

PRODUCT CONTEXT

- Vogue was first issued in New York in 1892 as a **high society diary** before it was bought by American publisher **Conde Nast** in 1905. Conde Nast made it into a **women's fashion magazine**, though still aimed at the upper classes.
- Vogue is still produced by **Conde Nast** and continues to be successful in the UK, despite **dwindling print sales** in the magazine marketplace.
- **Edward Enninful** was appointed editor in December 2017. A former model, he brought with him a strong **social media following**. He has made some important changes to the content and representations featured in the magazine, which have not only increased **digital subscriptions** and **stabilised print sales** of the magazine but have also influenced significant changes in the wider magazine marketplace.
- In 2021, British Vogue had an **average circulation figure of 191,000 issues** of the print magazine each month. Vogue claims to have **5.3 million digital subscriptions** and a social media following of **14.3 million**.
- Vogue is classed as a **glossy, monthly, women's lifestyle consumer magazine**. "British Vogue is the authority on **fashion, beauty and lifestyle**, and is a destination for women to learn, be challenged, inspired and empowered. Under Edward Enninful's unmatched **global editorial status**, British Vogue has become the undisputed Fashion Bible in the United Kingdom and is leading the **cultural zeitgeist** worldwide, powered by purpose."
- Vogue is aimed at **ABCI fashion** and style conscious women who are educated, sophisticated and wealthy. Whilst it traditionally targeted an older female audience of **30-45-year-olds**, you could say that this audience has now broadened to appeal to, inspire and empower younger readers too, as well as a much more **culturally diverse audience**, under the influence of the new editor.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

- Malala Yousafzai is recognised as an **education activist** in fierce support of a **girls' human right to an education** and has since gained a **PPE (Philosophy, Politics, Economics) degree** at Oxford University.
- In 2014, Malala won the **Nobel Peace Prize** for her activism, who also survived a gunshot to the head from the **Taliban**.
- Malala has used her **international platform** recently to **campaign** against the Taliban taking political control of Afghanistan as the US withdrew troops in 2021.
- Vogue influenced the rise of **consumerism** in 1950s and 60s and has evolved to explore **liberal cultural identities** emphasising diversity, **equality and inclusion** in its representation beyond **White-Centric** and **elite** portrayals of **femininity**.
- Pashtun culture has a **strict conservative ethos**, so the **liberal** elements of Malala's use of lipstick, jewellery and make-up highlight a subversion from **cultural norms** despite wearing a **red Pashtun head-dress**, as her interview highlights her disenchantment with the ideal of marriage, when a **red Pashtun dress** often has connotations of a wedding dress.

EXAM PREPARATION

- Vogue could feature in a Component 1A Language/Representation question.
- For a Component 1A Representation question, if Vogue is chosen as the seen text, it will be compared with an unseen text, which is likely to be another magazine example. Topics to compare could include: representation of gender, ethnicity, age, nationality or messages and values.

REPRESENTATION – GENDER / ETHNICITY

- The Malala cover highlights how **BAME (Black, Asian, Minority, Ethnic)** representation in the magazine has increased – with **Edward Enninful** as the magazine editor (Black British gay male), this reinforces the magazine's agenda to promote **diversity** in its portrayal of the **fashion zeitgeist**.
- Malala's hand gestures allude to Indian hand dancing
- Pashtun culture has a **strict conservative ethos** that emphasises **modesty**, so the **liberal** elements of Malala's use of lipstick, jewellery and make-up highlight a subversion from **cultural norms** despite wearing a red Pashtun head-dress, as her interview highlights her disenchantment with the ideal of marriage, when a **red Pashtun dupatta/dress** often has connotations of a wedding dress.
- Malala shows signs of a Westernised form of **liberal female empowerment** with a **non-traditional** interpretation of Pashtun cultural signifiers. However, Malala is not **objectified** or **sexualised** in the cover image.



