

Subject: Media Studies

Level: 2

Standards: 91248, 91251

Part A: Commentary

Higher-achieving candidates often provided responses free from overly scaffolded and prescriptive writing frames and knew how to attack a statement and structure a discussion. They provided an argument that describes, explains, and analyses within each paragraph, using thoughtfully chosen evidence to support the discussion. These candidates were able to select specific examples from relevant learning (often beyond the classroom) to target their discussion.

A significant number of candidates attempted the exam using a rote-learned, scaffolded response that included the same points in the same order with the same evidence within and across schools, as well as repeating rote-learned responses from previous years. They often struggled to do more than demonstrate limited understanding through the lens of their chosen statement.

Many candidates are writing essays that cover everything they have learned in the classroom. These essays are lengthy descriptions, often focused on plot summaries making generalisations that do not move outside rote-learned writing frames, evidence, and theory. The more a candidate writes, the less they are demonstrating understanding and the more they are simply demonstrating recall. Reasoned explanation for Merit and examination of implications for Excellence are revealed through the deliberate editing choices a candidate makes as to what knowledge and supporting evidence they choose to use to shape and support their argument.

Part B: Report on standards

91248: Demonstrate understanding of the relationship between a media product and its audience

Examination

Overall, the exam functioned well, with all four statements being answered. However, statements 1 and 4 were much less popular than 2 and 3. Candidates who used material focusing on Stranger Things (a very popular text for this standard), that was like material taught in previous years, were not quite as successful with it in this exam, as it meant that they were not addressing their chosen statement.

Observations

Candidates who responded to their chosen statement throughout the essay were generally successful. Candidates need to be wary of simply rote learning material and regurgitating it without attending to the specificities of the chosen statement, regardless of the statement chosen. This tended to be an issue with statement 3, whereby some candidates would write half of the essay with material that responded to the statement and then simply write everything else they had studied about the media product and its relationship with an audience, heedless of their chosen statement. These candidates were penalised even though all their material may have been relevant to the standard itself, as they did not fully respond to the aspect indicated in the statement.

There were a range of good media products chosen that featured interesting relationships with their target audiences that stood up under scrutiny and provided a wealth of primary and secondary material for the candidates to build a thorough, critical response. Stranger Things was probably the most popular media product and tended to work well, although sticking too closely to the same argument is advised against. Evidence provided in previous student exemplars used in rote-learned responses often lacked the critical understanding needed to generate a higher grade.

It is important that 'tried and true' products such as Stranger Things, Al Jazeera, and Aroha Bridge are augmented and freshened up each year with new material that demonstrates evidence of candidates having undertaken a thorough, in-depth study of the media product and its relationship with an audience. The Mandalorian was a new media product this year that worked well for this standard.

Many candidates demonstrated an awareness of the requirements for Excellence in this standard and therefore had a go at discussing consequences of the relationship. However, what separated candidates who, on the surface seemed to be presenting similar arguments as to the consequences, was the use of verifiable, specific evidence, and an understanding of the subtleties of the relationship – simple cause and effect explanations were not sufficient. Theory such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the Uses and Gratifications Theory were commonly used but tended to be more useful in establishing why the relationship existed between media product and audience (a requirement for Merit), as

opposed to how this relationship led to a wider social, cultural, political, industry, or economic consequence.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- maintained adequate statement focus, usually using the key words of the question to frame up their response
- matched the material they had learned to their chosen statement, although would at times include detail that was irrelevant to the chosen statement, or interpret the statement in a broad fashion
- demonstrated a clear understanding of the nature of the relationship between the media product and a specific, defined target audience
- provided specific evidence from the media product that helped to demonstrate a relationship between the product and the audience that was relevant to the chosen statement.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- provided insufficient detailed evidence from the texts or material about relationship with the audience
- focused mainly on either the media product or the audience but not on the relationship between the two
- provided some rote-learned material without demonstrating an ability to adapt this to the specific focus of the chosen statement.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- explained lucidly how and/or why a relationship between a media product and its audience operates
- provided thorough, accurate evidence such as demographic/psychographic information, a critics review and/or media audience theory to establish the nature of the relationship between audience and media product
- maintained a holistic focus on the statement throughout the essay, addressing the statement rather than simply using the key words to frame up their response
- attempted to discuss consequences of the relationship, at times implicitly, but lacked convincing critical thinking and evidence needed for Excellence and/or the consequences were not related to the rest of the essay or to the chosen statement.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- demonstrated a nuanced awareness of the complexity of the relationship between media product and audience as opposed to using generalised or more simplistic cause and effect statements when discussing the wider consequence(s)

