



THE COOPERS COMPANY AND COBORN SCHOOL

**A-LEVEL**

# **Media STUDIES**



**YEAR 12 Summer Transition Unit  
EXPLORING POSTMODERNISM**





## AUTUMN TERM 12

### Introduction to the

In this introductory sequence, You will be introduced to the study of the Media Studies, and the **four key aspects** (areas) of the **theoretical framework**:

- **Media Language**
- **Representation**
- **Industries**
- **Audiences**

### Advertising & Marketing



In this unit you will explore the realm of advertising and how producers use **media language** to construct **representations** of reality in order to sell products and target **Audiences**.

**Assessed in:** Exam: Paper One, Section A & B

### Music Videos

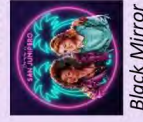


In this unit you will explore music videos as a marketing and promotion tool for artists and new releases. You will also consider how once again **media language** is used to construct engaging narratives and **representations** that target selected **Audiences**.

**Assessed in:** Exam: Paper One, Section A

## AUTUMN TERM 13

### Television in the Global Age



In this unit you will draw together all of your knowledge about the four key concepts of **media language, representation, industries and audiences** and apply them to the study of the drama, science-fiction and horror genres, focusing on the development of both UK and International television products.

**Assessed in:** Exam: Paper Two, Section A

### Magazines: Mainstream & Alternative



You will further explore your knowledge of the key concepts of **media language, representation, industries and audiences** through their application to the production of magazines for both mainstream and specialised **audiences**, looking in-depth at both contemporary and historical products.

**Assessed in:** Exam: Paper Two, Section B

### Media in the Online Age



Finally, you will conclude the course by utilising the same knowledge of the four key concepts of **media language, representation, industries and audiences** to undertake a detailed examination of the growth on online media **industries** and the ways in which media consumption has changed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Assessed in:** Exam: Paper Two, Section C

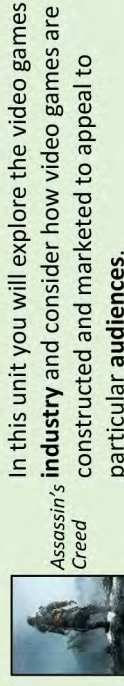
## SPRING TERM 12

### Radio Broadcasting

In this unit you will explore the medium of radio, including both Public Service and commercial broadcasting, looking specifically at how the **radio industry** operates and how broadcasters target **audiences**.

**Assessed in:** Exam: Paper One, Section B

### Video Games



In this unit you will explore the video games **industry** and consider how video games are constructed and marketed to appeal to particular **audiences**.

**Assessed in:** Exam: Paper One, Section B

### Newspapers



In this unit you will return to examining **media language** and look at how magazines construct **representations** to appeal to specific audiences. You will then apply the same practice to newspapers, but with a focus on how this might be done to promote particular political ideologies. You will conclude your work on newspapers, by considering the newspaper **industry** and its **audiences**, using the institutions behind each publication as a case study.

**Assessed in:** Exam: Paper One, Section A & B

## SUMMER TERM 12

### Film Promotion

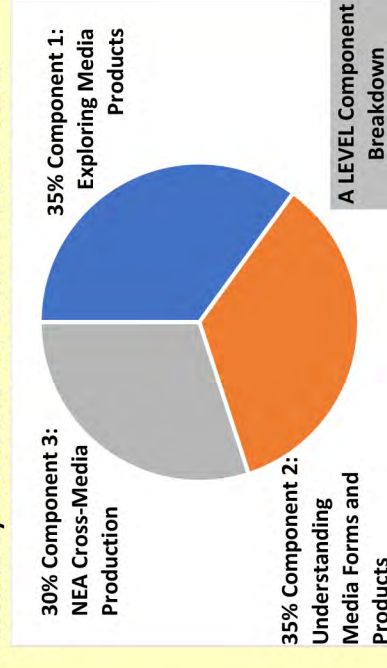
You will then exam the film **industry** and look at specific examples of promotional advertising campaigns analysing their **industry context**.

