



GENERAL COMMENTS

Teachers should note that that the comments made in this report are based on the Media Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design 2000-2004. A reaccredited study design has been implemented in 2005.

The Media examination allows students to demonstrate their understanding of several significant areas of the media. The 'Narrative' section asked students to analyse texts for the way that they are constructed and developed. The 'Social values' section required an analysis that explored what texts can reveal about the time and place of their creation. 'Media production design' allowed students to demonstrate their understanding of production processes. This section focused on the use of production design specifications in planning for a media product. 'Media influence' required an understanding of the claims made about the influence of the media and media texts over audiences.

The 'Media influence' section was generally answered well by many students. Other sections were less well answered, with evidence suggesting that many students did not fully understand the major concepts behind some Areas of Study. Assessors commented on a seemingly large number of uneven responses, where one section was much weaker than the other sections. The weak section was frequently Section B – Media production design or Section C – Social values.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

Section A - Narrative

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	7	17	24	24	16	9	3.4

This section focused on students' understanding of the way that the narrative is constructed in a media text. Many of the best responses used texts that followed classic narrative structures. Such texts are usually better suited for this task than some classic films noted for their strong aesthetic qualities or particular individualistic qualities. Texts with creative but fractured use of narrative conventions often created difficulties for students. An example of a text that caused some difficulties for students is *Sliding Doors*, which develops a range of narrative possibilities rather than following a classic narrative format.

Many students were able to write clearly about the specific production elements, but failed to show how the element contributed to 'the development of the overall narrative'. Too many responses wrote about how that element engaged the audience, which had been the focus for questions on the previous year's exam. There may be a danger in preparing for the examination by an over-focus on previous examination papers, at the expense of a deeper understanding of the ideas behind the Area of Study.

One student began their response: *In the opening sequence of Scream various sounds are used to establish the genre of the film and create certain sound-object-person relationships that contribute to the overall narrative. A primal roar, a heartbeat, a telephone, a scream and a knife slash all play on the ears of the audience before the start credits end...*

This effectively links one element of sound with how it contributes to the narrative and the audience's expectations. Many weaker responses ignored the variety of possible sources of sound in a film – for example, dialogue, music, sound effects, overlapping sound, diegetic and non-diegetic.

In writing about editing, many students only understood its bravura use in examples such as *Psycho*, giving the impression that the only scene in which Hitchcock used editing was the famous shower sequence. Editing, of course, applies to the whole film or television episode.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	8	5	8	11	17	14	14	11	6	4	4.5



This question linked narrative possibilities from the opening sequence of a text with their resolution in the closing sequences. Again, texts with classic narrative structures proved more successful in allowing students to demonstrate their understanding of these connections. However, those students who simply retold the story did not show this understanding.

High scoring answers frequently identified key information from the opening – the audience’s reaction to and expectations of key characters, the type of narrative it is expecting (comedy, suspense, horror) and the story line that will possibly develop. These expectations can then be clearly linked to the closing sequence(s). These answers were also flexible enough to handle any unexpected developments during the narrative.

...Although David’s journey seemed to be positively resolved, the conclusion to the film sees David once again unhappy as he walks away, leaving the possibility that his happiness and journey has not been resolved at all. (Student response on Unbreakable).

Section B – Media production design

This section related to work students had done during the year in their own media productions. Outcome 2 in Unit 3 requires that students can demonstrate the key role of planning and preparing for the production of a media product, and are familiar with all technical and creative aspects of their chosen medium. It was expected that a satisfactory design plan could give a reader an overall appreciation of the finished product, as well as being a realistic basis for actually making that product.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	3	3	11	17	19	16	11	9	6	3	4.5

Too many responses did not provide anything that looked like a design plan. Many students also appeared unfamiliar with appropriate terminology (for example, ‘design plan specifications’) as outlined in the Media Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design. The better responses provided assessors with a clear impression of the intended product. They showed a clear understanding of the intended audience, and how the product would be tailored to meet the expectations of that audience.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	16	13	20	20	16	9	6	2.6

Many responses showed signs of the issue referred to above of students preparing to answer previous examination papers rather than understanding all aspects of the Areas of Study. These responses appeared to be addressing previous questions which had focused on the strengths of the chosen medium. Even the key term in the question ‘technical operations’ (see the Media Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design, pg 22) appeared unfamiliar to many students.

