

GENERAL COMMENTS

In the 2014 Media examination, students showed clear awareness of and confidently discussed the current regulatory issues in assessing the control of the media, as well as a good grasp of a discourse or social issue. However, it also highlighted some concerns regarding students' understanding of and ability to analyse elements in Section A – Narrative, especially the ability to respond on the function and nature of elements using correct terminology in an appropriate context.

As general advice, students do not need to restate questions or write introductory paragraphs when responding to questions. They are not required to summarise the texts at the start of the response. Where students wish to use abbreviations, they should spell out the term in the first instance. Students are reminded to clearly indicate where they have continued a response at the back of the question and answer book. In all sections, students are encouraged to respond to questions with the appropriate depth and detail required, and to use media terminology, especially in Section A.

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 errors resulting in a total less than 100 per cent.

Section A – Narrative

Responses to this section highlighted a deficiency in the appropriate use of correct terminology by some students. Many employed anecdotal terms, particularly when discussing editing techniques and acting. Generally students seemed ill-equipped to combine set elements such as genre and acting. It is important that students are prepared to respond to questions regarding 'the interrelationship between production and story elements in the narrative organisation of fictional narratives to structure and communicate ideas' (*VCE Media Study Design*, page 21). Generally students struggled to compare texts (Question 4), which highlighted the importance that students can 'compare and contrast the function of and interrelationship between production and story elements across different fictional media texts' (*VCE Media Study Design*, page 21).

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	9	31	40	20	1.7

Responses to this question indicated that many students do not have a clear grasp of the terminology associated with editing, be it sound or vision. Most responses correctly named cuts or transitions, but few students were able to employ a more insightful use of editing language in their response.

The following high-scoring response employs this terminology suitably.

In the Bourne Supremacy, Greengrass cuts erratically between Bourne in the hotel room and the ground floor where the police are approaching. He then cuts to a close up of Bourne's sudden expression of realisation as a montage of low frame rate, handheld flashbacks are shown which increase in pace until a woman screaming and a loud gun shot is heard. Greengrass then cuts back to several shots of the police raiding the hallways and hitting doors, heightening the drama and the danger Bourne is in.

Ambiguous terms like 'jumping back and forth' do not communicate a grasp of editing terminology such as temporal order/duration/frequency, shot/reverse shot, parallel editing, etc. Many students simply described scenes with little or no acknowledgment of the ways in which the vision or sound had been edited.

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

Chaplin uses editing by creating a montage to depict an elapses on the passing of time and events between World War one and two. Chaplin includes in this montage snapshots of the Jewish barbers journey by superimposing it with newspaper articles and

then cross dissolving into stock footage of edits in a non diegetic sound of the narrator talking the audience through the events displayed.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	26	33	23	11	2.1

This question required students to discuss how acting communicated the style or genre of their chosen text. Few students were able to skilfully discuss how acting communicated the genre or style of their chosen text, and instead focused on the genre/style itself with little reference to the craft of acting. Many responses indicated a barely adequate understanding of the production element of acting, with a number of students confusing a description of acting (the use of gesture, voice, demeanour, movement in time and space, etc.) with describing the character. High-scoring students were able to discuss both acting and genre, with an awareness of how the relationship between the two elements and how they were able to communicate meaning to the audience. The following responses illustrate this relationship.

Example 1

In the 2001 Jean-Pierre Jeunet film Amelie heightened acting is used to emphasise the exaggerated version of a romantic comedy, as well as contributing to Jeunet's homage to the cinematic style 'cinema du look'. Presenting the romantic comedy within scope of a modern fairytale, the exaggerated acting of actors such as Audrey Tautou and Isabella Nanty, who played the introverted Amelie and hypochondriac Georgette (respectively) demonstrate the direction Jeunet was intending to take in his direction. The acting of Audrey Tautou, who uses a fast gait and indirect gaze throughout the majority of the film is used to create the image of a shy and awkward girl, a key element of the romantic comedy genre. Moreover, Tautou's use of whimsical facial expressions in talking with the audience during scenes of the movie... add to the engaging visual components of the film. Exemplifying the homage to 'cinema du look'. The acting of Isabelle Nanty in her portrayal of Georgette adds to Jeunet's allusion to the 'cinema du look' style, which looks at portraying alienated characters who struggle to fit in to society. Nanty's careful and measured interaction with props such as her asthma puffer and knitted shawl help to contribute to this, by portraying Georgette as a dysfunctional member of society who finds it difficult to overcome her fears.