**Assessed in:** Exam: Paper One, Section B

### Component 3: NEA Cross-Media Production

This coursework unit draws on everything you have learnt through studying the set products so far. You will be given a **set brief** by the exam board with specific instructions to **research, plan and produce** a new media product in a particular **form** and for a specific **audience**.

**Assessed by:** NEA coursework criteria and exam board.



## SUMMER TERM 13

### Revision & Final Exam



A range of knowledge recall and technique-based practice activities, exam-style questions and **revision** sessions will be scheduled to support you in your final preparations for examination.

**Paper One** [Component 1] - **Media Products, Industries and Audiences**

**Paper Two** [Component 2] - **Media Forms and Products In Depth**

**Assessed in:** Final A-Level Examinations

## A LEVEL OVERVIEW

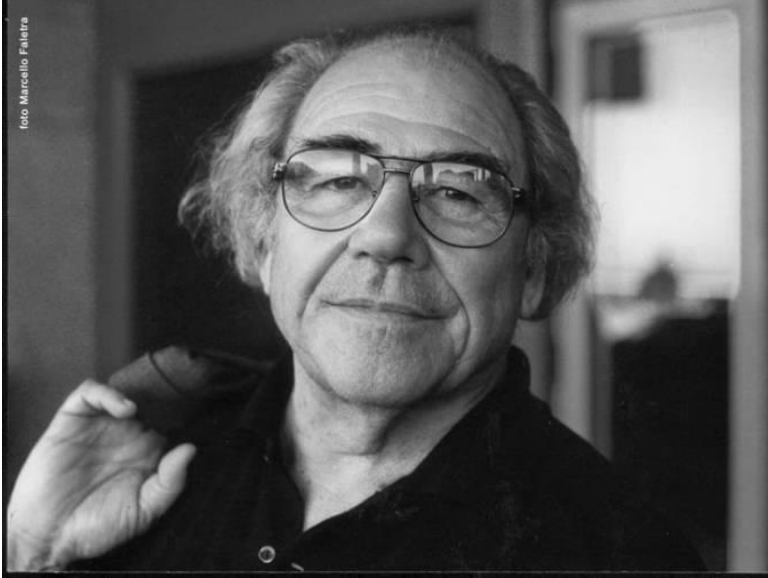




# AN INTRODUCTION TO POSTMODERNISM

**Postmodernism** (also spelt **post-modernism**) is a late 20th-century movement in philosophy characterised by broad **scepticism** (questioning everything) and **relativism** (all things depend on other things). It **challenges the notion of objective truth** suggesting that **truth is entirely subjective and usually decided by the dominant ideologies within a society**.

## Postmodernism in the Media – Jean BAUDRILLARD



*"In Postmodern culture the boundaries between the 'real' world and the world of the media are no longer distinguishable. As we, as audiences, receive more and more of our experience of the world through the media we become less able to distinguish between what is reality and what is construction."*

### What's the Short Version?

Baudrillard's postmodernism theory is that in the modern world, what something *represents* has become more important than what it actually *is*. So, the logo of a famous product, for example, comes to represent status, or wealth – and may not bear any relation to the physical product itself (which might be low cost, poorly made etc).

### And the Longer Version?

Postmodernism is the idea that society has moved *beyond modernism* – either modernism in art and culture (early 20th century) or modernism in the sense of a *belief in progress*, which dates back much further.

Baudrillard argued that, as modern societies were organised around the production of goods, postmodern society is organised around 'simulation' – the play of images and signs that get further and further away from basic reality.

Previously important social distinctions, such as differences of gender, class, politics and culture **suffer 'implosion'** and dissolve in a world of simulation in which **individuals construct their identities more through the messages they receive in the media than through real-world experience**.

This new world of 'hyperreality', populated entirely by media simulations, is **more real than the 'real'**, and controls how we think and behave.

Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) was a French sociologist, cultural theorist, author, political commentator. His best known theories involve **hyperreality** and **simulation**. Baudrillard described **hyperreality** as "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality".

He believed that **our lives have become so saturated with media messages** every day that **we now exist in a state of "Hyper-Reality"**.

**Hyperreality** is a state where the observer is **unable to distinguish reality from a simulation of reality**, especially in advanced postmodern societies. Hyperreality is seen as a condition where what is real and what is fiction are so entangled there is no clear distinction to where one ends and the other begins.

