

A-LEVEL MEDIA OCR SAMPLE ESSAY QUESTION BANK & DISCUSSION POINTS

Paper 1 Media Messages

News, Advertising, Magazines, Music Videos **= questions more suited to Year 13

NEWS Sample Exam Questions on unseen newspaper sources

Two linked in-depth studies that focus on contemporary news in the UK; we explore how and why newspapers and their online counterparts are evolving as media products + the relationship between both online and offline news. Select 2 covers of *The Mail* cover+ 2 covers of *The Guardian*. + 1 full edition of each. News stories should be related, i.e. from the same day.

A Compare and contrast the mode of address to the audience in Sources A and B. [15]

B* *Compare how far the media organisations which produce these products are reflected in the sources. [15]

C** Evaluate the usefulness of relevant academic ideas and arguments in helping your understanding of representation (in source A) [15]

D Analyse the representations in Sources A and B. Use Van Zoonen's concept of patriarchy in your answer. (15)

E Sources A and B cover the same news event but are from different genres of newspaper. How far has genre influenced the media language used in Sources A and B? In your answer you must:

- . outline genre conventions in British newspapers
- . analyse the contrasting use of media language in the sources
- . make judgements and reach conclusions about how far genre has influenced the media language used. [15]

F Explain how the political context in which newspapers are produced, influences their ownership and regulation. Refer to *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mail* newspapers you have studied to support your answer. [10]

G Evaluate the usefulness of **one** of the following in understanding audiences for online newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mail*: **EITHER** Gerbner's cultivation theory **OR** Shirky's 'end of audience' theory. [10]

Newspapers DISCUSSION POINTS & GENERAL QUESTIONS (main focus: Guardian and The Mail)

1. Choose 1 prominent image & do a RAILING analysis. Then do the same with a news story How is the photo/story anchored (headline/caption)?
2. Do you think newspapers manipulate opinion and construct messages or are they purely vehicles to entertain? Which model is more valid: **Hypodermic Needle or Uses & Gratifications**? How do they 'hook' audiences?
3. **How do newspapers reflect the social, political and cultural context in which they appear?
4. **How diverse is the newspaper landscape in the UK? (**hegemony? pluralism?** bias? objectivity? News vs opinion?)
5. How does the selection and presentation of content reflect a newspaper's character, values and ideology? Discuss print and online platforms.
6. How does a paper's **mode of address** appeal to particular audiences (**niche vs mainstream?**). Discuss print and online platforms.
7. **How important is the question of **ownership** in the content of newspapers? How is this reflected? (**Gatekeeping, hegemony**)
8. How have newspapers changed? What has driven these changes? Discuss print and online.
9. What evidence is there to show that traditional broadsheets are undergoing a process of 'tabloidization'? Discuss print and online platforms.
10. How do newspapers use codes and conventions to communicate their messages? (**Show how newspapers construct meaning and communicate messages through the skilful use of codes and conventions**)
11. **Do you think newspapers **reflect or affect** their readers' views?
12. ** Whose views do newspapers mainly reflect and represent? (**Two-Step Flow Model, democratization, Dyer, Prosumer, UGC, participatory & social media**)
13. How have newspapers adapted to take account of changing platforms, social media and changes in consumer habits?
14. What are the main similarities and differences between print and online versions of newspapers? Explain the reasons for these differences.
15. How different from mainstream newspapers are alternative news sites such as BuzzFeed, Vice, Facebook?
16. Compare publications like Private Eye and Huffington Post to more conventional newspapers. Look at other satirical news sites – Daily Mash, The Onion etc. Compare with YouTube alternative news sites such as The Trews, Jonathan Pie
17. How do newspapers respond to the **fragmentation** and the decline of mass audiences? (refer to **Fiske** in your answer)
18. How are newspapers coping with a decline in print advertising revenue?
19. Find examples of how newspapers use **Moral Panics** (Cohen) to divide society and spread mistrust and insecurity. Is there evidence that **Moral Panics** are used to trigger change/ to expose corruption and hypocrisy /prevent change/ protect the interests of elites?
20. Find examples of links between the press, TV and the entertainment industry – why are these links so important?
21. Regulation and control: are press intrusion and invasion of privacy still a problem? (Examples could be Cliff Richard, Princess Diana, Madeleine McCann, Millie Dowler, Meghan Markle, Kate and Prince William) Should the industry be more tightly regulated to prevent unethical practices? Has the Leveson enquiry led to any changes in the behaviour of journalists? (**Refer to Livingstone & Lunt**).
22. **How does a knowledge of **Marx, Gramsci and The Frankfurt School** affect our view of the way newspapers (and the media industry) engage with their audiences?
23. **Evaluate the ideas of the following in the light of work you have done on the news and newspaper industries: **Hesmondhalgh, Livingstone and Lunt; Curran and Seaton**.
24. **Show how **News Values & Chomsky's news filters** apply to the news industry to re-present more than just a factual account of events.