Example 2

Chaplin uses acting to communicate his stock character 'the little tramp' as the Jewish Barber (Charlie Chaplin) to depict the genre of farcical slap stick comedy. Through the Barber's clumsy movements and confused facial expression, he communicates comedy and fulfils audiences expectations of his slapstick style. Additionally Chaplin also performs choreographed routines, with his body movement reminiscent of his silent films, by depicting his familiar style to the audience, they are left sympathising with the Jewish Barber, who is a representation of all the Jews in the Holocaust. This allows acting to introduce the hybrid film of war and comedy and after 1944 the additional genre of holocaust fantasy. Furthermore, Chaplin uses acting to depict the genre by having the stormtroopers (army) hitting, screaming and intimidating the Jews in the ghetto which is contrasted with Chaplin's infamous routines once again reaffirming to the audience it is a Chaplin film and the hybrid genre of war and comedy.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	5	15	19	24	17	14	5	3

This question required students to discuss how the story element of setting helped to communicate ideas and engage the audience. Many students responded to this question with a discussion of the broader (production) element of mise en scène or the non-existent element of set design, which was not required. Settings in media texts can represent the time, place and ideas represented in a narrative. Settings may also have a deeper, symbolic function. Most responses focused on the location the narrative was set for their discussion. High-scoring responses discussed the function and symbolic purpose of the setting of a text as a broader concept that reflected the film as a narrative whole.

The following excerpts from high-scoring responses demonstrate this function and symbolic purpose.

Example 1

In Dennis Hopper's 1969 film Easy Rider, the American southwest provides much of the setting within the narrative. Telling the story of two antiestablishment bikers, Whatt and Billy the film uses vast, desert landscapes to suggest ideas of freedom that the bikers experience whilst they're travelling from place to place. Moreover, the use of vast landscapes with iconic imagery such as Monument Valley being included within this engages audiences by framing the two bikers amongst a seemingly neverending backdrop of desert and mountainous terrain, which may be unfamiliar to audiences...

Example 2

In David Fincher's 'The Social Network', the various settings are used in multiple ways to communicate ideas to engage the audience. The beginning of the film is set in Harvard University, 2003, a location used to communicate the theme of exclusivity in the film. Harvard is known as an institution that contains the brightest minds, and thus it's inclusion reflects not only the intelligence of the characters, yet the also selective nature of the culture of the university and ultimately of Mark Zuckerberg's (Jesse Eisenberg) life...

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	12	9	14	22	20	11	8	4	2	3.2

Very few students were able to answer all aspects of this question, with many students responding to one text at a time, with no comparison other than 'on the other hand ...' Many students did not compare texts at all and most students struggled to select suitable production and story elements to compare between texts. Many students also discussed the opening sequences of texts prior to discussing the resolution of themes and ideas communicated previously.

Section B – Media texts and society's values

Question 1

Marks	0	1	Average
%	11	89	0.9

Students were generally able to answer this question accurately. Many students used examples of emerging values in their definitions.

The following high-scoring responses answered the question correctly.

Example 1

An emerging value is an idea or attitude that is increasing in popularity or acceptance within society. It may have once been an oppositional value, with the potential to become a dominant value.

Example 2

A belief or attitude held by a growing number of people in society. Such as the emerging value that gun control is more important than gun ownership in 1972 America.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	6	38	56	1.5

This question asked students to describe an idea, an attitude or a discourse that was evident in a text they studied. A competent description was required for full marks. Some students included text examples to illustrate their understanding. A broad range of ideas such as benefits and disadvantages of technology, attitudes towards same-sex relationships or feminism, discourse pertaining to race relations and gender roles were discussed by students.

Example 1

A discourse evident in the texts studied is that of racial equality and race relations. This mainly involves issues of segregation and the effect that abolishment of the Jim Crow laws in 1965 had on America's populace.

