N5

National 5 MEDIA

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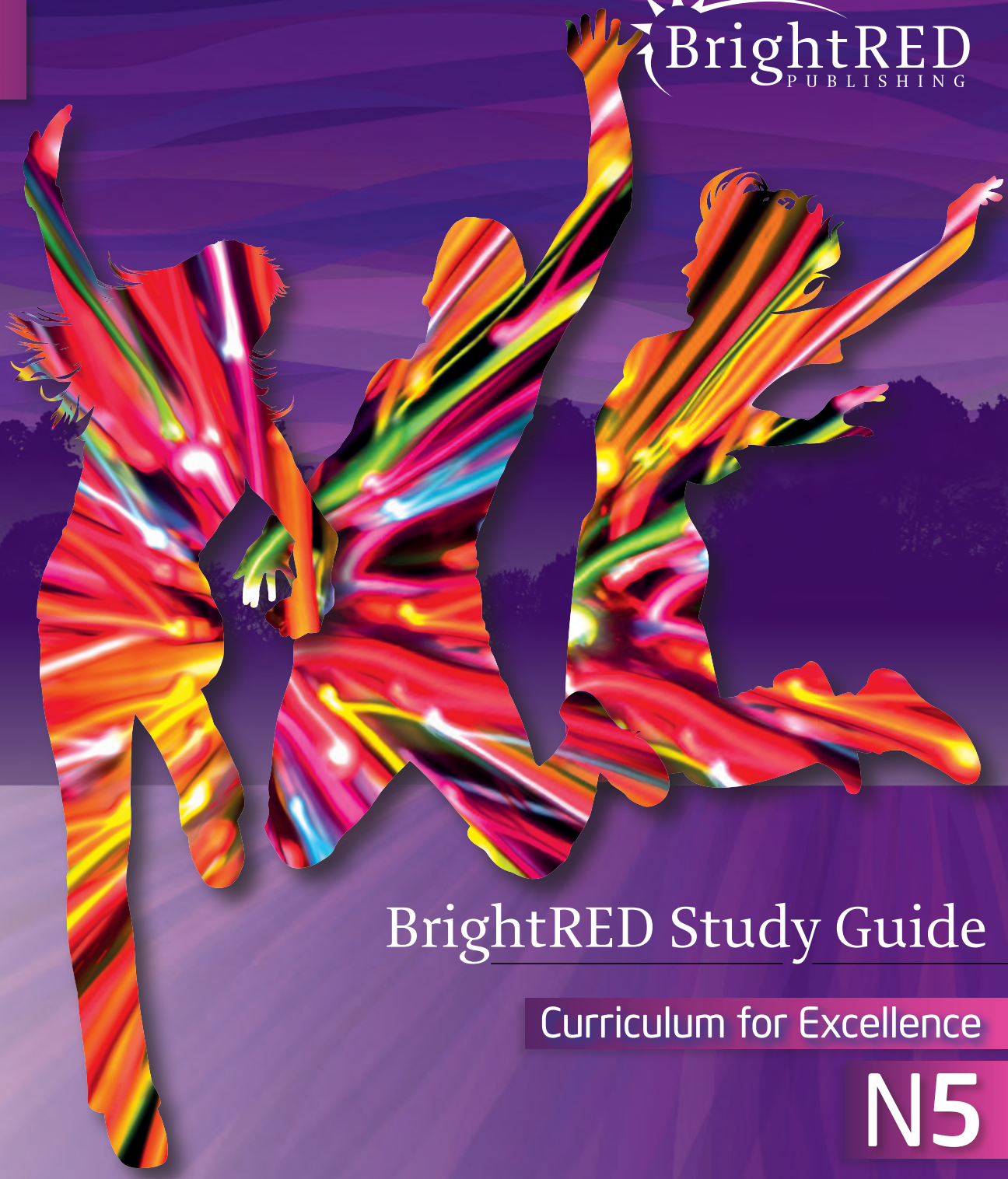

BrightRED Study Guide

Curriculum for Excellence

N5

MEDIA

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INTRODUCING NATIONAL 5 MEDIA

THE ROLE OF MEDIA

WHAT IS MEANT BY MEDIA?

