

2015 VCE Media examination report

General comments

Most students attempted all questions on the 2015 Media examination. A number of excellent papers showed that students understood the demands of the questions well. In Section B, Question 3a., there seemed to be some misunderstanding of the ways in which representations can be constructed.

Specific information

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A – Narrative

Most students attempted all questions in this section. Overall, responses to this section reflected an informed use of narrative terminology.

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	33	67	0.7

Most students answered this question correctly. They were able to correctly define the story element 'structuring of time' with reference to editing techniques or narrative structure within a text as evidenced in the student example below. Many students incorporated in their responses appropriate terminology such as temporal duration, linear narrative, chronological order, ellipsis and flashbacks.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Structuring of time refers to the order and way events in a film are shown to audiences. This refers to temporal ordering (order of events), temporal duration (how long) and temporal frequency (how often).

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	17	49	35	1.2

Most students provided textual examples to show their understanding of how structuring of time functioned in all or part of a narrative text. High-scoring responses referenced how the duration of

all or parts of a narrative were affected (expanded or contracted) using devices such as ellipsis, montage, repeated or parallel actions, freeze-frames, flashbacks and flash-forwards.

Low-scoring responses did not articulate the functionality of the text example; they merely stated that time had been manipulated in a certain manner or that certain parts were 'cut out' to tell a shorter narrative. These responses lacked sophistication in terms of the appropriate use of terminology and an awareness of how structuring of time functions in narratives.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Amelie is primarily told through a linear temporal order; however, the sparse use of flashbacks helps the audience engage with the characters emotions. When Amelie meets Nino, we are taken back in time through flashbacks to see how and compare how their childhood unfolded. This links the two together throughout their entire lives, though they have never met before. This makes their unspoken connection/communication believable for the audience and allows the audience to engage with their love story.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	7	28	39	26	1.8

Students were required to explain how camera techniques or technologies and qualities for radio contribute to a narrative's meaning; for example, including references to camera shot type, angle and/or movement. High-scoring responses correctly referenced camera techniques such as how close-ups and extreme close-ups were employed to establish the emotional state of a character by registering their facial expressions, or how camera movement through use of a Steadicam might have been used to build tension or communicate the experience of movement.

Low-scoring responses did not employ terminology that adequately referenced film camera techniques; they used simplistic language to describe a text example such as 'the camera scans the room'. Some students chose poor text examples that did not provide them with a good opportunity to discuss the narrative meaning.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

In the Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless mind, camera techniques have been used to communicate the unusual procedure (mind erasing) and the perspective from Joel's memories. Hand held camera techniques have been used when Joel is trying to escape his memory to emphasise the panic and distress he is experiencing. Furthermore the use of high angles and long shots shows Joel's vulnerability as he is powerless in the mind erasing procedure and highlights that he is alone through the wide and long shots. Tilted angles are used within the mind erasing scenes to emphasise the unnatural procedure occurring and the off balanced composition develops the strange process of mind erasing.

Example 2

In his science-fiction film 'Children of Men', Alfonso Cuarón employed a multitude of camera techniques to add meaning to the narrative. In the climactic scene, 'The Uprising', Cuarón used handheld camera movements which followed Theo Faron as he raced through Bexhill to save Kee and her baby. Much like the rest of the narrative, the camera focuses solely on Theo, tracking his movements throughout. The use of hand-held movement creates a sense of realism and authenticity, giving the film a documentary style feel. Occasionally the camera pans to shots of the environment and setting, highlighting the totalitarian world in which the film is set. Cuarón famously uses extremely long takes, with 'The Uprising' sequence running as 'one shot' for well over six minutes. This documentary style insinuates how close audiences are to

experiencing such events, giving the narrative a very gritty and rough edge through Cuarón's use of camera techniques.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	6	13	26	31	18	5	2.6

Students were required to select a production or story element then discuss how this element assisted the audience in consuming and receiving both texts. Generally students struggled with accurately discussing audience consumption and reception. Some responses noted audience engagement through emotional or physical contexts constructed by the production or story elements. Other students discussed how the chosen element supported the audience's understanding of genre conventions through narrative expectations and possibilities. Some reference was made to the physical context of reception at the time of text release or later.

