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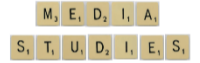
S<sub>1</sub> T<sub>1</sub> U<sub>1</sub> D<sub>2</sub> I<sub>1</sub> E<sub>1</sub> S<sub>1</sub>



# SUMMER HOMEWORK PACK

TRANSITION TO SIXTH FORM

# Welcome



This transition booklet will provide you with a small range of activities to complete over the summer holidays and help with your preparation for beginning your A Level Media Studies course in September. The completed activities will provide your teachers and peers something to share and discuss in your first few lessons, and give you some valuable experience with the critical analysis skills required for the course.

## Equipment

Your teacher will provide you with an A4 exercise book in which to complete all of your work and essays during your first lesson.

## Basic Expectations

- You will be expected to attend all lessons and be punctual.
- It is an expectation that you will arrive to all lessons with the correct equipment and folder.
- Invest an appropriate amount of time and energy in work you are asked to complete independently outside of lesson.
- If you loan out any camcorders, cameras and/or tripods you are expected to take care of this equipment as it is your responsibility.
- If you are absent for any reason you should find out what work you may have missed and catch up.

You will be following the **AQA** board of examinations and you can log on to the website for more information regarding the course at <https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/media-studies/a-level/media-studies-7572>

As a student here at Redhill Academy, you will be expected to be an independent learner. This means dedicating extra hours of study every week.

There will be a common deadline task set, normally before the first half term holiday, which will be the first formal assessment of your knowledge. This will help us to determine how you are progressing on the course.

Homework will be set regularly and some tasks (filming, photography and scripting) may need finishing outside of the lesson.

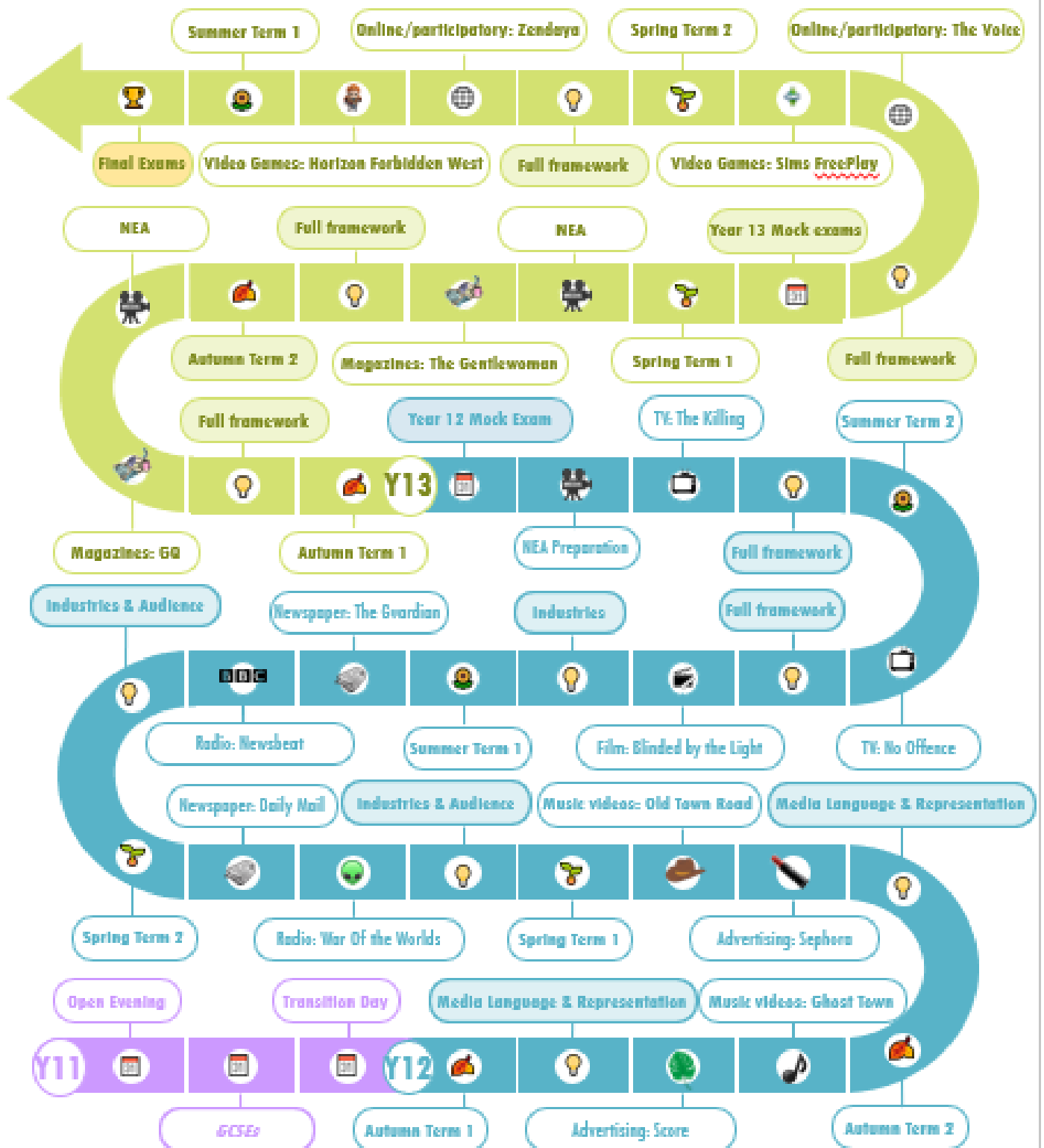
Deadlines for NEA must be met, but if there is a problem please contact your teacher **BEFORE** the deadline.