We live, work and play in a world saturated in and dependent upon multiple **forms** of media. It is quite simply central to our lives.

Media comes from the word '**medium**', which refers to the various channels that we use to communicate. 'Media' is the plural of medium (communication) and generally speaking relates to broadcast, print and online media.

What is media studies?

Media studies explores the impact of mass communication on society and this in turn affects how we make sense of our world. Throughout this guide you will learn to explore and analyse the seven key aspects of the course content. There are a range of theories and key ideas which will help you to explore both the impact of society on media and the impact on media from society.

Why it matters.

We live in a world where we are completely dependent on media. The connections between the news industry, ownership and politics are such that they heavily influence what information we are presented with. The power of advertising is such that it can convince us not only to buy into a product but to subscribe to a (potentially unrealistic) lifestyle. It forces us to judge and compare our own lives with an entirely fictional world; constructed by creators who are experts at identifying our fears, insecurities and greatest desires, and then selling us 'a solution' to get us one step closer to our dreams. Entertainment can act as a mirror, reflecting both an ugly and beautiful picture of the world in which we live. It can challenge our beliefs and values, provide an escape and meet our needs. It would be hard to imagine a modern world without, for example, social media. The media is an immense industry, providing employment both directly and indirectly. It is also fun to study!

Beyond the classroom

Many pupils leave school, having completed a media qualification, to pursue a career in the industry. This is a great time to be a media student, as in the last couple of years about 75 per cent of media graduates have gone straight into employment. This is probably both because the industry acts as a gateway to such a variety of opportunities and because there are so many transferable skills associated with the subject that you will be considered a valuable asset!

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN A MEDIA COURSE?

The combination of analysis and production will arm you with an array of useful transferable skills.

Literacy is central to our success in learning. Media literacy requires that you become an expert in communication. Your skills in this area will become highly developed and, if you put in the effort, will give your CV the edge over many others.

Research – both the National 5 and Higher courses involve a considerable amount of research, most notably the planning section of your assignment. However, you will be researching new content and theories all the way through your course.

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Problem solving and creativity. In your assignment you will be required to negotiate a 'brief' and work through a number of institutional and creative problems. You will have to make, justify and evaluate planning decisions based on your research. With a low (or no) budget you will have to stretch your imagination to the limit by coming up with creative solutions (see the Assignment section) to ensure your product is finished to a high standard.

Working with others and leadership. You will need to communicate your plans clearly and concisely to others and learn to give clear and realistic instructions and deadlines. You will have to keep your cool (even if those around you don't) and show others in your group that you are reliable and responsible.

Managing your time and meeting deadlines. You will have to be organised in order to plan your assignment and meet other deadlines you may have, both inside and outside of school. If you are completing a production, you will have to fulfil many roles, both technical and non-technical, from pre-production through to post-production. This will require very tight scheduling and planning deadlines if you are to finish on time. You will have to prioritise and make ruthless decisions and you will learn very quickly to become disciplined in your approach to both your analysis and creation work.

Technical skills. During the analysis parts of the course you will closely examine the use of technical codes, and during the production stage (if you complete your assignment through to a stage of full development) it is very likely that you will have to use technical equipment of some sort. Rather than shy away from this element of the course you should try to learn as much as you can – there are plenty of tutorials on YouTube.

Critical analysis. The skills you will learn during the analysis sections of your course will ensure that you develop the mindset and knowledge to challenge your thinking. You will no longer accept viewpoints presented to you without careful consideration. The world will look a little different from your new, informed perspective.

Communication skills. As mentioned are central to media studies. You will have to employ active listening skills, develop your negotiation and persuasive skills, hone your people skills and learn to write clearly and convincingly.

Confidence! Your confidence will increase when you work with others to achieve a shared goal. If you have the chance, you should volunteer to act (or at least appear as a supporting artist), agree to be interviewed or offer to do some interviewing. This will really be a big boost to your confidence. Even if it feels daunting at first.