25. Do a radial 'spider' diagram using as much print terminology as possible and explain the effect of certain conventions. How do the C&C's grab the reader?
26. Which particular techniques appeal to a) a mass-market less well-educated readership b) more educated, niche readers?
27. Show the importance of **construction in shaping media narratives and representations in order to suit particular audiences.**
28. Link the newspapers you have studied to **Young and Rubicam's 4Cs model (MARS)**
29. How useful are **Hypodermic and UGT models** in a discussion of newspaper's print and online content?
30. How useful is **Gerbner's Cultivation Theory** in an analysis of these front covers?
31. How useful is **Clay Shirky's ('end of') audience theory** in an analysis of these covers?
32. Look at **Galtung & Ruge's** definitions of what helps editors decide if a story is newsworthy, Which News Values feature most prominently in these covers? (elites, negativity, personalization? Proximity? Expectedness? Unexpectedness?).
33. Discuss the newspapers you have studied in terms of **Stanley Cohen's ideas on Moral Panics**. Do they show evidence of scapegoating and generating division, mistrust, or even hatred and What effect does a creeping sense of insecurity have on users?
34. ****Discuss the newspapers you have studied in terms of Chomsky's 5 news filters (Propaganda Model);** issues of manufactured consent and cultural hegemony? Do they show obvious corporate bias?
35. Compare and contrast the C&Cs in a tabloid and broadsheet front pages. How are they adjusted to match particular audiences?
36. Discuss and compare the representations on 2 front pages.
37. Show how the covers present news events as a 'narrative' – a constructed story to arouse opinion, emotion, controversy and connect to other areas of media interest such as sport, celebrity, TV/film. Mention mode of address, mean world syndrome, conflict and binary opposition.
38. Link the front pages to theories of patriarchy, readings (Hall), connotation, Mulvey & Berger,
39. Look at the how the covers fit into concepts of genre (Neale, Lacey);
40. To what extent does your newspaper feature stereotypes or countertypes?
41. Are there examples of Moral Panics?
42. ****What do the newspapers you have studied tell us about newspaper ownership?**
43. ****What do your newspapers tell us about issues of regulation and control (press complaints post-Leveson enquiry)?**
44. How does the Mail Online hook its audiences? What relationship, if any, is there with the print edition?
45. Analyse the **Mail Online's 'sidebar of shame'**. What do the items have in common in terms of the way women are represented? – look for examples of objectification, body-shaming, women as male fashion accessories, eye-candy, coat-hangers, child-bearers.
46. ****Analyse the Guardian's Online presence. What is the effect of the Guardian's paywall?**
47. Look at related stories in the online edition and see if you can identify differences with the print edition in terms of attracting online audiences and stimulating comment, reaction and participation.
48. Look at the Guardian's Facebook page, Twitter and Instagram feeds – how do they reflect the target readership? Do you think do they give prominence to users' opinions rather than the views of experts? Are there obvious commercial aspects? Do the same as the above for the Mail Online's social network feeds. (You could mention some of the following: **two step flow theory, gatekeeping, citizen journalism, user-generated content, pluralism and democratization**)

PAPER 1 SECTION B ADVERTISING

Prescribed print ads to study: Old Spice, Lucozade, Shelter

SAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

A) EITHER a) Discuss representations of gender in the advertisements you have studied

OR : b) In the adverts you have studied, comment on the use and effect of ONE of the following: layout, typography, mode of address; mise en scene

B) Compare how media language is used in the construction of gender in these advertisements. [10]