Example 2

Feminism is an idea we studied this year. Feminism relates to the equal distribution of rights irrespective of gender. Under this umbrella comes equal pay rights and a woman's ability to access contraception.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	5	10	20	27	23	11	4	3.1

To achieve well for this question, students were required to deconstruct the representation of one dominant value in two texts. Many students identified two different dominant values, often in two different texts or times, which was accepted as long as it was in relation to the same discourse or social issue. Most students discussed the representation of the value through characters, their actions and dialogue. Generally, responses to this question lacked a deeper understanding of the representation of a dominant value and the ways in which that representation has been 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. High-scoring students understood that attributes such as costume, framing, lighting, dialogue and even the resolution of plot lines contribute to the constructed nature of representations.

The following is an excerpt from an adequate response.

A dominant value within society regarding the representation of male homosexuality is that male homosexuals possess feminine or 'un-masculine' qualities. This value is represented in the TV mockumentary-style sitcom Modern Family, in the character of gay male Cameron Tucker. An overly flamboyant character, Cameron is described in the episode 'Treehouse' as 'not having the ability to (pick up) a woman'. This is exemplified when the woman he tries to pick up tells him that he's 'obviously gay' due to his 'theatrical hand gestures' and the 'way (he) walks and talks'. Moreover, Cameron reinforces this value by describing in the episode 'the Kiss' how 'gays don't high-five', suggesting it's more of a masculine behaviour. ...

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	9	9	17	18	18	12	9	5	2	3.4

This question required an analysis of the relationship between the values as representative of the tensions that can exist within a society's discourse or social issue. Students were asked to analyse the relationship between a dominant value and either an emerging or oppositional value, and how a representation of each value can reflect the society of the time. Students were not required to compare the representations of the values, but were expected to discuss the relationships between them in depth. Many students did not analyse the relationship between the values, and instead just gave two examples from texts. High-scoring responses acknowledged the relationship between values and analysed this using examples to illustrate the connection.

The following response demonstrates analysis of the relationship between values.

The discourse of many texts of the period between the 1960s and the 1980s includes the juxtaposition of the dominant value that Russia, an 'evil empire', poses a security threat to the USA, and the emerging value that Russians fear Americans just as much as Americans fear Russians. The relationship between these two values can be seen in Jewison's, 1965 film 'The Russians are Coming'. This film represents the dominant value through the characters of the unifying American town people who stand to fight the Russians, and the emerging value through both the acting and mise en scene of the Russians, who stand huddled tightly in one frame with worried expressions on their faces as the Americans angrily search for them. These representations reflect the 1960s American society as by 1961 after the erection of the Berlin Wall, many American felt the Russians posed a threat and anti-communist action started en masse, reflected via the films town's people. The various reports of West Berlin's people were ones of fear, yet this wasn't highly mediaised thus showing the small emerging value. Ultimately this text reveals that this emerging value is stronger than the dominant as both countries feel the fear at the climactic scene in which unity subsequently breaks out.

Yet in the 1980s this view of the evil Russians had become stronger and the support for the emerging value had diminished with US president Reagan's Evil Empire Speech of 1985. In Rocky IV the soviet evil empire is represented through the character of Iva Drago who is shot often from a low angle reflecting his domineering stance. He also often wears costumes featuring the 'Hammer and sickle' imagery of the USSR. His presence in the film portrays the dominant value. Contrary to this the emerging value is only displayed through the dialogue of Drago at the end of the film, when he states 'I can't defeat him' and ultimately the dominant value is seen to have destructive consequences for both countries, with both men being hurt badly in the ring. The film therefore includes the relationship between these two values showing that they will both create conflict and not resolution.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	15	15	20	20	17	10	4	2.6

This question required students to analyse how a social issue or discourse evolves from society's values, and how this is then reflected in media texts. Low-scoring responses simply discussed the text, whereas mid-range responses discussed a period in time generally and giving an overview. Higher-scoring responses analysed the context of the production or used specific examples of the time and place of the discourse or social issue. This analysis then led to an analysis of how these events, people or places contributed to the evolution of a discourse or social issue. Stronger responses reflected a clear understanding of the question; however, students who answered on the society of their discourse, idea or attitude in Question 4 found it difficult to respond successfully to this question.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

