

Discursive writing



MEDIA STUDIES

Are media audiences active or passive consumers?

Throughout the world, people spend hours a day sending and receiving media content. Arguably, the extent of audience participation has changed throughout the last ten decades and audiences are able to interact and produce their own content.

In a rapidly changing landscape it is imperative that we are able to make informed judgements about the media we are presented with and we are able to participate in media content in order to consider the discursive writing assignment- **are media audiences active or passive consumers?** [1,500-2,000 words]

You will need to research both active and passive audience theories in order to build case studies and provide balanced viewpoints. By conducting this research you will be able to discuss the question and consider what impact the media has on our emotions, behaviours and attitudes. Does media cause aggression and violence? Does the media inject us with ideas and values? Do we have the power to 'talkback' to media content? All of these questions you will consider within this assignment.

I look forward to hearing your viewpoint.

Mr Fuller

MEDIA STUDIES

Contents tracker



Topic focus	Tick when complete	Further comments [ideas, questions, opinions]
Audience & regulation		
Passive audiences: Bandura		
Passive audiences: Adorno and Horkheimer		
Active audiences: Blumer & Katz		
Active audiences: Shirky		

MEDIA STUDIES

Research



You will need to conduct research about theorists, their contributions to audience consumption as well as consider recent case studies to exemplify theories.

A key skill at A-Level, degree and beyond is to use books, webpages and news articles [I would steer clear from Wikipedia as it is not considered a reliable source of information].

The following webpages are an excellent place to start your research.

- Essential Media theory: a website that contains explanations and examples of theories.

<https://www.essentialmediatheory.com/shirky>

- Google Scholar: a search engine specifically for academic literature.

<https://scholar.google.com/>

To use this, simply enter key words [e.g. Hypodermic Needle theory]

- The Media Insider, Youtube: an excellent account that explains theories and will direct you to examples.

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGXfaZVEZrOXaZLWG3_HnIA

You will need to log your research findings throughout this project [see research record]

Key words



These key words will feature frequently in this project. Find the definitions of them before you start your research.

Key word	Definition
Media Consumption	
Influence	
Hypodermic	
Audience	
Gratification	
Active	
Passive	
Ideology	
Prosumer	

What is Media?



Before researching theories, watch the video clip on YouTube:
What is media studies?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qE-B_XkoAgQ

Make notes on what you understand about Media Studies and reflect on your media consumption

Summary

Media I consume [purpose of media consumption]

Initial opinion

Read the following statements and note down your initial opinion [do you agree or disagree with the statements?], you will return back to this at the end of the project.

- Video game publishers unethically train children in the use of weapons and, more importantly, harden them emotionally to the act of murder by simulating the killing of hundreds or thousands of opponents in a single typical video game.

My opinion: _____

- Repetition is a form of learning and a way of remembering things, and if children remember being rewarded for violence in games, they are left prone to being more violent in reality expecting a reward.

My opinion: _____

- Audiences are able to question the media presented to them and form their own opinions such as reject media messages.

My opinion: _____

- People are able to distinguish between reality and what they see online. The media does not influence behaviours.

My opinion: _____

Classifying audiences & regulation



It is useful to understand exactly what a target audience is and how they can be classified. You can use this information later when considering the active and passive debate. Use the questions below to guide your research and complete the research record.

1. What is a target audience?
2. How can audiences be broken down and segmented?
3. How do media texts target audiences? In what ways can they achieve this?
4. Who are the BBFC & VSA?
5. What is their role in targeting audiences?

Research record: Classifying audiences & regulation



#	Title of book, website, article or video	Summary of the information learnt:
1	The BBFC website: https://www.bbfc.co.uk/	
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

Passive audience theory: Adorno and Horkheimer








The Hypodermic Needle Theory suggests that the media 'injects' its messages straight into the audience with suggestions designed to trigger a specific desired response. The theory states the audience is entirely passive and is immediately affected by the media's messages, as the Media's hold over the public is so intense that the public is essentially unable to escape from its influence.

Use the questions below to guide your research and complete the research record and theory summary page.