Advertising Practical

- 1) Practical: Design your own print ad for a product of your choice. Write 300 words justifying your use of certain codes and techniques in terms of audience, institution and representation.
- 2) Practical: Design either a 30 second radio ad/ or a 30 second TV ad for a product of your choice. Write 300 words justifying your use of certain codes and techniques in terms of audience, institution and representation.
- 3) Practical : make your own print Tv or radio advert for a product aimed at an older demographic. Write 300 words justifying your use of certain codes and techniques in terms of audience, institution and representation.
- 4) Practical: design a print or TV ad for a product aimed at a younger audience
Write 300 words justifying your use of certain codes and techniques in terms of audience, institution and representation.

Advertising Research

- 1) Research: Why are some adverts banned? Find examples. What is the role of the ASA (Advertising Standards Authority) Should adverts ever be banned? Give examples of the ASA interventions
- 2) Research the work of 1 or 2 ad agencies. (e.g. Adam and Eve, Abbott Mead Vickers BBDO, McCann). In what ways is their work distinctive and unique?
- 3) Research: What are the features of a viral advert? What makes an advert go viral? Give examples.
- 4) Research another product's advertising campaigns e.g. Guinness, Lynx. Describe the techniques used
- 5) Find examples of adverts that appeal to a range of consumers and global audiences. Which C&Cs are used? (Y&R 4Cs model)

Advertising General

- 1) Give a personal response to ANY print advert of your choice Evaluate its strengths and weaknesses. Use the FAIR framework – forms, audience, institutions, representations. Mention genre and narrative. Include reference to visual signifiers; connotation; binary opposites
- 2) Give a personal response to ANY TV / online or radio ad of your choice. Evaluate its strengths and weaknesses. Use the FAIR framework – forms, audience, institutions, representations. Mention genre and narrative. Include reference to visual signifiers; connotation; binary opposites

General presentation discussion and essay work on the three set adverts

1. For each of the three poster adverts you have studied: (Old Spice. Lucozade, Shelter)
Do a spidergram/radial diagram of the advert (use VTTI – visual. Typographical, textual and institutional codes to cover all aspects systematically). Use Powerpoint as it's easier to format your work.
2. How do the adverts you have studied follow the AIDA principle (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action)?
3. Discuss the use of connotation and iconography in the adverts you have studied.
4. In the ads you have studied, discuss the use of the following: layout, mise en scene, colour, location, typography, mode of address
5. Discuss representations of places and people
6. Show how the different adverts you have studied are constructed to target different audiences.
7. How useful is **Dyer's Utopian Solutions Model** in an analysis of the print adverts you have looked at – escape, distraction, fantasy, abundance, community, excitement
8. ****How useful is are the ideas of the Frankfurt School (mass consumption, false hopes and needs, 'soft' indoctrination) in an analysis of the print adverts you have looked at**
9. **** To what extent do the adverts you have studied link to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and tend to promote false hopes and unfulfilled aspiration.**
10. ****Which media theories are particularly useful in an analysis of the adverts you have studied?**

Paper 1 Section B Music Video (Media Language and Representation)

MUSIC VIDEO LIST A	MUSIC VIDEO LIST B
stop where you are – Corinne Bailey Rae Unfinished Symphony - Massive Attack Heaven - Emil Sande	Titanium – David Guetta Ya Mama – Fatboy Slim Burn The Witch – Radiohead

SAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

- A) Explain how representations in music videos are chosen to promote the artist(s). Refer to **one** of the music videos you have studied to support your answer. [10]
- B) “Music videos reflect the cultural context in which they were made.” Discuss this statement through a comparison of the two music videos you have studied: one music video from List A and one music video from List B. [15]

<http://www.understandmedia.com/topics/media-theory/143-how-to-analyze-a-music-video>

see also

The Internet Music Video Database. Searchable by director, song, artist. <https://imvdb.com/>

