in society have changed, so that identity is today seen as more fluid and transformable than ever before**.** Twenty or thirty years ago, analysis of popular media told researchers that mainstream culture was a backwards-looking force, resistant to social change and trying to push people back into traditional categories. Today, it seems more appropriate to emphasise that, within limits, the mass media is a force for change. The traditional view of a woman as a housewife or low-status worker has been kick-boxed out of the picture by the feisty, successful 'girl power' icons. Meanwhile the masculine ideals of absolute toughness, stubborn self-reliance and emotional silence have been shaken by a new emphasis on men's emotions, need for advice, and the problems of masculinity. **Although gender categories have not been shattered, these alternative ideas and images have at least created space for a greater diversity of identities**

Agenda Setting Model: Ideas and events are given importance by appearing on the front cover of a magazine. If such ideas and similar stories and celebrities are long-running, stretching over many editions and provoking comment from influencers, adds to the sense of its importance and its place in society.

Agenda Framing Model: **The way the story is presented (***language used; images used; tone; etc.***)** – as well as selection giving prominence, the mode of address and the type of language and images used shapes how the reader is meant to see these matters

The prominence of the word 'sex' and 'sexy' implies the idea of its importance for women and relationships. The presentation of Alba – *pose; her dress; her shape; make-up etc.* – connote the idea of female desirability sustaining previous cover shots. All the stories are about heterosexual relationships and female beauty and thus are agenda setting for readers.

In the 1960s legendary German magazine *Twen* was published. Its aim was to appeal to a new audience of younger readers wanting to be different from their parents. To do so, it published sensationalist images and features, some of them deemed almost pornographic. It was highly influential on magazine publishers around the world and heralded a new style to be taken up to modernise magazine appeal in the age of TV.

In the seventies, under its influence, emerged a new kind of magazine, the modern women's lifestyle magazine. Genre defining Magazines such as *Cosmopolitan,* with its openness about sex and sexuality, have gone on to be amongst the most popular genre of modern magazine publishing.

Magazines such as *Vanity Fair* and *Cosmopolitan* have defined the modern format of style, fashion and ideologies. At times, widely criticized for sexual explicitness and as being seen to dominate their readers lifestyles by telling them *what to eat, what to wear, how to behave* - they have been influential far beyond their actual readership in defining modern Western social ideas and norms of gender and gender identity.

Lesson 12

We explore in **Edusites Core Media Framework Unit Media Audience+** how understanding and models of audience have evolved from the 1930s notion of a lumpen mass to more sophisticated ideas of how audience use mainstream media products and the real complexities of the meaning/response element.

The ideas of Hall and Morley and other theorists in the 1970s are based on the 'type' of mainstream media products such as lifestyle magazine. We need to be sure to consider the ideas of modern theorists such as **bell hooks, Judith Butler and Gauntlett** to fine-tune our assessment of the role of both the mainstream *GQ* and more alternative *The Gentlewoman* products**.**

Butler's model originates in *Gender Trouble: Feminism & the Subversion of Identity*.

Butler questions whether gender behaviours seen by society as defining what a woman is are biological or are in fact behaviours learned by repetition.

Butler sees **gender as a performance** based on conventions absorbed by individuals. Gender is thus seen by living up to pre-conceived expectations of how women or men behave. As a social construction, it can be viewed as a fiction open to change and to being challenged.

Butler's Performativity Model is based on the idea of repeated rituals performed to construct and reveal our identity. The model challenges societal norms of heterosexuality as beliefs that force us to conform to certain fixed standards for our identity.

Neo-tribalism: The model identifies the idea that humans evolved to live in tribes rather than a mass society. Michael Maffesoli saw this as a way of understanding why we seek to form new networks (small masses) or tribes within the great mass of society.

In Time of the Tribes (1988) puts forward the idea that humans seek identity and comfort from a tribal existence not simply based on ethnicity or geography but on shared ideas distinguished by 'lifestyle and taste'.

Mass culture has disintegrated, social and cultural identity is through fragmented tribal groupings, organized around the catchwords, brand-names, and sound-bites of consumer culture. Audience and identity is shaped by elements of music videos, gaming, films and pop culture, rather than religion or politic ideologies.

Maffesoli is the theorist of the break-up – **the fragmentation of audience** – of media culture.

These *little masses* are familiar to us – *the niche audience of blogs, YouTube channels, independent music.* They can be seen as the remains of what used to be the mass consumption media of 1970s TV and film, the mass audience of 1980s MTV and corporate dominated music charts.

These small masses are **defined from each other by their lifestyle choices, shared music, fashion and values**.

They are not tribes in the sense of anthropology: *they have neither longevity nor are they absolutely fixed; they morph and fragment, adapt and evolve*. They are described as *post-modern tribes*. Aware of themselves and of the consequences of their cultural selections and their sense of identity.