Popular elements discussed were sound, acting, setting, cause and effect, and mise en scène.

The following high-scoring response provides a thorough description of how audiences have been engaged through acting in both texts studied.

Chosen element: Acting

The performances of Audrey Tatou as Amelie and Bud Cort as Harold bring the characters to life, allowing the audience to empathise with them. The exaggerated, child-like expressions of Amelie as well as the pixie-like appearance of Tatou's physical presence render Amelie a whimsical character, a fitting protagonist for the magical realism genre. This fits with the audience's expectations of the film and adds to the film's lightheartedness, this also explains the film's overwhelming success internationally. Similarly, Bud Cort's thin, pale physicality and slow, deliberate non-verbal acting conveys Harold's detachment from the world and his paleness, emphasised by the make-up and Cort's stillness alludes to his obsession with death. This detached character was difficult to relate to many people, thus explaining the film's initial poor reception. However, it has since become a cult classic. Many people, particularly university students, found themselves able to sympathise with Harold's detachment, typical of the angst many teenagers/young adults experience. Thus, while the film was not widely well received, there is a select audience who consume it readily.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	4	9	14	19	14	14	10	7	4	1	4.7

Most students chose two elements appropriate to both texts and linked them to their function in establishing and/or developing characters. 'Sound' and 'acting' or 'sound' combined with 'the opening and/or resolution of the narrative' were the most frequently discussed elements. The production element of sound was largely discussed through the use of music and dialogue. High-scoring responses used appropriate terminology and were able to discuss how, for example, the details of dialogue execution through intonation and accent or genre-specific musical accompaniment combines with facial expressions, mannerisms and posture to support the establishment of a protagonist.

Low-scoring responses retold aspects of the narrative and provided a general overview of how multiple storylines, for example, had merged to reveal resolution. They did not use appropriate film terminology and instead relied on plot details rather than answering all aspects of the question.

The following high-scoring response provides a succinct analysis of how elements support the establishment of characters.

The opening and resolution of the narrative along with acting were used in both films to establish and develop characters. In The Sixth Sense, acting was utilised by Hayley Joel Osment who plays Cole to establish the vulnerability of his character. In the beginning of the film, Osment employs a pigeon-toed gait and short erratic movements as if he feels constantly at unease. He hunches his back in an enclosed position and has a sad expression with a slightly parted mouth and droopy eyes evoking an innocence and vulnerability. Furthermore, he utilises a soft, raspy voice with a downward inflecting which expresses sadness. However, Osment's acting by the resolution of the narrative delineates the growth of the character. In the school play scene, Osment has a strong, clear voice with an articulate dictation as well as an erect position and wide stance indicating his new found confidence. The opening/ closing sequence also enabled development of the characters Malcolm and Anna. In the opening scene, Malcolm and Anna are lit in a warm lighting and framed in a midshot depicting them cuddling suggesting a close relationship. However as the film progresses the relationship grows colder and the couple seem more distant as accented by the muted lighting in their house. However, the final scene where Malcolm finds out he is dead, he is able to come to peace with himself and cathartically realises that Anna was never 'second'. This is a direct comment on the opening sequence where Anna felt second to Malcolm's career, thus articulating character growth. In Dead Calm, the character of Rae was developed through Nicole Kidman's acting. In the car scene at the film's beginning Kidman employs a hunched body position with an indirect gaze. Her movements are lethargic and weak suggesting vulnerability. Moreover, as she sings to her child she employs a soft, delicate tonality. As the character of Rae becomes strong and resilient after defeating the antagonist Hughie, Kidman as Rae utilises expressive skills to demonstrate a much stronger character. Kidman's gait becomes wide and her posture is erect. Her eyes depict a direct and fierce mentality as she eliminates Hughie. Moreover, her movements become strong and purposeful suggesting her new found strength and independence. Furthermore the relationship between the opening and closing suggests the growth between the characters Rae and John. In the opening, the power relationship between the couple is established through camera. In the hospital John is framed from a low angle from Rae's point of view asserting his dominance over her, Rae is depicted from a high angle looking down on her suggesting her subordinate/submissive status. However, the characters both develop and the relationship is inversed near the end of the film. Where Rae saves John and she is depicted from a low angle and John from a high accentuating the shifting dynamics. Furthermore, Rae's new found strength and John's growing support for his wife is depicted in the final scene when they are framed at an equal height in the midshot suggesting the bond and strength they now have as a couple and the equality of power.

