



GENERAL COMMENTS

In the Media examination students are asked to demonstrate their abilities to analyse texts in a range of ways and to explore production skills relevant to a media design plan. The Narrative section asks them to analyse texts for the way that they are constructed and developed. The Social Values section requires analysis that explores what texts can reveal about the time and place of their creation. Media Influence requires an understanding of the claims made about the influence of the Media and Media texts over audiences. Media Production Design focuses on the use of production design specifications in the preparation of a plan for a media product. Overall, the Narrative and Media Influence sections were handled well, but there were approaches in the Media Production Design and Social Values sections that caused concerns.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section A – Narrative

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	4	2	3	4	6	7	8	9	10	12	9	7	7	5	4	3	7.86

Question 1

Question 1 asked students to discuss the structuring of time in two narratives. While many students used the prompt at the start of the question to guide their response it was ignored by others. More successful students discussed their texts as complete narratives; in contrast less successful responses did not show how the structuring of time was relevant to the narrative as a whole. Time is an element of all texts, but some students could only understand it in texts where Time was a theme as well as a story element (e.g. *Run Lola Run*, *Memento*). Time was often understood in simple situations such as the compression of an hour’s events into ten minutes of screen time through elision of insignificant moments. Few discussed the way the whole narrative was constructed in time, for example how a story with flashbacks worked differently to a story told in strict chronological order, or the different ways an audience accepts a story told, for example over a period of years or over the space of just one day.

Time has some different characteristics in texts created for cinema and television. Some students who chose television texts showed an appreciation that a television episode was in fact one segment in a much longer narrative, extending over a series. In this format, audiences often bring awareness of events earlier than this episode – and the understanding that a narrative will continue after this episode also can affect how an audience responds in, for example, a suspenseful situation.

Question 2

Question 2 focused on characters – how production and story elements helped develop those characters, and how audiences engaged with those characters. In more successful responses students selecting television texts considered that a text was one episode in a continuing narrative structure, and that the main characters were substantially developed in the audience’s awareness before the episode being studied. In selecting texts for study, attention should be paid to the advice in the study design which excludes texts such as cartoons and documentaries from this section of study.

More successful students were able to write about their chosen characters in a way that firmly established those characters in the context of a whole narrative. A detailed description of the lighting in one single scene may demonstrate an understanding of a production element, but not engage with the character construction achieved by a combination of production and story elements, or how an audience’s engagement with that character is developed.

Section B – Media Production Design

This section draws on the experience the student has had during the year in developing a variety of media skills relevant to the preparation of a media production design plan. Through that process, more successful students had obviously developed an understanding of the particular qualities of their chosen medium, and the ways that audiences respond to that medium. For example, the way a video allows its creator to employ movement, or use music to engage an audience. Print allows an audience to linger at its own pace over the material and its creator can include a lot of detailed material that an audience watching a video or listening to some types of radio programs could not take in.

Question 1

1a

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	21	33	46	1.24

1b

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	19	16	26	18	21	2.05

1a–b

Many students could not address aspects of their medium in Question 1. The focus in this question (parts 1a and 1 b) was on their medium, not on the client the Honour Youth Foundation. Successful responses in this section were able to explain how a characteristic of their medium identified in part 1a would have an effect on an audience, obviously achieving the aims of the Foundation.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	9	4	8	11	15	14	12	11	9	7	4.60

This section has been part of the examination format for several years, but this year, responses were generally less satisfactory. The question asked students to ‘Prepare a plan for a media product’. Many responses did not resemble a plan, for either a whole product or a part thereof. Assessors appreciate that a students have limited time for this response, and a whole range of ideas were acceptable. More successful students were able to present a response that used an appropriate plan format for their medium, to give a general idea of the nature, content and style of their proposed product. Moreover, it gave a clear idea that the student appreciated the characteristics of their medium, and how they planned to use those characteristics in their proposed product.

Less successful responses discussed the making of a plan, or described the whole process from pre-planning to post-production, rather than presenting a plan. Some responses suggested students were neither familiar with the specific terminology for their medium of production with reference to, for example, the production design specifications referred to in the student’s plan for the media product; nor did their response indicate an understanding of the role of proper planning in the creation of a Media Product.