LAYOUT AND DESIGN

- The Malala July 2021 issue of 'Vogue' conforms to **Z-line composition** conventions to make the magazine **aesthetically appealing**.
- The **Didot font** for the **'VOGUE' masthead** is part of the **iconography** and **house style** of the **Conde Nast** magazine (since 1950s) – the word **'vogue'** has connotations of fashionable, chic and zeitgeist (current/in style).
- The **uppercase serif font** of the **'VOGUE' masthead** reinforces the magazine's **elite brand identity**: classic, architectural look, tall, slim, sculpted with a statuesque style.
- The masthead overlays Malala and anchors her as the Vogue cover star, which may emphasise the brand identity over Malala's star status.
- The **red/silver/gold/black/white colour palette** reinforces luxury, passion and is a **minimalistic aesthetic** to make the magazine seem iconic.
- The use of **symmetry** in the **composition** of the magazine cover engages the reader with an **aesthetically appealing** design.
- The brush use of red in the **aesthetic** as a **chic minimalist design** creates multiple connotations: passion/love/romance (magazine theme of relationships), violence (Malala's history as a victim of Taliban violence), Pashtun culture (allusions to Asian marriages).

Representation Questions

- The way people have been portrayed – gender, ethnicity, age, class, culture etc.
- Feminist theories on representation.
- How media language can communicate representations.
- How context (social, historical, production) can inform representations.
- How the selection and combination of codes and conventions reveals the producer's intentions in how to represent groups and individuals.
- Under-representation/ misrepresentation – which groups are unfairly portrayed.
- Stereotypes – why have they been used and how have these stereotypes changed?
- The messages and values communicated through representation.
- Audience response to representation.

IMAGES / COSTUME / GESTURES

- The **medium close-up direct mode of address** shot of Malala with a slight smile has connotations of confidence and self-assurance. Her **closed body language** are contrasted by gentler connotations of her hand position, with allusions to **Indian hand dancing**.
- **High key lighting** is used for the **full bleed cover image** of Malala to put her in the spotlight and reinforce her **cultural status** as a **role model**.
- Malala's headscarf acts as a **signifier** of her culture and religion – as a **Sunni Muslim** of **Pashtun ethnicity** born in North West Pakistan, she was shot by the **Taliban** for being a 15-year old Muslim girl championing a girl's right to an education – none of her scars are visible in the **cover image**.
- Malala is wearing rings on both hands, but none of these signify engagement or marriage, highlighting her **non-traditional** attitude to relationships, with **Pashtun Sunni Muslims** often conforming to **monogamous arranged marriages**.
- Additionally, Malala wears a **red Pashtun dupatta**, a colour often associated with Asian wedding dresses, however, the article reveals that she has no intentions to marry at this stage, suggesting that she **subverts gender norms** in her star identity.
- Malala wears **lipstick, nail polish** and **gold jewellery** which conforms to some aspects of **Western beauty ideals**, living as a **British Sunni Muslim** with **Pashtun ethnicity**.

WRITTEN LANGUAGE

- **Emotive language** is used in the main cover line to describe Malala's life as 'extraordinary'.
- In addition, **rule of three copy** is **anchored** to the **main cover line** with 'Survivor, Activist, Legend' to reinforce Malala's reputation as a **trailblazer** for social justice causes.
- **Alliteration** has been used for the **cover line** 'Love After Lockdown' as Vogue establish themselves as a social authority on relationships.
- The **sub-headings** in 'The Shape of Now' **cover line** features **alliteration** with 'pleated/puff/perfectly' to describe clothing, reinforcing the magazine's focus on fashion.
- Vogue's status as a 'fashion bible' is further reinforced by the **cover line** 'VOGUE'S GUIDE TO SUMMER BEAUTY' emphasising **feminine beauty ideals** as a **unique selling point** for the magazine.

REPRESENTATION – GENDER / ETHNICITY

- Malala can be perceived as a **feminist** who calls out the **marginalisation** of girls as a **Pashtun Sunni Muslim** from the **Taliban-controlled Swat Valley** stating "we're considered to be **oppressed**, or voiceless, or living under **patriarchy**" and declares "you can have equality in your culture."
- Her **red dupatta** is a soft fabric that is gently folded to highlight a classic elegant look over any **objectified** portrayals of women, and could be seen as having **mythic status** with an **intertextual link** to the 1984 front cover of Afghan Girl in 'National Geographic' with her **gesture codes**.

Media Language Questions

- Identify codes and conventions.
- Reference the advertising genre.
- How the historical context informs meanings.
- Layout/design/composition choices and connotations.
- Images (shot type, angle, focus)
- Typography (serif/sans-serif, colour, font type).
- Mise-en-scene – props, costumes, hair/make-up, settings, lighting, colour.
- Language/lexis – slogan/tagline and any copy included in the advertisement.
- Anchorage of image and text.