Confused by the barrage of new terms just thrown at you? Here's a Handy-Dandy mini glossary:

**DON'T PANIC!**

**Scepticism** – questioning what is generally accepted as 'the truth'.

**Relativism** – nothing is absolute (certain), everything is dependent on other things.

**Ideologies** - the prevailing ideas/ accepted ways of doing things within a particular group.

**Simulacra** - a world of images which aren't 'real'.

**Hyperreality** - images more 'real' than reality.

# BAUDRILLARD CAN BE EXPLAINED WITH ORANGES



## REALITY

The genuine article as experienced in the real world outside of media representations.

The construct is trying to be a faithful reflection of a basic reality.

## HEIGHTENED REALITY

The media has always constructed a version of reality ('mediated'); often the version portrayed will be a concentrated, (like the juice!) *idealised* version of reality. There are still links to the 'true' reality however.

The construct has masked and perverted a basic reality.

## SIMULACRUM

Made with only 4% real fruit! The simulacrum gives the appearance of being genuine, but is actually artificial and bears very little resemblance to the real thing.

The construct now masks the fact that the basic reality is absent!

## HYPER-REALITY

The media has become so saturated with simulacra that we as consumers can no longer distinguish between the original and the constructed meaning we are given through repeated representations.

The constructs bears no relation to the reality whatsoever: it has been replaced by pure simulation.

REALITY ← —————→ CONSTRUCT

# POSTMODERNISM: SOME TERMS DEFINED

*Some terminology relevant to this critical perspective defined.*

## **Post-Modern**

A historical period in Western culture after the Second World in which society became dominated by information technology.

## **Hyper-reality**

The collapse of the distinction between the real and simulated.

## **Signifier & Signified**

The basic units of semiotic analysis. Also known as the Denotation and Connotation of constructs.

## **Bricolage**

Construction of a unique media product by taking elements of or samples from other texts.

## **Parody**

To copy something in a humorous and tongue in cheek way.

## **Intertextuality**

To make reference to or contain elements from another media text.

## **Pastiche**

To copy something without humour, irony or anything else that communicates difference.

## **Simulacrum**

A copy without an original – reality has been simulated so many times that what we experience is a *copy* of a *copy* of a *copy*.

## **Multi-Accentuality**

The way in which meaning changes according to context and over-time.

## **Cultural Capital**

The knowledge and information that informs people's cultural consumption in a post-modern society.

## **Synthesis**

The combination of components or elements to form a connected whole.

## **Ideology**

The dominant way of thinking about society and culture enforced by the ruling class.

## **Irony**

A situation where an event occurs that seems deliberately opposite to what was expected, often with an amusing result.

## **Consumer Culture**

A culture and society in which individual and collective identity is constructed in material acts of economic exchange e.g. shopping.

## **Homage**

A copy intended as a tribute and to show respect to the original.

## **Verisimilitude**

The appearance or semblance of reality, but often without substance.



# Post-Modernism: Some Imagery



Bricolage?

Monet



Pastiche? Parody? Or Homage?

Banksy!



Magritte's Pipe

"Ceci n'est pas une pipe."  
"This is not a Pipe"

-but why the contradiction  
between text and image?  
What's his point?

*Ceci n'est pas une pipe.*

Magritte



# CONSIDERING POSTMODERN MEDIA TEXTS

## Key Elements of Post-Modern products

### Pastiche

Many postmodern texts combine, or “paste” elements of previous genres and styles to create a **new voice**. These are often **‘tongue in cheek’** (a feeling that it is *aware* it is referencing another media text) or pay homage to a previous work, e.g. the music video for *Buddy Holly* by Weezer.

### Irony, black humour, Parody

Postmodern texts will often treat serious social issues or historical events in a purposely inaccurate manner to create a point or be humorous. The **bounds of ‘taste’** or what is considered **‘acceptable’** might also be challenged.

### Intertextuality

An important element of postmodernism is its acknowledgment of previous media works. These are often re-worked in a way that audiences recognise and find clever. Intertextuality is often used in products such as music videos. *The Simpsons* is a product that illustrates this concept.