1. How are the media viewed?
2. How are the audience viewed?
3. What examples did Adorno and Horkheimer use to explain the theory? [Look up Frankfurt school]
4. How might this affect media audiences ?
5. What are the strengths of this theory?
6. What are the limitations of this theory?
7. What examples from media today can you apply?

Passive audience theory: Adorno and Horkheimer

Summary	Key quotes
	 
Strengths of theory	Limitations of theory
	
Examples from media	

Passive audience theory: Bandura








Albert Bandura suggested that humans learn new behaviours as a result of their environment rather than genetic factors. Research into Bandura's Bobo Doll experiment (passive audiences).

Use the questions below to guide your research and complete the research record and theory summary page.

1. What did Bandura want to find out?
2. How did Bandura conduct the experiment?
3. What was the outcome of the experiment?
4. How this might affect media audiences ?
5. What are the strengths of this theory?
6. What are the limitations of this theory?
7. What examples from media today can you apply?

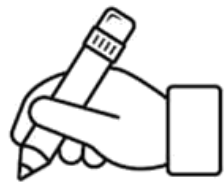
Passive audience theory:

Bandura

Summary	Key quotes
	 
Strengths of theory	Limitations of theory
	
Examples from media	

Research record:

Passive audiences



Record your findings on passive audiences here

#	Title of book, website, article or video	Summary of the information learnt
1	Summary of Bobo doll experiment: https://www.psychologistworld.com/behavior/bobo-doll-experiment-albert-bandura-learning-aggression	
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

Active audience: Blumler & Katz








Uses and Gratifications theory as developed by Blumler and Katz suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media. Blumler and Katz believed that the user seeks out the media source that best fulfils their needs. The **uses and gratifications theory** assumes the audience chooses what it wants to consume for five different reasons.

Use the questions below to guide your research and complete the research record and theory summary page.

1. How does Blumler & Katz explain their Uses & Gratifications theory?
2. What are the 5 categories they use to explain Uses & Gratifications?
3. How does this suggest audiences are passive?
4. What are the strengths of this theory?
5. What are the limitations of this theory?
6. What examples from media today can you apply? [you can use your own experience of media consumption]

Active audience: Blumler & Katz

Summary	Key quotes
	 
Strengths of theory	Limitations of theory
	
Examples from media	

Active audience: Shirky








Shirky argues that audience behaviour has changed due to the internet and the ability for audiences to create their own content at home thanks to the lower cost of technology. This new audience doesn't just consume media, but also produces it – creating the term 'prosumer'.

Use the questions below to guide your research and complete the research record and theory summary page.

1. What role does the media play today?
2. How are the audiences viewed?
3. What influence does 'new media' [the internet] have on audiences?
4. What are the strengths of this theory?
5. What are the limitations of this theory?
6. What examples from media today can you apply?

Active audience: Shirky

Summary	Key quotes
	 
Strengths of theory	Limitations of theory
	
Examples from media	

Research record:

Active audience



Record your findings on active audiences here

#	Title of book, website, article or video	Summary of the information learnt
1	Explanation of Uses & Gratifications theory: https://youtu.be/Vn9_0mTfT3Y	
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

Opinion: reflections

Before you begin planning your discursive writing, make notes summarising the passive and active audience debate. Include theorists you have researched, examples and finally, your opinion

Passive audiences	Active audiences

Essay planning

It is important to plan your essay before you start writing. An essay has a clear structure with an introduction, paragraphs with evidence and a conclusion. Evidence, in the form of quotations and examples is the foundation of an effective essay and provides proof for your points.

Planning your answers is a crucial part in essay writing and getting into the habit now will support you in further education.

Complete the table on the next page, thinking carefully about the vocabulary and quotations you will use to ensure your paragraphs are focused and concise.

Guide to... essay writing

Introduction

Introduce a hook sentence at the very starting point - something that would sound interesting to the readers. Where you can provide a brief explanation of the issue, or use a quote or rhetorical question. Then pose the arguments on both sides, and summarise. The introduction should be brief where the knowledge needs to be explained specifically.