The discourse of the tension between the USA and the USSR is created by the holding of values of people, which are created by real world events. In 1961 when Russia erected the Berlin Wall many Americans reacted with distain and sided with the dominant value that Russia was an evil empire, where communist oppression was worse than US democratic freedoms. This value was then reflected in various films of the time including Jewison's 1965 film, 'The Russians are Coming'. During the 1970's and 1980's with the Cuban Missile Crisis, American's became increasingly worried about the threat the USSR posed to their security and adopted this as a dominant value. This was reflected in Stallone's 1985 film 'Rocky IV'. Yet as time passed, support for the emerging value that 'peace was the answer' was gained by 1986, and this is reflected in the 1986 episode of Family Ties, 'Checkmate', where Alex (Michael J Fox) accepts his 'bolishivec' enemy Ivan Razmorovich as a 'friend', who is 'just like me, - just a guy who enjoys chess'. This reflecting the increasing support for the emerging values of the time. Ultimately society is reflecting values, which in turn shape the media's discourse.

Example 2

The discourse of racial prejudice is entirely dependent on society's shifting values over time. In 2009's 'District 9' the issue of 'White Apartheid' is reflected as a domineering institution of racial segregation and oppression. However in retrospect, Apartheid was one seen as a necessary concept needed to establish a social hierarchy and prevent violence. The values of Apartheid were shaped through the cultural uprising of Nelson Mandela, promoting racial equality and denouncing segregation. As well as the advent of 'District 6', illustrating the problems of racial segregation on a massive scale. Crash's representation of racial prejudice in LA was shaped by the myriad of social issues that culminated to evolve society's values. For example, while attitudes to African Americans were affected by the LA riots and the OJ Simpson Trial, clearly establishing simmering racial tensions that are reflected in Crash's repressive racial tone. However the attitudes towards those of the middle -eastern element were once assigned with mystique and wonder, after 9/11 they were associated with danger and aggression.

Section C – Media Influence

This section was generally attempted well by students who were prepared to demonstrate their understanding of a broad range of texts and forms claimed to be influential. Students discussed contemporary texts such as the Ice Bucket Challenge competently. Most students had a basic grasp of media regulative bodies. A diverse range of communication theories and models were referenced by few students.

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	14	86	0.9

Most students accurately identified one communication model or theory that is used to suggest that the media has little influence on audiences. A wide range of suitable theories and models were identified such as the Uses and gratification theory, Encoding/decoding theory, Reinforcement theory, Agenda setting function theory, Two-step flow theory and the Propaganda model. A small number of students inaccurately identified the Hypodermic theory.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	29	22	26	16	7	1.5

This question asked students to expand on the communication theory or model identified in Question 1a. by discussing supportive arguments and evidence. Most students only expanded on their response to Question 1a. by providing a definition of the theory or model without reference to any arguments or evidence. Arguments and evidence discussed ranged from anecdotal and personal examples to empirically supported evidence. Some students expanded on the theory identified in Question 1a. and therefore were unsure about what to write for this question.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

1a. The Uses and Gratification Theory

1b. ...Various arguments are used to support this model. Studies of post-election campaigns, including the 1974 American election, suggested voters only took on what they needed to based on pre-conceived ideas. Yet many argued against this research saying the sample of 2000 voters didn't incorporate a large enough cross section of the community and was influenced by external factors. More recently a Kent State study in 2012 surveyed the general American election, noting all the various forms of media people used and compared it to the changes in their voting preferences. They concluded that 96% didn't change their votes from media and thus reinforced the ideas presented in this theory.

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Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	7	32	61	1.6

This question was generally well answered by students who were able to specifically explain a form of media regulation. Most responses referred to government regulators such as the Australian Classification Board or Australian Communications and Media Authority. Fewer students noted industry regulators such as the Australian Press Council, Australian Association of National Advertisers and Free TV Australia. Alternative self-regulation such as parental controls, internet search blocks and online community forums were also discussed with some authority. While the accurate names for regulators were not always given by students, they demonstrated an understanding of the regulation process undertaken by these regulators. It is important that students can demonstrate accurate knowledge of media classification and regulation rather than using incorrect terms such as censoring or banning when referencing film classification.