### Generic blurring/ hybridity

Mixing genres to create “new” experiences for the audience or to experiment with forms and meanings. In simple terms, **the ‘Mash-Up’**.

### Self-Reflexivity

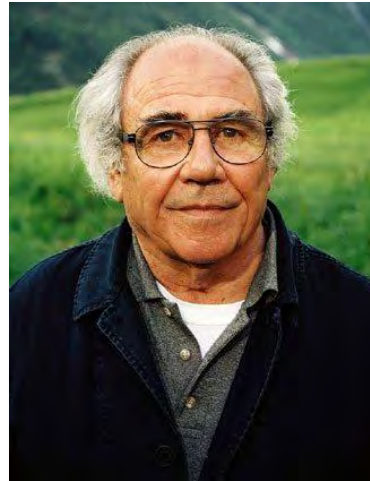
**‘Breaking the Fourth Wall’** (acknowledging the presence of the audience), referencing the way in which the product is created or highlighting the fact the product is a created text.

### Magical Realism

Arguably the most important postmodern technique, magical realism is the introduction of fantastic or impossible elements into a narrative that is otherwise normal (e.g. *Supergirl*)

## Key Theory

### Jean Baudrillard – ‘Hyper-Reality’



**B**audrillard claims that the distinction between media and reality has collapsed, and we now live in a reality defined by images and representations. All ideas of the **‘truth’** are just competing claims and what we believe to be the truth is just the majority agreement as expressed through the media. He suggests that because the lines between reality and the media have become blurred, we now live in a state of Hyper-reality, **‘a condition in which “reality” has been replaced by simulacra’**. This is because our lives are now saturated (flooded) with symbols and representations in the media that encourage us to believe the construct instead of the reality.

### Simulacra

When a sign loses its relation to reality, and instead becomes a simulation.

### Simulation

The process in which a representation of something comes to replace the thing which is actually being represented. The representation then becomes more important than ‘the real thing’. This happens especially in film and reality TV or celebrity magazines.

### Hyper-Reality

The division between the real and the simulation has collapsed. The symbol has replaced the original as what is **‘true’**.

**(people) “... seek happiness and fulfilment through the simulacra of reality – e.g. media, and avoid contact/interaction with the real world”**

**Jean Baudrillard**

## SUMMER TRANSISTION TASKS

**Following the A Level Media Studies taster session you have attended in which we began to explore the concept of Postmodernism in the Media, the tasks in this section of the booklet should be completed over the summer and handed in at the start of your first lesson in September.**

**These tasks will not be given a numerical mark, but you will be provided with feedback on the quality of your communication and your initial understanding of the concepts introduced, as well as your effort and attention to detail in completing them to your best possible standard.**

**Copies of the materials from the taster session are available on the media studies induction page, as well as the links to media resources you will need to complete these tasks.**