# Your Learning Journey

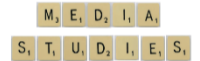
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Below is a map of the topics and media texts you will be exploring during your time in Year 12 and Year 13. Your course will cover a range of topic areas including: advertising & marketing, music videos, newspapers, radio, film to mention just a few.

## A Level Media Studies Learning Journey 2023-25



## Introduction to Media



This subject is designed to be studied over two years.

A-level exams in Media Studies include questions that allow students to demonstrate their ability to:

- recall information
- draw together information from different areas of the specification
- apply their knowledge and understanding in practical and theoretical contexts
- analyse critically and compare how media products, including products outside the commercial mainstream, construct and communicate meanings through the interaction of media language and audience response
- use and reflect critically upon a range of complex theories of media studies and use specialist subject specific terminology appropriately in a developed way
- debate critically key questions relating to the social, cultural, political and economic role of the media through sustained discursive writing.

You will be required to sit TWO formal examinations at the end of the course and you will also submit Non-exam assessment (NEA). You will find an outline of each exam and the NEA below.

EXAM – Media One

### Media One

#### What's assessed

Section A will focus on Media Language and Media Representations. Questions in this section will test the following forms:

- advertising and marketing
- music video.

Section B will focus on Media Industries and Media Audiences. Questions in this section can test any two of the following forms:

- radio
- newspapers
- film (industries only).

#### How it's assessed

- Written exam: 2 hours
- 84 marks
- 35% of A-level

#### Questions

- A range of questions relating to an unseen source and Close Study Products.
- Two essay questions (20 marks), one of which is an extended response question.

## Media Two

### What's assessed

Questions will focus on the in-depth media forms of television, magazines and online, social and participatory media/video games.

### How it's assessed

- Written exam: 2 hours
- 84 marks
- 35% of A-level

### Questions

- One medium length unseen analysis question.
- Three essay questions (25 marks), one of which is an extended response question and one of which is a synoptic question.

## NON-EXAM ASSESSMENT

### Non-exam assessment: Creating a cross-media production

#### What's assessed

- Application of knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework.
- Ability to create media products.

#### How it's assessed

- A choice of one of six annually changing briefs, set by AQA.
- 60 marks
- 30% of A-level
- Assessed by teachers
- Moderated by AQA

#### Tasks

Students produce:

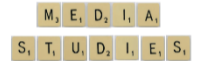
- a statement of intent
- a cross-media production made for an intended audience.

### Assessment objectives

The exams and non-exam assessment will measure how students have achieved the following assessment objectives.

- **AO1:** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media and contexts of media and their influence on media products and processes.
- **AO2:** Apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to:
  - analyse media products, including in relation to their contexts and through the use of academic theories
  - evaluate academic theories
  - make judgements and draw conclusions.
- **AO3:** Create media products for an intended audience, by applying knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to communicate meaning.