- distinguished themselves by presenting their own original, well-reasoned discussion supported by evidence
 - provided evidence, which was often varied, including theory, statistics, and academic and other articles, as well as judiciously chosen from the media product and the creators of the product
 - discussed consequences of the relationship between media product and audience such as economic, cultural, or political consequences that arose organically out of the discussion of the media product and the audience.
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91251: Demonstrate understanding of an aspect of a media genre

Examination

All four statements were attempted by a reasonable number of candidates who provided a range of ways to respond to the standard.

Statement 2 used the word “surprised” – many students responded to the word in a simplistic manner rather than considering change in the audience or audience expectations. Candidates were generally able to describe a change and say it surprised the audience – what they then needed to do was describe the surprise factor and explain how/why this impacted the audience or genre. Just saying it surprised the audience was insufficient detail for Achievement. Candidates often focused on generic things such as the changing role of women, which is common to all media texts, and tried to argue that this surprises the audience. This resulted in the argument being sighted between media representation and society rather than how genre functions through the candidate’s chosen aspect.

Several candidates confused genre hybridity for sub-genre when responding to statement 4.

Observations

Candidates who understood how genre functions, such as the cyclical nature of genre in response to changes in audience and/or commercial considerations tended to demonstrate understanding consistently.

Many candidates were relying on an overly restrictive writing frame to produce an essay describing a series of films. Candidates who prepared for the examination using a heavily scaffolded framework to structure their discussion generally did not do well as they showed limited understanding. They often used terms such as androcentricity, referred to theories such as the Bechdel Test, or attributed quotes such as “voiceless ornament”, with little understanding, or in a way that was irrelevant to the discussion.

Candidates are still referencing texts with R ratings beyond the age of a typical Year 12, such as X and Midsommar. For the significant percentage of candidates who studied Slasher and/or Horror R16 films, such as The Shining and Jennifer’s Body, the way they

discussed the films suggests they may not have the nuanced thinking to engage with these texts beyond simplistic discussions of violence, sex, and/or gore.

Many candidates made overarching generalisations presented as fact that served to demonstrate their lack of understanding of media genre contexts and realities. By taking the discussion out to what society expects, candidates generally moved their description/explanation away from the genre itself and tended to end up making overarching generalisations such as women were “voiceless ornaments” who had no say in the 1920s. This is a particularly limited view of such a vibrant time and suggests a lack of understanding of the reality of films at that time. (After all, why was the Hayes Code mooted in the first place?)

Candidates who wrote about the representation of women in a genre found it hard to demonstrate how an aspect of genre functions. Rather, they described characters/narrative and tended to focus on a series of films rather than genre. This meant they often found themselves on the Not Achieved/Achievement boundary.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- demonstrated they understood the audience, focusing their description on how audience expectations drove genre development rather than making overarching generalisations about society
- described ‘what’ was happening/could be expected to happen in the genre, i.e. change in genre cycles or time periods, but did not explain why, or what implications/predictions could be drawn
- attempted to explain the impact but described rather than provided reasoned explanation.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- did not address their chosen statement and/or provide evidence to support their response
- wrote a ‘representations’ or ‘media readings’ essay as opposed to a genre essay addressing the chosen statement
- wrote a discussion at a generic level where any genre could be substituted and still be true because they are talking about changes in society rather than in the genre itself
- demonstrated limited or no understanding of the context of their genre/audience
- listed and/or described what happens in a series of films without linking to the genre or audience, and without evidence to support.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- demonstrated in-depth thinking by writing in their own voice rather than using a heavily scaffolded writing frame

- provided detailed reasoned explanation using well-chosen evidence that supports their discussion
- demonstrated solid in-depth understanding but did not provide sufficient relevant discussion for a higher grade.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- responded to their chosen statement actively, providing reasoned, evidenced explanation and then examined the implication of considering media texts in this way
- provided a nuanced discussion in their own voice, examining an implication of the aspect
- addressed the concerns of their chosen statement directly, and used judicious evidence to support their argument from a range of media texts within the genre
- selected and cited relevant research beyond the primary texts to show critical understanding.