Routes of progression

There are many routes of progression once you have completed a National 5 award in media. If you have enjoyed the course, you could progress to Higher Media. There are numerous college courses and university degree programmes that you can consider. The most obvious are film, radio, television and journalism, although there are many other areas of creative media industries. Additionally, you could consider working in marketing, advertising, public relations, publishing, theatre and arts, the local government or teaching. Most large businesses will employ someone who is media savvy to deal with the public-relations (as well as create press releases) in their communications department.

ONLINE

Visit the Digital Zone at www.brightredbooks.net/subjects for tips on how to enhance your research skills; master time management; establish a good set of guidelines for group work and links to further media education and employers in Scotland.

DON'T FORGET

Even if you will be producing your own assignment, you should always talk to others about any challenges or creative ideas you may have. Working collaboratively is a great skill or habit to foster. Two (or more) heads are always better than one and some of the best creative projects have been an amalgamation of just that. You could also talk to your teachers or previous pupils about how they overcame obstacles such as no/low budget or juggling media projects with other subjects – you are not alone.

COURSE OUTLINE

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This guide is designed to help support you through your N5 Media Studies course and additionally serve as a good foundation for Higher Media (should you choose to take this route). The contents of the guide closely mirror the content and structure of the course in order to support your class work. You will learn about key aspects by working your way through the chapters. In order to deepen your understanding, you will have to apply your knowledge to unfamiliar content – the online sections are designed to support you to do just that. You do not have to work through the guide in any particular order, but you should complete all of the key aspects before you proceed to other sections as described below.

ABOUT THE COURSE

The National 5 course is made up of two parts – both requiring the same knowledge and understanding and both completely interdependent:

- Creation and production
- Analysis and evaluation

Both components are assessed externally by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) as follows:

1 The Question paper (exam)

2 The Assignment (you will work on this aspect for a substantial part of the year before it is sent away to be assessed)

There are no additional requirements for this course although your teacher may wish you to sit additional units as extra practice. To gain a National 5 award you must pass both parts of the course – your final result will be graded A–D.

Assignment (60 marks)

You will carry out an assignment set by SQA, using a given brief. There are two parts to this – a planning portfolio and a development stage where you will produce your content. You will also select elements of your content that you feel worked particularly well and evaluate areas that perhaps didn't work so well. All of this is described in detail in the relevant sections.

The exam (60 marks)

The exam component is two hours long and consists of five questions that allow you to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the key aspects of media literacy by applying them to content you have studied and by analysing an unseen print text so that the examiner can assess your understanding in an unfamiliar **context**. All of the sections in this book have been designed to show you how each key aspect may be presented to you, and assessed, in the exam. If you complete all of the practice questions on a regular basis, with a range of different texts, you will be very well prepared for the exam.

The language of media studies may be unfamiliar to you now, but you will soon get used to it: there is a glossary of key terms at the back of the book to help you. Although it may feel like hard work, you must always stop and further explore anything you don't understand before you proceed. The key aspects are relatively simple to grasp but a deeper understanding can only come from applying your knowledge and understanding in an unfamiliar context (in other words to unfamiliar texts). This will take time and commitment from you but should be a very rewarding experience and time well spent as you see your efforts reflected in the final examination results.

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The seven 'key aspects' that we teach in media are: categories, language, narrative, representation, institution, society and audience.

The first four (categories, language, narrative and representation) are what we call content-based key aspects – they all relate to the content evident in the text you are looking at. The last three (institution, society and audience) require you to consider context. You will look beyond the immediate text and consider, for example, the influencing factors or circumstances of the creating company; or the way a text is shaped by audience or reflects society in some way. You should work through these chapters carefully to make sure you understand the concepts and then use the suggestions as a guide to help you to put your knowledge into practice. The key aspects are explored in as much detail as space allows, and online content and tasks will ensure consolidation and development of your skills.

The key aspects work together to create meaning and purpose and your first job should be to learn what they are; they will become the tools you need in order to analyse and create content.

