For media **language**, you should:
- analyse and explain the combination of elements to create meaning using **semiotics**
- study a range of newspapers to become familiar with the **generic conventions** of print and online newspapers, looking at variations, change over time, **hybridity** and challenging/subverting conventions
- compare a range of print and online newspapers in order to understand the relationship between media language and technology
- analyse and explain examples of **intertextuality**
- analyse and explain the way media language incorporates viewpoints and **ideologies**
- practise applying the ideas of Barthes, Todorov, Levi-Strauss, Neale and Baudrillard in analysing newspapers
- analyse and explain media language in newspapers in terms of media contexts.

For media **representations**, you should:
- analyse and explain how selection and combination create representations of events, issues, individuals and social groups
- analyse and explain how news makes claims about **realism** and constructs versions of reality
- analyse and explain the impact of the media industry and social, cultural and historical contexts on how producers choose to represent events, issues, individuals and social groups
- analyse and explain positive and negative uses of **stereotyping**
- analyse and explain how social groups may be under-represented or misrepresented
- analyse and explain how representations, particularly those that systematically reinforce values, attitudes and beliefs about the world across many representations, invoke **discourses** and ideologies, and **position audiences**
- suggest how audience response and interpretation reflects social, cultural and historical circumstances
- apply the ideas of Hall, Gauntlett, Butler, Van Zoonen, hooks and Gilroy in analysing newspapers.

Semiotics: The study of signs. (See Barthes in the Academic Theories section at: www. hoddereducation.co.uk/ myrevisionnotesdownloads.)

Generic conventions: The shared understandings of what elements fit in which genres.

Genre hybridity: The stable mixing of different genres in one product.

Intertextuality: Media products (texts) that refer to other media products.

Ideologies: Sets of beliefs, values and assumptions shared by a social group and embedded in social, cultural, political and economic institutions. Usually thought to reflect the interests of powerful groups. Consumerism, freedom, equality and individualism are often considered dominant ideologies in free market capitalist societies as they reflect the economic basis of these societies.

Realism: Realism is the set of conventions by which audiences accept a representation as 'real' or 'realistic'. There are different sets of rules for different genres and for different media forms, and there are many different forms of realism.

Stereotyping: A commonly repeated generalisation about a group, event or institution that carries judgements, either positive or negative, and assumes any example of this group, event or institution will fit the stereotype. This generalisation is inaccurate because it is an over-simplification, even if it is based in reality. It can refer to a representation that comprises a simple stereotyped characteristic rather than a complex and individualised set of characteristics.

Discourses: A system of shared knowledge embedded in social institutions, such as medicine, that exercise power over people.

Positioning audiences: How products try to put their audiences in particular positions. This might be emotional positioning (e.g. making them feel fear or sympathy), cognitive positioning (how they think about representations in the products), social positioning (e.g. as males or females) or cultural positioning (e.g. being positioned as British or American).

Exam tip

The specification lists the subject content on pages 23–27 of the document. Examiners may write their questions using the same wording as the subject content. So, it is important you read through the subject content to check you understand all the wording.

For Question 2, revise media **audiences** and media **industries** as well, as they could be covered in the first bullet point about the media form. However, these two areas will be dealt with under Question 3, as they are best understood in relation to their contexts, which Question 3 is likely to ask about.

> **Exam tip**
>
> You may be asked to discuss media language or representation in either Question 1 or Question 2.
>
> Question 1 in the exam practice above is an **analysis** question, so you may be asked to **apply** your knowledge and understanding of media language or representations when analysing the unseen sources you are given in the exam.
>
> Question 2 in the exam practice above is both a **knowledge** and **understanding** question on the whole media form (the first bullet point) and an *analysis* question based on the sources (the second and third bullet points).

Newspapers

Newspapers: media language

Semiotics – combining elements to create meaning

The media language elements in print newspapers include:

- colour
- layout (e.g. page size, the **masthead**, the **skyline**, use of columns, headlines, image, space)
- images (e.g. photography, graphics, cartoons)
- language use (e.g. **formal and informal registers, mode of address**)
- typography (e.g. **serif and sans-serif typefaces/fonts**, gothic typefaces/fonts).