Better answers showed an understanding of the equipment being used, and how it could be operated to achieve particular outcomes, for example: *I will be using ‘Adobe Photoshop 7.0’ as this will allow me to manipulate my photographs by adding text. I will also be able to move the text around to find a position that doesn’t outweigh my subject(s) and creates balance. Ultimately the text will help create a story of the ‘journey’ through year 12, giving meaning to the shots and allowing students and teachers to relate to the shots better.*

Section C – Social values

The Media Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design outlines the basic philosophy underlining this approach to text analysis – that texts are influenced by the social values of the period and place of production, and that they can reflect and challenge those values. Too many responses suggested that students were still not able to explain what a social value is. Many also wrote on texts that made their task difficult. The best texts were generally those which were straightforward popular narratives and were unambiguously set in the period of production. *Leave It to Beaver* (TV) and *Rebel Without a Cause* (film) are good examples. Short texts, such as advertisements, sometimes provided students with too little material to examine in depth.

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Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	15	28	32	25	1.7

This question revealed clearly whether a student understood what a social value is. Too many students confused this with social issues (for example, racism or feminism), or with a social concept such as family, gender or sexuality. The important aspect – the **attitude** towards these concepts or issues that defines it as a social value – was too often missing. In contrast, this example shows how well this question could be answered: *A social value present in The Brady Bunch is the belief, ideas and attitudes toward Men's and Women's roles in the home. Men in that period were valued for being the provider and 'bread winner' of the home, the dominant figure and head of house hold. The women were valued for being 'home makers' and valued for their ability to take care of domestic issues. Women were valued for their role in the kitchen and house keeping.*

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	16	21	28	21	15	2.0

This question built on Question 1 and allowed students to demonstrate their understanding of the concept of representation. Where Question 1 had been clearly answered, responses were able to explain how characters could act as embodiments of a social value; that characters could take on a representational aspect, they could be 'typical'. A character could also embody aspects of a social concept (for example by being racist or non-racist) thus allowing the drama to explore aspects of a relevant social value. It was not adequate to simply retell a story without demonstrating how that story embodied or represented the social values under discussion.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	21	20	26	20	14	1.9

Again, this followed on from the previous questions. Weaker students had included relevant material for Question 3 in their response for Question 2. Better answers were able to explore the ways that a text can embody attitudes – for example, which characters are presented as 'goodies' or 'baddies', and the way the narrative is concluded (who wins, who is punished). Sometimes these elements were harder for students to unpack in texts which deliberately set out to explore or satirise values (such as some animated television series).

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	32	23	22	14	8	1.4

A range of students who had handled the first three questions appropriately had trouble with this, although the concepts behind the question again flow on from the earlier questions. The very subject matter of the text may have been chosen because of prevailing social values. *The Defiant Ones*, for example, was made to directly comment on the racism of its time, while *Gone With The Wind* reflects the racial attitudes of its period of production.

Some responses explored the way that a text deliberately set out to explore aspects of minority or oppositional values, to the extent that the very story was created for this purpose. This influence, arguably, cannot be definitively proved, but it is expected that students should be able to argue the case for the connection between a social value of the text's time and place of production and its influence on the text.

Section D Media Influence

Question Chosen	0	1	2
%	5	44	51

Question 1 / Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	7	4	5	6	7	7	8	10	9	9	7	6	6	4	3	2	7.0

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Both questions required an understanding of different theories and research and how these are used to argue cases for the influence of media. Better responses showed the appreciation that although media influence can not be definitively proven, these theories and research can be used to argue the case for the extent of any such influence. Weaker responses still blamed the theory for the event – for example, that ‘Hitler used the Bullet Theory against the Jews,’ or ‘The TAC used the Hypodermic Needle theory to inject the audience against drink driving’.

Overall, however, many students did demonstrate at least a basic understanding of some key theories of media influence. Better answers frequently came from knowledge of recent work in the area – after all, the ‘Bobo doll’ experiment is now many years old.