Key Aspect	Example
Categories	**Genre**, purpose, **tone**, medium, form, style
Language	Medium/Form-specific technical codes, **cultural codes**, **anchorage**
Narrative	Medium/Form-specific structures, codes, **conventions**
Representation	Selection and portrayal, **stereotypes**, **non-stereotypes**, cultural assumptions, **ideologies**

Key Aspects – Contexts	Example
Audience	Target audience, preferred reading, different audience reactions
Institution	Internal factors, external factors
Society	Time, place (for example, facts, information, ideas, historical portrayals, circumstances, events, politics, technology or any other societal factors relevant to the time the content was made, consumed or set) Adapted from National 5 Course Specification, SQA, August 2017 edition, version 2.0

ROLE OF THE MEDIA

Central to the study of media is understanding the role of the media in society. Even if you have studied media in your English class previously you may not have considered the 'bigger picture'. There are lots of theories associated with this aspect of media – some of the more common ones are included in these sections, and suggestions for further study are online. Although these theories will at first be unfamiliar, they are interesting and will really help you understand how media content 'works'.

The roles of the media that we study in National 5 media are:

'Meeting Needs – to entertain, educate or inform.

Influencing attitudes and behaviours both intentional and unintentional

For a particular purpose: profit, self-interest or public service'. (SQA).

These are all explained fully in the relevant sections.

Throughout the course you will be introduced to a range of different texts to illustrate all of the above – they may include film posters; special interests; health and lifestyle; advertisements (for example, for fashion, beauty and cosmetics, cars, music and technology); TV dramas; news items.

THINGS TO DO AND THINK ABOUT

Before you begin, take the time to familiarise yourself with both the key aspects and the role of the media concepts listed above.

DON'T FORGET

This is a guide; your teacher will want to teach you using their own choice of texts and will have lots of additional material to prepare you for your exam. The guide is designed to consolidate your knowledge and help you to independently deepen your knowledge of media studies.

ONLINE

To get the most out of this guide you should do all the extension work online at www.brightredbooks.net/subjects. Some of the online material is challenging and is excellent preparation for your exam and beyond. Good luck!

NARRATIVE 1

OVERVIEW

Not all stories are as original as you think! When we are analysing a text it is useful to be able to recognise certain patterns hidden within the narrative. A recognisable structure helps us to make sense of the order of the information presented, and helps us identify key scenes or turning points in the plot.

At N5 level, it is expected that you will be able to use a number of different approaches to help you analyse complex media content in a sophisticated and thorough manner. Remember that you need this skill for *both* parts of the course. Once you have had a go at analysing texts and can begin to recognise structures, you will then be in a better position to apply these structures to your own media content. This section applies, on the whole, to moving image texts.

ACTIVITY

With a partner, take a moment to discuss the difference between a **story** and a **narrative**.

Tzvetan Todorov.

TODOROV

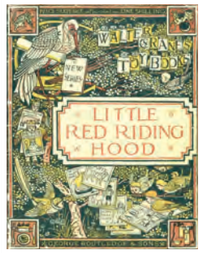
The narrative can often follow a pattern identified by Bulgarian philosopher, Tzvetan Todorov.

In a nutshell, Todorov recognised that film narrative exists as a process of cause and effect (a bit like our own lives) and categorised the stages as follows:

Equilibrium	Normality. Everything is calm. "Once upon a time in a land far away..."
Disruption	An interruption of that normality by a character or event.
Recognition	That disruption has taken place.
Repair	An attempt to repair the disruption.
New Equilibrium	A resolution and return to a new normality.

ACTIVITY

In order to help familiarise yourself with Todorov's narrative theory, study the example below, then try it out on a simple story that you a familiar with.

Equilibrium	Disruption	Recognition	Repair	New Equilibrium
Little Red Riding Hood sets off to see her Grandma.	Big Bad Wolf stalks her through woods.	Little Red Riding Hood notices Grandma looks very strange.	Hunter rescues Little Red Riding Hood and cuts open wolf to reveal an unharmed Grandma.	Everything goes back to normal and they all lived...
				

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Recognising Narrative Structure

It is harder to recognise this structure in a longer text. Not all films have *linear narratives*, meaning they are not always presented in the order in which they happen. Some stories use *flashbacks* (perhaps to reveal back-story), *subplots* (to create a more complex story), or different *viewpoints* (which place the audience with a certain character giving them an insight into their world).

