

# CHILDREN'S COMICS

## REVISION/RESEARCH TASKS FOR EASTER

During this Easter holiday, you will be revising for all your GCSEs.

Media Studies is different: you don't have to learn lots of facts or formulae. However, you do have to be ready for the exam.

**After Easter, you will be taking a mock exam under timed, exam conditions, in three one-hour sittings. To help you prepare for this exam, and in place of Media Studies revision, you are to complete the following two research tasks.**

### TASK 1

Attached to this page are a collection of worksheets and a Desperate Dan comic story. *If you've downloaded this work pack at home you'll have to get your own copy of the Dandy!* In addition to the reading here, you will need to browse the comics sections of your local newsagents or supermarkets. It would probably be a good idea to buy one or two comics to have at home for reference during your exam preparation anyway. Remember, Tesco has the biggest range!

The following pages are all about Representation.

- You *must* complete the worksheets on Female Rogues and Political Correctness.
- You may find it helpful to complete the sheets on Authority Figures and Character Types

### TASK 2

Read the DC Thomson media pack on *The Beano and The Dandy*, and complete the *Appeal* and *Dead as a Dodo* worksheets on the back page. Bear in mind that the handout is produced by the company responsible for the comics: it is not impartial research.

You may also find it helpful to look at current editions of *The Beano* and *The Dandy* – have a browse in your local supermarket or newsagent.

### REVISION

Remember, these tasks are meant to take the same time and effort that you'll put into revising your other subjects. It also wouldn't hurt to read through the comics handouts you've been given since January.

## HAPPY EASTER!



# Character types

The next three worksheets deal with how characters in comics are represented. You may need to look through several different comics in order to complete them.

Characters in comics are by their very nature caricatures. This means that they are recognisable by a few simple characteristics. In other words, they are stereotypes who can be relied upon to behave in a predictable way. One typically predictable way is that they are always getting into trouble.

**1** Choose half a dozen characters from the comics you have looked at. Try to find ones that you think represent a different kind of stereotype, for example, mischievous young person, irate teacher, long suffering parent. Describe in a couple of sentences how each character displays these stereotypical features.

## Character A

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## Character B

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## Character C

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## Character D

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## Character E

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## Character F

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**2** How convincing do you find the characters in comics?

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## Female rogues

An interesting quality of many comics is the behaviour of the female characters. For this worksheet you will need to look at comics aimed at different audiences. First find a comic aimed at both boys and girls, such as *Beano*. Then look at an example of a girls' comic such as *Bunty*.

- 1 Choose any female character from the girls' comic and compare her with, for example, a female character like Minnie the Minx. Then write some of the differences between the two female characters into the table below.

Characteristics	Comic A (boys and girls)	Comic B (girls)
Dress		
Appearance		
Attitude		
Behaviour		
Common storylines		

- 2 How do you account for the difference in the characters? What do you think it tells us about how girls and boys are expected to behave when they are growing up?

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# Authority figures

A key element of children's comics is the role played by authority figures. These can be defined as anyone who has responsibility for or control over other people, especially children. They include parents, teachers and police officers.

- 1** Look through a few comics and make a list of four or five different characters that you think represent authority. In the table below, write down the name of each of these characters and describe how this person is seen to represent authority.

Name of character	How they represent authority

- 2** From your research into the different characters, what do you think we learn about the nature of authority, especially when it is challenged?

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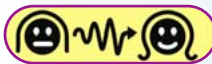
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- 3** Do characters who challenge authority ever get the better of it?

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## Political correctness

Comics, even those produced today, belong to a bygone age. The values in our society have changed. Read the article below about the way in which Desperate Dan was revamped by the publishers of the Dandy to meet with the demands for a more politically correct character. Then complete the questions on **Worksheet 11b**.

### Desperate Dan slims down for Dandy relaunch

Purists will no doubt lament the passing of Chips and Bully Beef, Smasher, Korky the Cat and Desperate Dan's gun, but the Dandy – the nation's longest-running comic – is attempting to etch itself on the consciousness of a new generation of readers with a relaunch today.

The favourite childhood read of anyone over 40 – who could buy the comic for the princely sum of two old pennies compared with £1.20 today – might not take kindly to the new, more politically correct, comic. But publisher DC Thomson is adamant the changes will help the struggling title “bowl” kids over in the newsagents.

Out go old favourites like Beryl the Peril and Smasher, not to mention the 1968 classic Spunky and His Spider – and in comes Jak the cool kid with big sister problems.

In an attempt to bring a little multiculturalism to the mix, the new Dandy – tagline: Can You Handle It? – introduces Dreadlock Holmes, a cod Rastafarian homage to Conan Doyle's famous detective.

Desperate Dan is still there, but now looks like he's been on an Atkins diet. Plus he has no gun. His holster's still there, but it looks like one of those fabulously over-designed belt-worn mobile phone pouches that went in and out of fashion sometime in 1995.

Bananaman – the story of little Eric who turns into a superhero after eating the tropical fruit – also survives the redesign. He first appeared after the Dandy underwent its first mid-life crisis in 1985, when three months shy of its 48th birthday it was forced to merge with Nutty.

Cuddles and Dimples – the troublesome

toddlers – who appeared a year later also make the cut, as does Owen Goal and his football-mad mentor, Coachie.

DC Thomson said it undertook in-depth research before relaunching the magazine in a bid to make the venerable magazine “cool” again among its core seven- to 11-year-old readership.

Like the very first issue, sold at auction for a dandy £20,350 last month, the all-new comic keeps the covermount going. It was the first time a freebie had been given away with a magazine – back in 1937 it was a free Express Whistle – hardly likely to tempt the kids of today – so that's been replaced with a “free gross tongue”.

DC Thomson says the redesign should help stem a long-term sales decline. In its heyday in the mid-1960s the Dandy was selling well over 2 million. But just prior to the relaunch sales had slumped to less than 50,000.

“We're never going to hit the 2 million mark again but if we could double existing sales to around 100,000 we'd be happy,” said a spokesman.

The comic that broke the mould when its first edition hit the shops in 1937 is trying to do it again. Sixty seven years ago it was the colour and A4 format that pitched the comic into the hearts and minds of game-free, TV-free, celebrity-free school kids.

Today with all the competition, glossing up that colour and bringing in a few new names is unlikely to provide the same epoch-making impact. Seventy years used to be most people's idea of a good innings – and that could equally well apply to magazines.

From *The Guardian*



# Political correctness

Political correctness is about not being offensive to different groups within our society. It demands that we take care in our social attitudes and, for example, use of language so as not to do or say things that might upset these groups.

- 1** Read a recent comic story of Desperate Dan in *The Dandy*. How far do you think he can be called 'politically correct'?

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- 2** Choose some other characters from contemporary comics. Do you think any of the representation might be offensive to different groups within our society?

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- 3** How well do you think different minority groups are represented within present day children's comics?

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- 4** Do you think we should worry about things like this, or are comics just harmless fun?

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