Section B – Media texts and society's values

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	6	36	58	1.5

The majority of students were able to describe a discourse or social issue evident in the texts they had studied. Some students employed text examples in their descriptions; however, most clearly described a discourse, as shown in the following student responses.

Example 1

We studied the discourse of gender over a period of fifty years (1960's - 2000s) in America. Gender discourse looks at the roles, responsibilities, occupations and lifestyles of males and females and how society treats these genders. This discourse was heavily present in all texts studied.

Example 2

The discourse evident in the texts is economic materialism. This is the excessive desire to acquire and consume material goods. Thus the notion of economic is bound in a value system which suggests that affluence is the key indicator in determining social status, supporting the notion that money can buy happiness.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	4	16	37	29	15	2.4

This question required students to discuss how one text had been shaped by a discourse or social issue present in the society at the time it was produced. While most students were able to demonstrate some knowledge of a text and the society that produced it, fewer students were able to discuss specifically how the content of the text had been shaped by the discourse or social issue, as shown in the following student examples.

Example 1

In the 'Bring out a Britton' (campaign – Aus government 1960's) the text is reflective of the dominant social value during the specific time of the 1960's, and within the specific Australian society, as it is supported by the laws and regulations of the time. British immigrants were being welcomed to Australia by boat in the hope that Australia would become a more prosperous and established nation, as the British in the cartoon campaign are being pulled over to Australia by a rope and boat by a happy kangaroo. Ideals such as family and affordability of living are evident as important concerns of the time as they are emphasised and exaggerated in the campaign.

Example 2

The 1980's in USA was a period of economic prosperity. With the economic boom, middle class incomes were rising and people wanted to show off their wealth. This era was when "greed is good" and affluence as well as hedonism defined American life. Everyone chased the American dream only to realise it's futility in the late 80's. By the late 80's, people saw the intangible idealism of chasing hedonistic desires and priorities started shifting. People searched for the meaning of life and regarded growth and relationships as far more valuable than material possessions. This evolving discourse shaped the representations and themes of The Simpsons episode "Old money". In this episode Grandpa Simpson(Abe) inherits a mass fortune and immediately spends it on material things such as purchasing an expensive 'fez' hat. However, despite being wealthy Abe feels unfulfilled and hollow with the ghost of his deceased girlfriend asking "Why isn't my money making you happy?" This portrayal of money is clearly shaped by the society of the late 80's who saw the futile nature of material goods. Abe thus, instead of spending the money on himself, donates it to the retirement home to benefit his friends. Only then was Abe satisfied and fulfilled in his life.

Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	9	19	40	22	10	2.1

This question asked students to explain how a representation in a text (i.e. a character, idea, institution, event, cultural group, etc.) was constructed. Most students chose to discuss the construction of a representation through characters, their actions and dialogue. Generally, responses to this question lacked a deeper understanding of the ways in which that representation has been actively constructed. For example, medium- to low-scoring responses discussed the actions of a character without a discussion of the constructed nature of the character's actions. Students should have been able to refer to technical and symbolic codes and conventions

(including, but not limited to camera, acting, mise en scène, editing, lighting, sound, narrative progression, character) in relation to the representation's construction to achieve a higher score. This understanding of the construction of representations was only evident in higher-scoring responses, such as the following.

Blanche is in "Bonnie and Clyde" a representation of the older generation and the view of the older generations values being outdated. This representation is constructed through Blanche's costuming. She is pictured in conservative clothes, which when contrasted with Bonnie's revealing attire is seen to be unflattering and limiting. Blanches constant gravitation to the kitchen throughout the film is representative of the older generations belief that women should hold a domestic role. While the production element of acting, specifically the delivery of Blanche's lines in an uncomfortable, pitchy voice, encourages the audience to dislike Blanche and view her as annoying. While the production element of mise en scene, specifically the placement of Blanche in the far corner of frames, often obscured by characters and objects, serves to establish her reliance on others and lack of independence representative of womens reliance on others and the view that women are less capable and powerful than men.