ACTIVITY

Can you think of examples of films that use these techniques? What was the purpose of using that particular narrative structure? Consider how you could have told the same story differently.

Sometimes switching between different characters can create fear and suspense in the audience as they know what is going to happen next, whereas the character doesn't. All of this can make it tricky to identify the different stages of narrative. It may help to first jot down the most important points of the *main storyline* on separate post-it notes, then try grouping them into the five stages. It is not an exact science so don't lose heart if it takes a while to get the hang of it. Get into the habit of filling in the template provided online as you watch new films/TV programmes or advertisements.

IDENTIFYING CHARACTER TYPE

Russian critic **Vladimir Propp** (1895–1970) identified a number of character roles common to most storylines, they are as follows:

Hero	Reacts to the donor and wins the princess.
Princess (and often her father)	The hero deserves her but she is often also sought after by the villain. Often marries the hero at the end of the story.
Villain	Struggles against the hero.
Donor or mentor	Prepares the hero or gives him some magical object.
Helper	Helps the hero in his quest.
False Hero	Takes credit for the heroes action and tries to win the princess.
Dispatcher	Sends hero off on his journey.

EXAMPLE:

In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, the characters fit quite well into Propp's theory:

The Villain – Lord Voldmort
The Hero – Harry Potter
The Donor – The Phoenix who provides tools such as a 'sorting hat'
The Helper – Ron Weasley or Hermione Granger
The Princess – Ginny Weasley (and her father, Arthur Weasley, and Dumbledore, who acts as a father figure)
The Dispatcher – Moaning Myrtle, helps show Harry the way
The False Hero – Professor Gilderoy Lockhart

THINGS TO DO AND THINK ABOUT

Not all texts have all characters and some will double up and fit into more than one category. Directors or **institutions** love to subvert the narrative (change our expectations of characters or plot): it keeps us watching.

Now try to list as many character types from films or stories you know well.

ONLINE

For practice, download the **worksheet** at www.brightredbooks.net and use it for any texts that you are studying.

DON'T FORGET

Remember you can do this to make your own stories more interesting.

VIDEO LINK

Watch the clip at www.brightredbooks.net for a less predictable example of new equilibrium!

DON'T FORGET

If you are planning your own short film or trailer etc, consider planning your characters using Propp's theory. Remember that this will satisfy the audience as they will recognise the narrative structure to one that is familiar to them. They expect it!

DON'T FORGET

Remember, in media studies, you have think about narrative not in isolation, but consider the effect it has on context: both audience and institution.

ONLINE TEST

Head to www.brightredbooks.net to test yourself on narrative.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

CASE STUDY 1 – YOUTUBE AND VLOGGING

VLOGGING

A vlog is a blog containing video content. It usually involves an element of self-expression and is produced in the *form* of personal stories, or video diaries, information or tutorials. Popular examples include beauty vlogging, lifestyle vlogs or health and fitness vlogs.

Vlogging is big business and revenue is created predominantly in the form of advertising. This is because the above types of vlogs usually endorse certain products. Content is traditionally self-produced and distributed on platforms such as YouTube. When a vlogger reaches a certain number of viewers, advertisers will be keen to advertise before the content begins. The vlogger will receive payment from the advertisers – this can be very lucrative.

Although there are still rules, this type of 'author-created content' does not have the constraints and regulations of content such as film and TV.

ACTIVITY

YouTube has a number of 'Community Guidelines' and policies (such as age restrictions), which, if violated, may result in the removal of content. Research the guidelines for releasing content on YouTube.

EXAMPLE

The following is an extract from YouTube's Violent and Graphic Content policy:

> 'Increasingly, YouTube is becoming an outlet for citizen journalists, documentarians, and other users to publish accounts of what is happening in their daily lives. It is inevitable that some of these videos will contain content that is violent or graphic in nature.
>
> It's not okay to post violent or gory content that's primarily intended to be shocking, sensational, or gratuitous. If a video is particularly graphic or disturbing, it should be balanced with additional context and information. If posting graphic content in a news, documentary, scientific, or artistic context, please be mindful to provide enough information to help people understand what's going on. In some cases, content may be so violent or shocking that no amount of context will allow that content to remain on our platforms. Lastly, don't encourage others to commit specific acts of violence.'