## Subject content



A-level Media Studies engages students in the in-depth study of media products in relation to the **four** areas of the theoretical framework:

- media language
- media representation
- media industries
- media audiences

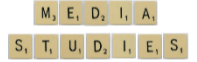
Students are required to study media products from all of the following media forms:

- television
- film
- radio
- newspapers
- magazines
- advertising and marketing
- online, social and participatory media
- video games
- music video

For each of these areas, the exam board will specify one or two media texts to be studied within the exam series. These specified texts are referred to as **CLOSE STUDY PRODUCTS** or **CSPs**. Here is the list of **CLOSE STUDY PRODUCTS** for examination in 2024. You will study all of these during your time in Year 12 and sit a mock examination at the end of the academic year.

Media One		
1965	<b>Advertising &amp; Marketing</b> Score	<b>Paper 1 Section A</b> Media Language, Representations
2021?	<b>Advertising &amp; Marketing</b> Sephora, Black Beauty is Beauty	<b>Paper 1 Section A</b> Media Language, Representations
1981	<b>Music Video</b> Ghost Town <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZ2oXzrti4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZ2oXzrti4</a>	<b>Paper 1 Section A</b> Media Language, Representations
2019	<b>Music Video</b> Old Town Road (Official Movie) Lil Nas X, featuring Billy Ray Cyrus <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2Qv5jzm3j8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2Qv5jzm3j8</a>	<b>Paper 1 Section A</b> Media Language, Representations
1938	<b>Radio</b> War of the Worlds	<b>Paper 1 Section B</b> Media Industries, Audiences
1973-present	<b>Radio</b> Newsbeat	<b>Paper 1 Section B</b> Media Industries, Audiences
1896-present	<b>Newspaper</b> Daily Mail	<b>Paper 1 Section B</b> Media Industries, Audiences
1821-present	<b>Newspaper</b> The Guardian	<b>Paper 1 Section B</b> Media Industries, Audiences
2019	<b>Film</b> Blinded by the Light	<b>Paper 1 Section B</b> Media Industries ONLY

## Helpful Books



Hendry, S and Stevenson, E (2018) AQA Media Studies for A Level Year 1: Illuminate Publishing

Hendry, S and Stevenson, E (2018) AQA Media Studies for A Level Year 2: Illuminate Publishing

Probert, D and Graham, A. (2008). *Advanced Media Studies*. Philip Allan: Oxfordshire

Branston, G and Stafford, R. (2010). *The Media Student's Book 5th Edition*. Routledge: Oxon

O'Sullivan, T, Dutton, B and Philip, R. (2003). *Studying the Media*. Hodder Arnold: London

Long, P and Wall, T (2012) Media Studies texts, production, context. Pearson: London

## Useful websites for A Level Students

These are a range of sites where you can revise terminology, read case studies and complete independent research.

<http://davidgauntlett.com/portfolio/making-media-studies/>

<http://www.mediastudentsbook.com/>

<http://mediaknowall.com>

<http://media.edusites.co.uk/>

<http://www.mediauk.com/>

<http://www.bbfc.co.uk/>

<http://www.barb.co.uk/>

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/home>

## Newspapers

<http://www.independent.co.uk/>

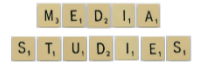
<https://inews.co.uk/>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/index.html>

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/>

# Key Vocabulary



## Anchorage

Fixing of meaning e.g. the copy text anchors (i.e. fixes to one spot) the meaning of an image (for instance, a single rose, that could be used for an ad for anything from a dating agency to a funeral home) in a print advertisement

## Antagonist

The character whose function in a plot is to oppose the protagonist. In straightforward hero's journey plots (most action adventures), the antagonist can be referred to as the villain. However, in character drama, the antagonist might not be a "bad" character, just someone who stands between the protagonist and his/her goals.

## Audience

The recipients of a media text, or the people who are intended to read or watch or play or listen to it. A great deal of media studies work is concerned with the effects a text may have on an audience.

## Binary Opposition

The contrast between two mutually exclusive concepts or things that creates conflict and drives a narrative e.g. good/evil, day/night, male/female, presence/absence, old/young

## Code

A system of signs which can be decoded to create meaning. In media texts, we look at a range of different signs that can be loosely grouped into the following:

technical codes - all to do with the way a text is technically constructed - camera angles, framing, typography etc

verbal codes - everything to do with language -either written or spoken

symbolic codes - codes that can be decoded on a mainly connotational level - all the things which draw upon our experience and understanding of other media texts, our cultural frame of reference.

## Connotation

Way in which meaning is created —

Connote = meaning by association, the deeper meaning (e.g. red connotes anger, passion, love, danger)

## Convention

The widely recognised way of doing something - this has to do with content, style and form e.g. the conventions of music video

they are the same length as the song (somewhere around 4 minutes, say)

they present the band, who look as though they are singing

they have lots of fast edits



## Demographic

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Factual characteristics of a population sample, e.g. age, gender, race, nationality, income, disability, education.