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	10	17	34	27	12	2.2

Most students were able to accurately identify a value defined by the representation explained in Question 3a. High-scoring responses went beyond merely defining the value, and provided an informed discussion of the context around the value's classification as dominant, oppositional or emerging.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	9	6	11	18	18	15	13	7	3	3.8

To achieve highly on this question students were required to consider the relationship between dominant, oppositional and emerging values in both society and media texts. Their response should have included an analysis of all three types of values and made reference to at least one text. Students were required to refer to a discourse or social issue from a particular society that is relevant to a text(s). They should then have provided an analysis of how the different values are related to the discourse and, ultimately, to one another. Many students discussed the tension between two values well; however, few addressed all values equally well. The following responses include sound analysis of all three value categories.

Example 1

There is a clear tension between dominant, emerging and oppositional values, especially when measured over a period of 50 years. In the 1991 Pilot episode of 'Step by Step', the emerging value that women are not the only nurturers and can maintain a job was reflected. This episode also depicted 'step families', which were only recently emerging to be acceptable. However, the how still referred to some dominant values. For example, single mother Carol owns her own business, which is a nod to the emerging value. Although this refers to dominant roots in the fact that the business she owns is a hair dressing salon, typically a 'woman's' workplace. By the 1990's, approximately 30% of marriages were step-families, which clearly juxtaposed to the 1960's, where a 'nuclear family' was ideal. Although 'Step by Step' addressed the emerging value of women being equal to men in the workforce, there was clearly a struggling relationship between the newly emerging value and the dominant value of the 1960's. Similarly, 2009s Modern Family – pilot clearly addressed the oppositional value of 2000s USA that men are the head of the household. This is evident in Claire Dunphy, who is married to Phil, a goofy and

quirky man. Claire is the clear 'leader' of the house, as she makes the decisions regarding their children.

Example 2

The discourse of immigration and the treatment of Asylum seekers is evident in the text 'Rover' (Michod 2014) as it creates a dystopian diegesis of Australia in 2050, depicting it as a barren and dangerous landscape after increasing immigration and asylum seeker intake and settlement. The film presents the relationship between dominant, emerging and oppositional values, and the tension that exists the society through the protagonist of the Rover and the mentally disabled American immigrant, Ray. The dominant value held by contemporary Australia that Australian borders should be tightly controlled in order to protect Australia as a nation is clearly evident in the text, and supported through the depiction of the impoverished and violent characters that are an outcome of allowing too much immigration to Australia. The oppositional social value held by contemporary Australia, that immigrants and Asylum seekers should be shown compassion and acceptance is also reflected in the text and also supported through the character of Ray, an immigrant from America who was not given the choice but rather followed his brother to the country in hope of work, creating a complex and tense relationship between the differentiating social values as it considers the arguments for oppositional, emerging and dominant, posing all possibilities to the audience and allowing them to conclude and form their own opinion and relationship on the discourse of immigration and Asylum seekers.

Section C – Media influence

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	41	59	0.6

This question was answered accurately by the majority of students, who revealed an understanding that the nature of media influence referred to the type of influence. Some students correctly described audience opinions, attitudes or physical reactions in their answers.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

This refers to how media influences people; the ways in which media influence manifests eg. copycat behaviour, emotional trauma etc.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	32	68	0.7

This question was answered well by most students as they demonstrated an understanding of 'extent' to mean the degree of influence.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Example 1

This refers to how much/the level of influence that is evident eg. media can inspire violent thoughts or violent acts.

Example 2

Refers to the degree of influence that a media text or form has over or in shaping of audiences views, behaviours and values.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	9	4	13	24	26	16	8	3.4

Most students accurately identified an influential media text/form and audience claimed to be influenced. The quality of arguments and/or evidence employed for the purpose of supporting or opposing the claimed influence varied substantially among students. High-scoring responses provided detailed accounts of empirical evidence and the subsequent findings. Low-scoring responses provided a general view of anecdotal evidence, or used the same piece of evidence over the two examples. Some students did not have clearly defined forms/texts and therefore had difficulty in identifying the audience claimed to be influenced.