PromoNews.tv. New music videos, updated daily <http://promonews.tv/>

1. Present and discuss a music video of your choice. Refer to as many media concepts and terminology as possible.
2. Discuss the importance of camerawork, editing and mise en scene in a music video from List A and one from List B (Stop Where You Are & Titanium)
3. Explain how representations in a music video are constructed to promote the artist.
4. 'Music videos reflect the cultural context in which they are made'. Discuss by comparing one video from list A and one from List B.
5. 'Music videos tend to suggest a mood rather than tell a story.' Discuss by comparing one video from list A and one from List B.
6. 'Music videos break all the rules of conventional film-making.' Discuss by comparing one video from list A and one from List B
7. 'Music videos are obsessed by representations of outsiders and misfits.' Discuss, referring to two music videos you have seen.
8. 'The characters in music videos are stereotypes rather than real people.' Discuss, referring to at least two music videos.
9. Discuss the importance of location in the two music videos you have studied from list A and B.
10. To what extent do the music videos you have studied give prominence to the following aspects: intertextuality; performance; narrative; production design; cinematography; animation and CGI.
11. How important is intertextuality in the MV's you have studied?
12. In what ways are the music videos you have studied postmodern?
13. **Consider some of the theories you have come across in the context of the music videos you have studied. How helpful are these academic approaches? Among others, you could discuss Dyer, Berger, Mulvey, Neale, Gauntlett, Baudrillard, Todorov.

Paper 1 Section B Magazines: 'The Big Issue' Meanings, Messages and Representations

Sample exam question

A) Analyse why *The Big Issue* magazine has used an intertextual approach on its front cover.

In your answer you must: Analyse the use of intertextuality to create meaning in the source make judgements and reach a conclusion about the advantages of this use of intertextuality to *The Big Issue* magazine. [15]

Background Research

- 1) Research ownership production & distribution of print magazines – what are the challenges facing the magazine industry today?
- 2) Why is the magazine market so varied and apparently flourishing? Research the state of magazine sales today.
- 3) Choose an area you are interested in (fashion, sports, health, music etc) and research using 2 or 3 case studies: How do online magazines differ from their print counterparts?
- 4) Do lifestyle magazines promote harmful messages about body image, pharmaceutical products and sexuality?
- 5) 'Magazines' are simply a vehicle for advertising. Editorial content is not important'. Discuss this view, giving examples **from your own research**.
- 6) How successfully is the magazine industry evolving to adapt to the dominance of online platforms? How successfully are print magazines responding to audience fragmentation, migration to online platforms and the power of social media?
- 7) How is the magazine industry responding to the rise of the online audience-producer (Vloggers etc) ?
- 8) To what extent are print magazines able to adapt and survive in an age of digital media convergence

Discussion points– the Magazine Industry

- 1) What do magazines tell us about today's society? Focus on two or three typical examples of popular magazines.
- 2) Show how magazines exist in a symbiotic relationship with other media platforms.
- 3) Show how magazines use certain codes and conventions (e.g. mode of address, layout) to construct messages and appeal to (/influence?) their target demographics.
- 4) Show how certain magazines appeal to niche audiences in order to target advertising and maximise their revenue.
- 5) 'Magazines are simply an excuse to get people to buy products' - discuss
- 6) Discuss the view that magazines are purely a vehicle for the advertising and entertainment industries (TV, sport, music and film)?
- 7) Will print magazines survive?
- 8) To what extent is escapism (**Dyer**) a factor in shaping the content of magazines?
- 9) Does the magazine industry still rely on sexist objectification (**Mulvey, Berger, Gaze Theory**)?
- 10) **How are **celebrity and fandom** exploited by the magazine industry? Does the media construct celebrities in order to position (and manipulate) its audiences? (**Jenkins**)
- 11) **Do you think magazines generally fulfil a normalizing social function by educating and 'socializing' readers about society's norms and values? i.e. Do magazines tend to reinforce social norms?
- 12) **Do lifestyle magazines exploit the unfulfilled aspirations, insecurity and frustrations of mainstream audiences? (Links with Maslow) (Gramsci: cultural hegemony, winning consent) (**consumerism, political economy models**)
- 13) **How does a theoretical knowledge of media help our understanding of how the magazine industry tends to promote dominant hegemonic ideologies? (Gramsci, Marx, Hesmondhalgh, Curran & Seaton, Frankfurt School)

The Big Issue Front Cover (you are expected to have looked in detail at two front covers and be able to compare and contrast them).