## Denotation

Way in which meaning is created —

Denote = literal or surface meaning e.g. red is the colour of a flower

## Enigma

A question that is not immediately answered and thus draws an audience into a text eg. a body is discovered at the beginning of a tv detective drama. The killer's identity is an enigma. We watch to find out who the killer is.

## Genre

A way of categorising a media text according to its form, style and content. This categorisation is useful for producers (who can utilise a genre's conventions) and audiences (who can utilise their expectations of the genre) alike

## Ideology

This is a complex concept - in its basic form it is a set of ideas or beliefs which are held to be acceptable by the creators of a media text. For example, a text might be described as having a feminist ideology, meaning it promotes the idea that women are the equal of men and should not be discriminated against on the grounds of gender.

## Institution

A formal organization (with its own set of rules and behaviours) that creates and distributes media texts

## Intertextuality

The influence that media texts have on each other. Sometimes this is the result of direct cross-references (e.g. music mash ups) or indirect (the way gossip news items regulate the way we view a star's performance)

## Narrative

The way in which a story, or sequence of events, is put together within a text. All media texts have some sort of narrative, from a single photographic image to a sports report to a feature film.

Narrative may be reduced to one simple equation which is equilibrium - disequilibrium - new equilibrium

## Preferred Reading

The meaning of a text which the producers intended. The opposite of 'preferred reading' is 'aberrant reading', such as when people deliberately interpret a text (the Bible is the source of a lot of mixed messages) to further their political agenda rather than the author's original intent

## Protagonist

The character who drives the narrative forward, through the choices they make and the actions they take

## Representation

The way in which the media "re-presents" the world around us in the form of signs and codes for audiences to read.

## Signs & Signification

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**Sign** - a symbol which is understood to refer to something other than itself. This may be very simple - think of a "No Entry" road sign. It may get more complicated when reading media texts, where a sign might be the bright red coat that a character is wearing (which signals that they are dangerous)

**Signification** - the process of reading signs (see denotation and connotation)

### Star

A person who has become so famous, both for doing their job (actor, sport player) and appearing in many sorts of media, that their image is instantly recognisable as a sign, with a whole range of meanings or significations eg - David Beckham's image represents a whole raft of meanings: England, football, wealth, Posh, success, fashion victim, expertise, sexuality etc...

Britney Spears is also a star but her image signifies physical fitness, blonde (+associated stereotypical characteristics), singing, dancing, sexuality, fashion etc...

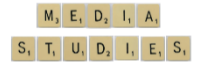
A star's image becomes a readily recognised sign that is used in many different media forms - think of where you have seen pictures of Britney and Becks. Stars can use the fact that their image has meaning by allowing it to be used for advertising purposes.

### Stereotype

Stereotypes are negative (usually) representations of people that rely on preconceived ideas about the group that person is perceived as belonging to. It is assumed that an individual shares personal characteristics with other members of that group e.g. blondes are all stupid, accountants are all boring.

Although using stereotypes saves a lot of explanation within a text, it can be a very lazy method of characterisation. Stereotypes may be considered dangerous, as they encourage audiences to think large groups of people are all the same, and often have the same negative characteristics.

# Summer Task



## Task One

Read the following information about our first area of study – SEMIOTICS.

Semiotics asks questions about how meanings in media texts are created OR constructed.

### SEMIOTICS

Semiotics is also called semiology, and we can define it as the study of signs, or of the social production of meaning by sign systems. Drawing largely on the work of the linguists Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce and Roland Barthes, semiotics argues that verbal language is just one of the many systems of meaning. These include gesture, clothing etc. which can be studied like verbal languages.

### How do these languages, or sets of representations, work?

Language is both constructed and inherited, by people using it within existing cultures, to produce meanings. Things and events in themselves do not have inherent meaning. Of course, they exist. But neither they, nor the ways we describe a photograph or even perceive them, are ever experienced raw or unmediated. It is the ways that cultures, through their changing use of language, have 'agreed' to perceive, and then to name, things and events that determines how they are defined.

Semiotics used the term signs to describe the ways that meanings are produced. Signs have two characteristics:

- **First**, a sign has physical form, called the signifier. This might be a haircut, a traffic light etc.
- **Second**, a sign refers to something other than itself. This is called the signified and it is important to grasp that this is a concept, not a real thing in the world.