Section C – Social Values

Most responses indicated that this is still an area that students find challenging. Key concepts such as Representation were not well understood. Even the overriding idea of Social Values is not understood by many students, frequently being misinterpreted as a ‘Social Issue’ or a social characteristic. The choice of text for study frequently had a bearing on the level of understanding that students were able to demonstrate. In general, students were better able to grasp the social values in a text at least a generation old – vintage television shows are richer for understandable examples of social values than current shows which may be too close to the students. Satiric or ironic texts also create difficulties in understanding. Some students discussed cartoon characters as though they were real flesh-and-blood people, rather than caricatures. Very short texts (such as a single advertisement) generally are difficult to write about at length, as are current TV talk shows.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	10	15	27	23	25	2.37

This question asked students to describe two representations in the text studied. Despite the information in the question’s stem, many students were unable to identify and describe the representations in their text. When a text is explored for its social values, the analysis of a character must be different to the way a character is analysed for the text’s narrative qualities.

A successful response is able to identify the representative nature of a character and identify what is being represented, e.g. ‘Mr. Brady is a representation of the typical, ideal husband, father and head-of-family of the period’. Another problem was identifying social issues (e.g. issues of sexuality, gender issues, and racism) as representations.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	22	17	27	18	16	1.89

This question was linked to Question 1. Students were asked to explain how the social values of the text’s production period influenced the representations described in Question 1. Many students either did not identify the social values they saw as influencing the representations, or their identification of the social values was misunderstood.

Social values need to be clearly understood as particular values or general attitudes held in society. Many students are still discussing them as though they are issues or groups ‘women’s liberation’, ‘homosexuality’, ‘family’, ‘teenagers’).

More successful students were able to see that it is the attitudes to these that constitute the social value, e.g. 'In the period of the text's production, more people were questioning whether the woman's place was only in the home as homemaker and wife,' or 'By that time it was no longer seen as unacceptable for a single woman to have a child'.

More successful responses were able to show the link between the social values and the way a representation appeared in a text, e.g. 'Because attitudes were changing towards unmarried women, the single heroine with the child is presented sympathetically in the text'. This question particularly showed up students relying on pre-learned responses. They frequently failed to include material that responded to the specific question, and which more properly belonged to other questions in this section.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	16	7	11	14	17	14	11	10	3.48

This question asked students to demonstrate a further level of understanding of how texts are influenced by, and in turn can influence, social values. This built on the answers to Questions 1 and 2. More successful students effectively linked their discussion to the social values of the period of production. Less successful students, who had not effectively identified valid social values in earlier questions, were not able to illustrate the relationship of the text to those values.

Section D – Media Influence

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	15	18	26	41	1.93

By contrast, this section was generally well done by many students. In Question 1, a wide range of examples of claims for media influence were outlined. These included the 1930s *War of the Worlds* broadcast, Hitler's use of propaganda, specific advertising campaigns, fashion images and the Columbine shootings. There were students who discussed evidence in this question, although they were only asked to outline one example of influence. This is one example where the reading time could have been used to consider what information and approach was needed for the question so that students do not provide material that is irrelevant to the questions. (Similarly student planning could have been better focused in completing Section C questions.)

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	17	6	11	15	19	15	17	3.27

Question 2 was generally soundly done. Most students were able to identify two theories or models, and give a brief outline of each theory's general position. Less successful students revealed misunderstandings through misnaming a theory, or using terminology in a way which suggested the ideas were not understood. Another weakness was to see the theory as causing the influence, rather than as a tool to help try to understand that influence. For example, it would be said that the TAC used the 'Bullet theory' to change attitudes, rather than see that the ideas behind the 'Bullet theory' may explain any impact of the TAC Road Safety campaign.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	30	10	14	15	13	10	8	2.32

Question 3 asked students to outline the arguments and evidence for one of the theories discussed in Question 2. Generally, students were able to describe some of the experiments, laboratory trials and field research that had been undertaken. Less successful students frequently relied on only the Bobo Doll experiment, and attempted to draw too many conclusions from this. Some also relied solely on anecdotal evidence.

More successful students were able to include comments evaluating some of this material, drawing attention to limitations or qualifications to practically all the arguments or evidence. They were able to convey the sense that the evidence may be significant, but could rarely be definitive. However, there were students who seemed to believe that the theories caused media influence, or were specifically used by, for example, advertisers to achieve an affect, rather than seeing them as a way of trying to understand such an intangible but very important concept as 'media influence'.

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Published by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
41 St Andrews Place, East Melbourne 3002

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