Media language elements in online newspapers and their social media feeds include all the above, plus:

- elements of specifically webpage layout (e.g. page size and margins, headers and footers, navigation bars, tabs)
- functionality (e.g. hyperlinks, embedded audio/visual content, interactivity)
- media language elements determined by the social media site (e.g. Twitter, Facebook and Instagram house styles).

Semiotics or semiology is the study of signs. There are many different versions of semiology/semiotics, but this need not concern us here. Meaning is created by difference (how one sign is different to another) and combination (how signs are put together, such as words in a sentence).

> **Mode of address**: How a media product addresses its audience. This might be warm and inclusive, or formal and objective, for example, as in tabloid and broadsheet newspapers.
>
> **Serif and sans-serif typefaces/fonts**: Serifs are small ornaments on fonts, sans-serif fonts do not have these so look cleaner and more modern. A typeface is a family of fonts. Arial is a common sans-serif typeface. Times New Roman is a common serif typeface.

> **Masthead**: Often used to describe the title of a printed publication (though technically it is the title above the editorial).
>
> **Skyline**: A line of text or boxes (sometimes called skyboxes) above the masthead promoting a newspaper.
>
> **Formal and informal language registers**: A **formal language register** is used in formal situations, e.g. in a lecture, to communicate information, and may include complex sentences and an elaborate vocabulary. An **informal language register** is used in informal situations, e.g. in a chat with a friend, to communicate the relationship between the participants and uses simple language including slang.

Barthes put forward this theory of the different levels of signs (he called them 'orders') in the 1960s:

- A **sign** consists of a signifier (a word, an image, a sound) and its meaning – the signified.
- The **denotation** of a sign is its literal meaning. For example, the word 'dog' denotes a mammal that barks.
- Denotations signify **connotations** – the associations of the denotation. For example, we need to make up the rather strange word 'dogness' to suggest the thoughts and feelings associated with dogs. Connotations are often expressed as nouns in this way.
- Denotations and connotations are organised into **myths**– the ideological meaning. These make ideology seem 'natural'. For example, an image of a Bulldog might activate a myth of Britishness.

This all sounds complicated, but in practice you simply have to analyse front pages, websites or social media feeds from newspapers by:

- explaining why each key element has been selected (imagine it replaced with the opposite)
- explaining why each key element has been combined with the other elements (especially the **anchorage** effect of written language)
- suggesting the connotations of these combinations
- suggesting the ideologies activated by this media language (see the section on media language – the way media language incorporates viewpoints and ideologies).

Example: the *Sun*'s 'Gotcha' headline

The *Sun* used this headline for the story of an attack on two Argentinian warships during the Falklands Conflict of 1982. It was changed for later editions when the large number of sailors killed became known. The headline is combined with two photographs of Argentinian warships; these are long shots, a detached observer's point of view that tries to minimise any emotional involvement the audience might feel with dead sailors.

The headline implies '*we* got *you*', positioning the audience on the side of the attackers. The slang term 'gotcha' rather than 'got you' connotes a heightened emotional involvement in the attack and triumphant identification with the British armed forces personnel. This one word activates ideologies of nationalism and militarism – the patriotic pride in the military that was aroused in some sections of the population during this controversial conflict.

Imagine the page with the opposite connotations and ideologies. For example, in a pacifist version the headline might read 'Slaughter' and anchor images of grieving relatives.

(The front page may be found at: https://editdesk.wordpress.com/2009/08/28/memorable-headlines-gotcha/).

Sign: Any unit of language that designates an object or phenomenon. It consists of a signifier (a word, an image, a sound) and its meaning – the signified.

Denotation: The literal meaning of a sign.

Connotation: The associations of the denotation. Often expressed as nouns. May vary in their meaning – be 'polysemic'. For example, the sign 'dog' connotes 'dogness' which could mean 'warmth and devotion' or 'fear and danger'.

Myth: The organisation of meanings into commonly repeated forms that express ideology (e.g. the myth of Britishness may be signified by bulldogs, Union Flags, the monarchy, Big Ben).

Anchorage: Use of language to 'anchor' the meaning of an image to suit the purposes of the producer.