## TASK ONE: Exploring Postmodern TV

**Your first task relates to the trailer for the Netflix series *Stranger Things 2*.**

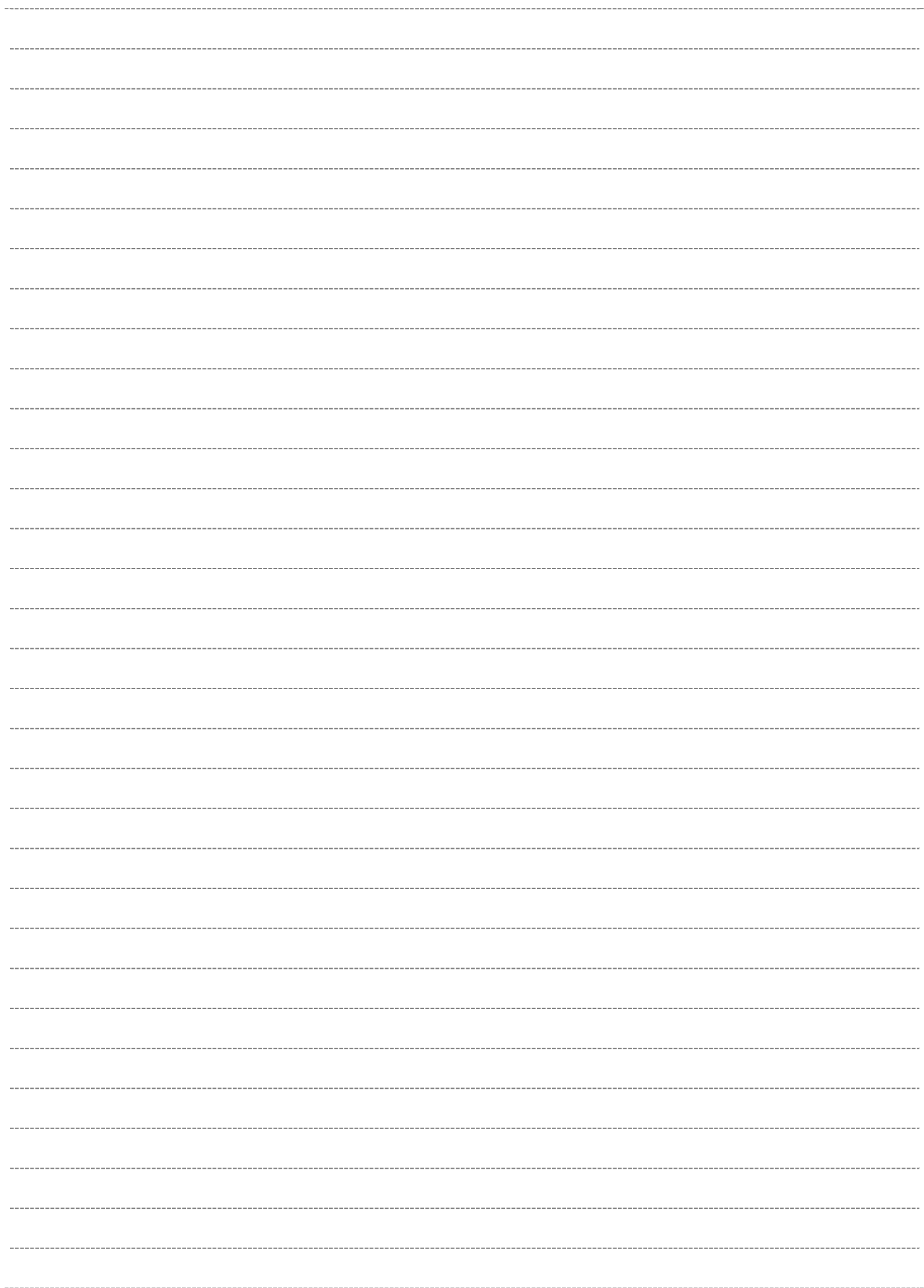
The trailer can be viewed via **YouTube** here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FIppdeVieA>

**Task: Watch the trailer for *Stranger Things 2* and write a response of 600 words [approx.] exploring how the trailer might be considered Postmodern, based on its use of the ‘key elements’ (irony, genre blurring, pastiche, etc.) Baudrillard identifies.**

**(the full list of 'key elements' can be found on page 6 of this booklet)**

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dashed lines, typical of primary-ruled notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.





## TASK TWO: Postmodern Advertising

Here is the poster for the 1994 Quentin Tarantino film *Pulp Fiction*.

Task: Annotate the poster identifying different aspects that might be regarded as Postmodern.

**Note:** You may find it helpful to do some brief research into the history of 'Pulp Magazines'.



### TASK THREE: Independent Research

**Wider, independent exploration of unseen texts is a key part of study at A Level for Media.**

**Task: Select a film or TV programme of your own choosing that you consider to be Postmodern. In no more than 600 words, explain why you consider it to be a Postmodern text.**

[illegible]



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## **TASK FOUR: Securing Your Knowledge**

Task: To conclude your summer tasks, please read and watch the video clips on the following blog post:

<https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-postmodernism-definition/>

(The link to this can also be found on the relevant section of the school website)

After reading, please answer the following questions:

1. When did Postmodernism really start?

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2. Which Director is considered to have produced one of the earliest examples of a Postmodern film?

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3. What does the article identify as an example of postmodernism in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*?

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4. Who is, "one of the most meta characters every created"?

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5. "Works in Postmodernism tend to have an attitude of rejection or \_\_\_\_\_". Complete the quote from the article.

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