The following response employs relevant evidence effectively.

Form/text – Violent video games
Audience claimed to be influenced

Teenagers are claimed to be influenced as they're more impulsive and have not yet fully matured.

Argument and/or example of evidence 1

The Australian Attorney General's office tested the impact that violent video games can have on young audiences and whilst the results were contested and inconclusive it was discovered that they can have a negative impact on particular populations. People with aggressive or psychotic personality traits may be at risk of being negatively impacted by violent imagery in these games.

Argument and/or example of evidence 2

James Markey who has a PHD in violent video games and violence also discovered that those with psychotic or aggressive personality traits could be negatively affected by these games. He stated that "violent video games do not turn a child into a killer" however they can change thought processes, just not incite action. These violent video games could possibly encourage them to think more violently but there is no evidence to prove that it actually makes them violent.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	7	4	11	31	29	14	4	3.3

A diverse range of theories were identified and compared by students. The hypodermic needle theory dominated throughout responses. Active comparison was limited and low-scoring responses tended to provide only linking statements such as 'on the other hand'.

The following high-scoring response provides an effective and active comparison between two theories.

The hypodermic needle theory and the encoding-decoding theory both agree that messages are embedded into media texts. However, they disagree on how the audience responds to/processes/is influenced by the messages. The hypodermic needle theory, developed following WW1, suggests that messages are injected into the audience's mind and have a direct impact on behaviour. This theory suggests that audience's passively accept encoded messages. Conversely, the encoding-decoding theory developed by Stuart Hall in the 80's and 90's suggests that audiences are active in interpreting/decoding messages. When the message is divided in a way very much like what the author intended/encoded, this is referred to as a dominant reading. If it is partially decoded as the author wishes and partly not, this is called a 'negotiated' reading. If it is decoded in an entirely different way, this is referred to as an

oppositional reading. Thus, the hypodermic needle theory and the encoding/decoding theory differ greatly on how they perceive the role of the audience.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	8	6	13	19	20	15	11	6	2	3.7

Few students responded to all parts of this question. Most attempted to address the key question and then touched on one of the two dot points in a simplistic manner. Low-scoring responses were often very brief and formulaic, merely relating generally to the topic of media regulation. These responses tended to address the main question without reference to the required dot points. Other low-scoring responses provided short statements about one dot point without a real attempt to link this to the question. These responses offered very little understanding of the complexity surrounding media regulation.

The following high-scoring response addresses all parts of the question.

The need for media regulation is always in a state of limbo due to the ever-evolving landscape of globalisation and technological developments. The need to regulate media stems from various concerns all aimed to protect citizens from harm. One reason for media regulation is the need to protect vulnerable groups such as children. Young children are impressionable thus vulnerable to media influence. The Australian research alliance for Children and Youth released a report suggesting that children exposed to explicit and violent material are likely to develop harmful thoughts and behaviours as well as disrupting sleep patterns. As children are the future they must be protected from viewing explicit content and is currently done via Classification regulation of films and games by the Classification board and some program timing by industry bodies such as Free TV. Moreover, the need to regulate the media is aimed at stopping the monopolisation of mass media. This is to ensure media diversity and no one organisation set specific agendas. This is currently controlled by the Australian Communication and Media Authority who ensures no person's broadcasting licence can reach more than 75% of the population and that there is a minimum of "5" voices in metropolitan markets. However, in this rapidly growing society, the convergence of the new media has made regulation increasingly difficult. The internet has enabled audiences to gain access to explicit or banned content at the click of a button which makes regulations such as banning material redundant. Moreover, theories such as uses and gratification suggest audiences are active and imperious to influence thus regulation is not needed as people can choose for themselves what they want to consume thus supporting the classification act that "adults should read, see, hear whatever they want". Furthermore in this modern, democratic nation regulating media can be seen as a form of government control that impedes the right to free speech and the right to press freedom thus contrary to the notion of democracy. Hence, while evidence such as Columbine shootings and Norway shooting alludes to the need to protect and regulate media from vulnerable groups as well as to protect the public in general. It can be argued that such strict regulations are ineffective and redundant in this technological world...