- 1) Research the history of the Big Issue magazine. Who founded it? When? Why? Funding etc?
- 2) Do a contents analysis of two editions of the Big Issue – list the articles and subject; list the adverts and products. What conclusions can you draw about its values and character?
- 3) How do the front covers of the Big Issue contrast with more glossy, commercial publications? What makes the Big Issue 'alternative' in terms of its differences with mainstream magazines?
- 4) Look for examples of intertextuality in a front cover of the Big issue. Give examples of why it is intertextual? What are the advantages and disadvantages of intertextuality? Examine the effect and purpose of intertextuality in promoting a product and constructing messages.
- 5) Analyse the front cover - how are the representations constructed to create meaning and communicate a message?
- 6) ****Discuss the Big Issue front cover in relation to Hall's '3 readings' theories.**

Guardian article on digital magazine industry

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2013/aug/19/digital-magazines-popular-circulation-figures>

Links & texts re History of UK Newspaper industry

Timeline etc <http://www.newsmediauk.org/History-of-British-Newspapers>

Paper 2 Evolving Media

Radio, Video games, Film, Long form TV drama

Paper 2 Sec A Radio Industries & Audiences

Notes on Radio from the exam spec document

Learners need to study the set radio product in relation to all the subject content bullet points listed under the 'media industries' and 'media audiences' topics in the subject content table at the end of this component. The selected radio programme should be a standard episode (not a feature or on location episode) and include a range of British music and content promoting British music, celebrity interviews, news items and quizzes/games. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure the content selected is appropriate to their students.

Theories of media industries and audiences do not need to be studied.

Learners should consider the significance of public service broadcasting and how The BBC Radio One Breakfast Show fits into the overarching ethos of 'informing, educating and entertaining', including consideration of the 'distinctiveness' of the content of the programme compared to commercial breakfast shows and which audience(s) are being targeted and why. The influence of funding should also be considered in relation to content, production, marketing and distribution and there should also be a consideration of technology, for example, the use of technology to distribute the show across a number of platforms other than 'traditional' radio.

UK radio industry <http://www.radioandtelly.co.uk/radio.html>

June 2015 Rajar report <https://www.themediabriefing.com/article/rajar-results-the-changing-consumption-habits-of-british-radio-listeners>

RADIO 1 BREAKFAST SHOW SAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

A Explain how The BBC Radio One Breakfast Show uses its online presence. [15]

B Explain why popular music radio programmes struggle to gain recognition as Public Service Broadcasting. Refer to The BBC Radio 1 Breakfast Show to support your answer. In your answer you must also explain how political, cultural and economic contexts influence the status of popular music radio programming [15]

General

1. Research the BBC's brand values, public service remit and its role in evolving new technologies
2. Give examples of how the BBC has evolved to keep pace with new technology
3. Give examples of how the BBC's output fulfills its public service remit.
4. Explain the continued success of radio in attracting audiences.
5. How has radio adapted to adapt to modern audience tastes and habits?
6. How does radio use online platforms to enhance its appeal?
7. Read about 'The War of the Worlds' radio drama broadcast in the US in 1938. What does this tell us about mass audiences then and now. Could anything in media have the same impact today?
8. Radio is the nearest traditional mainstream media form to social media'. To what extent do you agree with this statement?
9. Discuss the role of a) radio advertising or b) talk radio (e.g. phone-ins) in appealing to modern audiences.
10. **How useful are academic theories in an analysing audience engagement with radio? (Dyer, UGT, Gilmour)

MAKE SURE YOU LISTEN TO A FULL EDITION OF THE BREAKFAST SHOW

R1 BREAKFAST SHOW Specific questions and discussion points

1. Make notes on facts and stats- when it started, times of broadcast, presenters, playlist policy, changes over the years and reasons for change. Listener figures over the years.
2. How does the BBC Radio One Breakfast Show reflect the brand values and PSB mission statement of the BBC?
3. How successfully does the BBC Radio One Breakfast Show appeal to a younger demographic?
4. How does the BBC Radio One breakfast show differ from similar shows on commercial stations? Consider use of adverts, jingles, choice of music, presentation of news, mode of address, subject matter, audience involvement.
5. How does the show involve its audience?
6. How does the show create interest in other platforms, personalities and media products?

