6.2 The Media: Representations of Age, Class, Gender, Ethnicity and Disability: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Write full sentences for questions worth 4 marks or more. Where asked, use Item A. Use sociological vocabulary and name relevant perspectives or studies where appropriate.

1 Compare briefly uses and gratifications theory with the hypodermic syringe model in terms of their view of audience activity and provide one practical implication for media producers from uses and gratifications.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

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2 Item B: A short hypothetical research summary. "A study interviewed 30 viewers from the same city about reactions to a TV drama about teenage gangs. Middle-class viewers tended to interpret the drama as 'sensationalist' and blamed media bias, while working-class viewers emphasised 'real social problems' shown in the drama and described it as 'accurate'." Using Item B and your own knowledge, analyse how reception analysis helps explain these differing readings.

Using Item B and your own knowledge, analyse how reception analysis helps explain the differing readings of the same TV drama by middle-class and working-class viewers.

(Total for Question 2 is 10 marks)

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3 Item C: An invented polling summary. "A survey of 1,000 residents in a large UK town found 62% felt 'young people are becoming more anti-social', and 70% said they heard about youth crime 'mostly' through local news reports. The local newspaper often ran front-page stories linking youth groups to moped thefts." Using Item C and your own knowledge, evaluate how far sociologists would agree that the media are responsible for creating negative public attitudes towards young people.

(Total for Question 3 is 12 marks)

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Mark scheme · 6.2 The Media: Representations of Age, Class, Gender, Ethnicity and Disability: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies contrast in audience activity, e.g. uses and gratifications sees active audiences choosing media, hypodermic sees passive audiences being directly affected **B1**

develops contrast, e.g. uses and gratifications focuses on motives and needs, hypodermic focuses on direct effects **B1**

gives practical implication, e.g. producers should research audience needs and produce targeted content to meet gratifications **B1**

develops implication, e.g. targeted marketing and genre tailoring follows from understanding specific audience uses **B1**

Answer: Uses and gratifications treats audiences as active, selecting media to meet needs, while the hypodermic model treats audiences as passive recipients of powerful messages. A practical implication from uses and gratifications is that producers should research audience motives and create targeted content or marketing to meet specific gratifications, for example tailoring shows for relaxation or social identity.

Question 2

Level 1 Simple statements about audience differences with limited reference to reception analysis or Item B. **1-3**

Level 2 Clear explanation of how social background can lead to different readings, with some use of Item B and relevant reception analysis concepts. **4-7**

Level 3 Developed analysis linking reception analysis theory, social position, cultural capital and interpretive communities to the examples in Item B, with well-chosen supporting knowledge and implications. **8-10**

Indicative content:

- Reception analysis sees meaning as produced by audiences, not simply encoded by producers; viewers interpret texts differently according to social background.
- Cultural capital and life experiences shape what viewers notice and how they interpret representation; middle-class viewers may have different expectations and be more likely to critique media bias.
- Working-class viewers may read the drama as realistic because it reflects lived experience or local concerns; this is an example of preferred versus oppositional readings depending on social context.
- Research methods used in reception studies include qualitative interviews and focus groups, as in Item B, which reveal individual interpretations and group patterns.
- Reception analysis highlights that disagreements about realism or sensationalism are not just about accuracy but about differing social positions and interpretive frameworks.

Question 3

Level 1 Simple assertions about media influence with little sociological support, or a brief description of the item with minimal analysis. **1-3**

Level 2 Developed explanation of one or two sociological perspectives or studies supporting or challenging the claim, with some use of Item C. **4-6**

Level 3 Clear evaluation using competing perspectives, including evidence from Item C and relevant studies, and consideration of alternative causes of public attitudes. **7-9**

Level 4 A well-balanced, sustained evaluation that weighs multiple sociological perspectives and evidence, assesses the strength of alternative explanations, and reaches a supported conclusion about the media's role. **10-12**

Indicative content:

- Arguments that support media responsibility: moral panic theory (Cohen) and evidence in Item C that most people hear about youth crime via local news and correlate media coverage with fear.
- Hypodermic-type views may explain direct media effects on public attitudes, and agenda-setting theory suggests heavy news focus makes an issue appear more important.
- Studies showing media exaggeration of youth crime and stereotyped representations can fuel fear and calls for control, consistent with the polling results in Item C.
- Counterarguments: two-step flow and uses and gratifications suggest media influence is mediated and audiences select and interpret messages; people may be influenced more by local opinion leaders than directly by news.
- Structural and social factors: real increases in certain crimes, economic decline, cuts to youth services, or experiences with local youth may shape attitudes independently of the media.
- Methodological cautions: polling data may reflect survey framing, and media coverage might respond to public concern rather than create it; correlation in Item C does not prove causation.
- Perspectives: Marxist or New Right explanations could emphasise different causes, for example political agendas or social breakdown respectively; interactionism and reception studies stress varied readings among social groups.
- Conclusion should weigh the evidence and may argue that the media contribute significantly to negative public attitudes, but are not the sole cause; alternative social factors and mediated audience responses also matter.

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