You can see that it is more general than, for example, the BBFC guidelines, which are very detailed, clear and specific. Carefully review the BBFC guidelines and compare with the YouTube policies. There are both similarities and differences.

ACTIVITY

Consider any ways the restrictions could be problematic to someone producing content for YouTube.

YOUTUBE

YouTube has provided opportunities for ordinary people to experience fame since 2005. For the very few who do succeed, the rewards are huge. This has meant that more and more content is being produced in an attempt to stand out from the crowd. The growing trend of releasing daring content in order to gain followers can push people to the extremes. On 26 June 2017, in the pursuit of fame, Pedro Ruiz created the idea for content of a stunt that went horribly wrong. Pedro instructed his girlfriend Monalisa Perez to shoot him at close range. Pedro's only protection – a hardback book. The stunt failed, Pedro was killed instantly, and his expectant girlfriend jailed. The video was never released.

With huge profits to be made for the lucky few, hundreds of thousands continue to publish content of varying genres.

The quality of much of the successful content released on YouTube now could easily rival traditional TV channels. Productions are slick and presenters professional. YouTube has come a long way since the first video of elephants in a zoo was released in June 2005.

ACTIVITY

Watch the first of 12 videos by YouTuber Benjamin Cook (NineBrassmonkeys) 'Anatomy of a YouTuber'.

The video interviews some of the most successful first-generation YouTubers such as Dean Dobbs, Jack Howard, Myles Dyer, Lex Croucher, Ed Blann, Charlie McDonnell, Tom Ridgewell, Chris Kendall, Phil Lester, Liam Dryden, Alex Day and Carrie Hope Fletcher.

This video has hundreds of thousands of views. Use the example to identify genre markers of a typical YouTube video such as direct mode of address and documentary-style content such as interviews, drama and comedy. In addition, you should closely consider the opening scene; the overall quality of production; the identification of any conventions of genre or cross-genres; tone; style; use of language codes such as camera work (movement, angles and distance); continuity or non-continuity editing; sound; music; lighting; cultural codes such as presenter/character accents; costume; representation of the three characters; and any recognisable narrative codes.

Try to identify any aspects of society that are apparent.

Finally, the video discusses the kind of people who produce, watch or engage with YouTube content. This directly relates to audience. How does this type of content meet the needs of the audience?

While working through the key aspects you should be able to draw many similarities from other content you have studied.

ONLINE

Read an article on Pedro Ruiz on www.brightredbooks.net/subjects

VIDEO LINK

Head to the Digital Zone and watch the first ever video to be published on YouTube www.brightredbooks.net/subjects

VIDEO LINK

Watch the video for this activity on the Digital Zone!

ONLINE

Head to www.brightredbooks.net/subjects for an extra activity on vlogging!

THINGS TO DO AND THINK ABOUT

Try to plan and storyboard a YouTube-style vlog of your own. If done well this could be an ideal project for you to develop for your assignment.

Start with considering purpose (to increase the amount of people following your channel, for example) and audience before deciding how you are going to create engaging content. You should storyboard your ideas just in the same way you would any other moving image. Remember to use the conventions that you have identified in the above task to help you with your ideas.

BrightRED Study Guides

Curriculum for Excellence

N5 MEDIA

Alexandra Mattinson

This BrightRED Study Guide is just the thing you need to tackle your course and gain the exam skills essential to succeed at National 5 Media. Written by our trusted author and experienced Media teacher Alexandra Mattinson, this book is packed with brilliant examples, tasks and advice. It is the perfect companion to your studies.

- **Contains all the essential course information, fully up-to-date with SQA course changes,** arranged in easily digestible double-page topic spreads..
- **Designed in full colour, highly illustrated, accessible and engaging** to make sure all that study sticks!
- ***Don't forget!*** pointers offer advice on key facts and on how to avoid common mistakes.
- ***Things to do and think about*** sections at the end of each topic are packed with great activities to boost your skills.
- **A glossary of key terms** helps you really learn and revise important course concepts.

Let BrightRED lead you to success in your National 5 studies and beyond!

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