### Denotation and Connotation

Signs, then, signify, or **denote** different aspects of our experience.

However, signs also **connote**, or link as well as define things. They may link things by association with broader cultural concepts and values.

The word 'red' denotes a certain part of the colour spectrum. Broadly it can be used to describe blood, fires and sunsets. This perhaps indicates why, in certain cultures, the colour and the word have gathered connotations of fierceness, passion and danger.

Let's look in more detail at how semiotics has explored visual representation systems, as well as words. Key distinctions can be made between **iconic**, **indexical**, **arbitrary** and **symbolic** signs.

1. **Arbitrary signs** – there is no necessary resemblance between the signifier and the signified. For example, Spoken and written language are arbitrary. TREE = 
2. **Iconic signifiers** – always resemble what they signify. There is a physical similarity between a photograph/drawing and the real object.  
3. **Indexical signs** – used to describe signifiers that act as a kind of evidence: smoke of fire; sweat of effort; spots of measles etc.
4. **Symbolic signs** – used to describe visual signs. Flags are nearly always symbolic. Crowns and the colour purple are symbolic of the monarchy.

## Codes

So, signs, far from 'naturally' just 'labelling' the real world, are never as 'natural' as they often seem. The choice of green for the traffic sign meaning 'GO' could be replaced by pink, if that were the agreed colour for 'Go'.

It is worth emphasising the broad **cultural or social agreement** needed for meaning to be produced. We learn **to read signs** in relation to wider systems of meaning, to which the term codes is often given.

Paradoxically, it is because signs have to be employed by us, the 'readers' or 'users', to produce meanings at all that they are inherently ambiguous or unstable. In this process of being socially used and often shared by many people the meanings of signs are neither **fixed** nor single, but **polysemic**, or capable of having several meanings.

One way in which control is attempted over the ways potentially disruptive polysemy or ambiguity of visual images, especially for news purpose, is through the use of captions or commentary. Semiotics calls this **anchoring**, a process which tries to select and therefore control the meaning which could legitimately be made by a reader. Think of it as similar to the way that an anchor tries to limit the movement of a

## Task Two

Test your understanding of semiotics by answering the questions below.

1. Define semiotics

Semiotics is \_\_\_\_\_

2. A word which means a sign is capable of having several meanings.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Define the term signifier.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. This visual sign will usually represent another concept.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. A process which tries to select and therefore control the meaning which could legitimately be made by a reader.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Used to describe signifiers that act as a kind of evidence: smoke of fire; sweat of effort; spots of measles etc.

\_\_\_\_\_

7. There is no necessary resemblance between the signifier and the signified.

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Always resembles what it signifies

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Refers to something other than itself. This is a concept, not a real thing in the world.

\_\_\_\_\_

### TASK THREE

Watch the following clip to help cement your understanding of semiotics.

Which TWO theorists are named in the video? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

[https://youtu.be/zVM7e\\_iyh3Y](https://youtu.be/zVM7e_iyh3Y)

## Task Four

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Look at the following advert. The text is a skyscraper advert for a BBC TV drama based on the work of the author Phillip Pullman.

To the right of the advert, label the signifiers. Remember: a sign can be anything from a colour, a gesture, a word – anything that helps to create or build meaning.



## Task Four

Complete the table on the next page. Use your understanding of semiotics, the key vocabulary terms and your analytical brain/common sense to help you. Look up anything as necessary.

Thinking Point	Notes
<p>What do you notice about the <b>layout</b> of the advert? Can you identify any <b>binary oppositions</b>?</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> Complete a quick look up of Levi Strauss binary oppositions to help you.</p>	
<p>How is the <b>genre</b> of the TV programme established in this advert?</p> <p>Look up the meaning of genre if necessary.</p>	
<p>How does the advert help to build the <b>expectations</b> of the <b>audience</b>? Are there any signs which help to create anticipation about <b>HOW</b> the <b>narrative</b> might develop?</p>	
<p>How are each of the characters <b>represented</b> in the advert?</p> <p>Think about positioning, body language, gestural codes, costuming.</p>	
<p>How is colour used in the advert?</p> <p>How do these colours help to create meaning in the advert? What could they <b>signify</b> to the audience?</p>	
<p>How does the tagline help to <b>anchor</b> the meaning of the advert for the audience? What does it reinforce in terms of establishing genre and characterisation?</p>	