**Paper 2 FILM INDUSTRY SAMPLE QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION POINTS – THE JUNGLE BOOK
(You should make specific reference to The Jungle Book 1967 & 2016)**

Sample Exam Question

A) Discuss how far the distribution of the 1967 Jungle Book differs from the distribution of the 2016 Jungle Book. [15]

Extra questions and discussion points

- 1 Discuss differences in distribution between earlier films and their remakes.
- 2 How have the promotion and marketing of films changed over the years?
- 3 How do film companies use social media and online platforms to promote, distribute and show their films?
- 4 Show how the industry ensures that mainstream films reach the widest possible audiences.
- 5 Show how the different versions of the film show changing cultural attitudes in terms of representations of race, gender and ethnicity.
- 6 Make notes on the films in terms of Todorov's narratology theory (three-part structure), Propp's eight character types and Neale's views on genre.
- 7 Link your Jungle Book Comparative study to the following audience theories: a) Hypodermic Needle Model b) Uses & Gratifications Model c) Gerbner's Cultivation Theory d) Hall's 3 Readings e) Shirky- 'end of audience' model. e) Fiske f) Anderson's Long Tail Model
- 8 Link your study to the following industry theorists: a) Hesmondhalgh b) Curran & Seaton

PAPER 2 VIDEO GAMES 'MINECRAFT'

Sample Exam Questions

A Explain the impact of digitally convergent media platforms on video game production, distribution and consumption. Refer to Minecraft in your answer [15]

B Explain why online audience participation is so important to the success of Minecraft. [15]

Extra questions and discussion points

- 1) Explain the success of Minecraft among younger audiences. What makes it different or unique. Compare it to other successful phenomena such as Fortnite.
- 2) What does Minecraft tell us about modern media industries, contemporary media audiences & processes of production, promotion and distribution?
- 3) To what extent does Minecraft confirm Clay Shirky's view about the changing nature of modern audiences? Discuss Minecraft in terms of Clay Shirky and Henry Jenkins views on audiences

PAPER 2 Long Form TV Drama NOTES & SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Section B Long Form TV Drama

This is a synoptic question, (=bringing together all aspects covered throughout the course). You will be rewarded for drawing together knowledge and understanding from your full course of study, including different areas theoretical framework and media contexts. You should have studied two long form television dramas: one from List A and one from List B below.

Your answer should make reference to both long form television dramas you have studied: one from List A and one from List B.

LIST A : STRANGER THINGS S1E1	LIST B: THE KILLING S1 E1
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Sample exam questions

A) Why do long form television dramas from different countries offer different representations? [20]

In your answer you must:

- consider the contexts in which long form television dramas are produced and consumed
- explain how media contexts may have influenced representations in the set episodes of the two long form television dramas you have studied
- make judgements and reach conclusions about the reasons for the differences in representation between the two episodes.

B) Evaluate the relevance of Todorov's theory of narratology to long form television drama.

C) Discuss the extent to which the long form television dramas you have studied challenge the conventions of genre. Your answer should make reference to **both** long form television dramas you have studied: one from List A and one from List B. [20]

D) Discuss the extent to which your chosen long form television dramas successfully target their audiences. Your answer should make reference to **both** long form television dramas you have studied: one from List A and one from List B [20]

E) Evaluate the usefulness of academic ideas and arguments in helping your understanding of how media language is used in **one** of the long form television dramas that you have studied. [10]

Extra questions and discussion points

- 1) How does the first episode draw the audience in?
- 2) How do long form TV dramas successfully target different audiences?
- 3) Discuss the representation of location in the dramas you have studied.
- 4) Compare and contrast the representations of certain groups in the dramas you have studied e.g. authority figures, police, children, women, villains, parents.
- 5) How does long form TV drama successfully cross national and cultural boundaries to gain foreign audiences.
- 6) Discuss the differences in style between the English language and the non English language TV drama you have studied.
- 7) Discuss the role of intertextuality and other postmodern conventions such as self-referencing, parody and pastiche in your chosen TV dramas.
- 8) How does the format of a long-form drama influence the structure of the narrative?
- 9) To what extent do the dramas you have studied reflect the cultural, social, economic and political context of the countries in which they were produced?
- 10) Which academic ideas, if any, could be useful in adding to an appreciation of the dramas you have studied?