Main body [4 paragraphs]

You might want to start with a topic sentence that summarises the main point of the paragraph. This sentence acts like a mini introduction for this paragraph of the essay. The rest of the paragraph should then develop this main point by providing more explanation, detail and evidence.

Conclusion

A conclusion is the final paragraph of your essay. It should tie all the loose ends of your argument together.

An effective conclusion may: restate your main idea, directly link back to the essay title or question, briefly summarise the key supporting points, give readers something to remember - a final thoughtful idea or reflection

Key words

You should now be familiar with these key words, plot them into your essay plan on the next page [some of them can be use in more than one section e.g. audience will feature heavily]

Key word	Where will I include them specifically?
Consumption	
Influence	
Hypodermic	Passive audience theory paragraph
Audience	
Gratification	Active audience theory paragraph
Active	
Passive	
Ideology	
Prosumer	

Paragraph	Main points	Quotes/ Examples	Key words
1: Introduction (100 words)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define key terms [active/passive] 2. Summarise the debate 3. Introduce theories 		
2: Passive audiences: Bandura (200 words)			
3: Passive audiences: Adorno and Horkheimer (200 words)			
4: Active audiences: Bulmer & Katz (200 words)			
5: Active audiences: Shirky (200 words)			
6: Conclusion (100 words)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Restate key points 2. Make a judgement that directly answers the question 		

Essay writing support

Introduction	Giving examples	Analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The debate is focused on... • The central theme • ...is defined as... • The key aspects discussed... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An illustration of this... • For example... • For instance... • This can be seen... 	<p>With certainty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This means... • This shows... • This suggests... <p>Possible interpretations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can be inferred that... • This implies... • This possibly...
To add ideas	To compare and contrast	Conclusions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also... • Furthermore.. • Moreover... • Additionally... • Equally important is... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similarly... • In comparison... • However.. • Alternatively... • Despite this... 	<p>In summary...</p> <p>To conclude..</p> <p>In conclusion...</p>

Don't forget! You must also read over your work for spelling errors and grammatical errors, to check the structure of your essay, and to assess whether the argument is logical and coherent.

Has your opinion changed?

Reflecting on the research conducted, has your opinion changed?

- Video game publishers unethically train children in the use of weapons and, more importantly, harden them emotionally to the act of murder by simulating the killing of hundreds or thousands of opponents in a single typical video game.

My opinion: _____

- Repetition is a form of learning and a way of remembering things, and if children remember being rewarded for violence in virtual reality games, they are left prone to being more violent in reality expecting a reward.

My opinion: _____

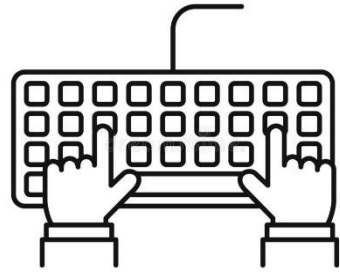
- Audiences are able to question the media presented to them and form their own opinions such as reject media messages.

My opinion: _____

- People are able to distinguish between reality and what they see online. The media does not influence behaviours.

My opinion: _____

The write up



Using your research findings and essay plan, you are now ready to start your discursive writing.

Are media audiences active
or passive consumers?

Submitting work

Congratulations!

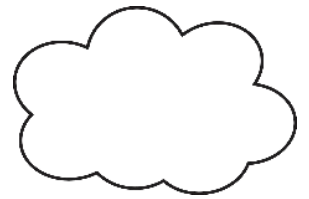
You have completed this writing
project!

Please submit your essay and research
findings to Mr Fuller

pfuller@raynespark.merton.sch.uk

MEDIA STUDIES

Final reflections



Now your project is complete and you are waiting on feedback, reflect on this project

1. What did you find most enjoyable about this writing task?
2. What tasks did you find most challenging;? How did you attempt to overcome them?
3. What research/theories have interested you the most?
4. Has your viewpoint of media and audience consumption changed? How?
5. What research or questions would you like to explore further?
6. Finally, how has this project helped you prepare for further education? What skills have you had to employ to ensure success?