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

A form of media regulation is classification. This involves the evaluation of media content such as films, television, video games and print media, and the use of classifications or ratings to determine the age bracket allowed to view the product and the placement of content descriptors for the purpose of self-regulation or the regulation of children by adults. This process is handled by the Classifications Board.

Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	11	15	33	26	15	2.2

This question required students to discuss two arguments in favour of the regulation specified in Question 2a. Students should have referred to the purpose of the regulation in a relevant and coherent manner. Most students were able to identify two arguments but few discussed these in depth. Often one argument was discussed in greater depth than the other. Many students noted the protection of vulnerable children as an argument but few went on to discuss exactly what these audiences are being protected from and why.

The following is a good response that followed a Question 2a. answer explaining the role of the Advertising Standards Bureau.

One of the key arguments in favour of advertising regulation is to prevent copycat behaviour from occurring. This can be found in the regulation of advertisements that may depict unhealthy lifestyles, such as unhealthy eating, drinking and/or drug consumption. In addition to this, it includes regulation of advertisements that may depict suicide or graphic violence. Another argument in favour of regulating advertising in Australia is that it can help protect children by preventing them from seeing explicit content. This can include bad language such as profanities, sexual content, violence and or potentially scary content from being shown in advertisements, particularly during certain hours of the day where children are watching.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	7	8	15	18	16	12	10	7	5	2	1	3.9

This question required students to discuss the relationship between a specific audience and media forms and texts that are claimed to have had an influence on them. In addressing all components of the question, students should have named a specific audience and provided an example of a media form or text (for example, TV, film, video games, advertisements or social media) claimed to have had a specific influence. Students were required to substantiate arguments (for example, studies or research) about the influence of the media. Students should have named a relevant communication theory or model and provided details about how it is used to explain the influence.

Most students struggled to address all three dot points in the question, although most adequately discussed two. Generally, one relevant communication theory and one influential media text was discussed with some accuracy. Popular media forms included video games, films and internet. Specific texts included Saints Row IV, YouTube, Grand Theft Auto, Kony 2012, TAC advertisements, ABC Four Corners 'A Bloody Business', Facebook, Ice Bucket Challenge and Kylie Minogue breast cancer news reports.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response that sufficiently addresses all elements of the question.

Over the decades, many claims have been made in relation to the influence that media forms and texts can have on their audience. One such claim was made in the 1950's by Dr. Frederick Wertham, in his book Seduction of the Innocent. Wertham

claimed that comic books were having a negative influence upon America's children, singling out the violent content of EC's Tales from the Crypt and accusing DC's Batman and Robin comics of encouraging homosexual fantasies in young boys. Wertham claimed that the pair were engaged in a gay relationship, and that their adventures were having a negative impact on the youth of America, spreading what he saw as a negative aspect of society. A widespread moral panic ensued, and to combat this, the Comics Code Authority was created, dedicated to the censorship of questionable content in comic books. The predominant communication theory used to explain this influence is the Hypodermic Needle Theory, developed in the 1940's and based on behavioural psychology of the time. This theory posited that audiences were passive subjects to the dominating will of the media, allowing themselves to be 'injected' with the ideas presented in the media products they viewed. This theory, as well as Wertham's arguments, have been criticised for lacking substantial evidence to demonstrate this instantaneous negative effect of the media. Today, the idea of a passive audience is outdated, as audiences are considered active and aware of the products they consume. The 1950's did not see a rise in the prevalence of homosexuality in America's youth, and as such Wertham's claims have been criticised as unfounded and unproved, merely the product of a moral panic. The Comics Code Authority, a result of Wertham's claims, was famously called into question by Marvel Comics writer Stan Lee. In the 60's, Lee wished to publish a three issue story-arc revolving around the negative effects of drug use, but this was shot down by the CCA, who did not allow any depiction of drugs, whatever the context. Lee obtained permission from his publisher, Martin Goodman, to put out the issues without the Comics Code seal present on all comic books until the early 2000s, and this bold move resulted in the success of the story-arc and a changing of some of the CCA's restrictions. The rise of the heavier content such as this in comic books and other media serve to show that the media has less influence upon audiences than Wertham claimed, with more recent behavioural models becoming much more dependent on the context of media content and the varying factors among audiences.