

Assessment Report

New Zealand Scholarship Media Studies 2020

Standard 93303

Part A: Commentary

It was pleasing to see candidates address Question Two and Question Three statements/quotations more effectively this year than in previous years. For Question Three, the most successful candidates clearly linked specific aspects of their production experience to the statement/quotation and to relevant exemplary production processes from media creators they had studied or were familiar with.

Where candidates chose to debate the topic, they were well served with a wide range of texts, evidence and analysis.

It is recommended that candidates undertake a full and well-rounded course of study in order to write convincing responses. This includes an understanding of a media industry and practical media production experience.

Candidates who did not achieve Scholarship generally discussed a limited range of texts and evidence, often cherry-picking these to argue their point of view.

Question One:

Quotation One was the most popular option. Many candidates recycled 'genre essays', with only limited attempts to address the specific needs of this statement. There were some impressive essays written, but too many appear to have seen this statement as an easy option. There was broad understanding of the common meaning of a "Trojan Horse", with most interpreting the statement as being about film-maker's tendency to have ideas they wished to communicate to audiences that were not necessarily obvious or literal. However, there was little understanding of the more subtle aspects of the "Trojan Horse", i.e. a deceptive, disruptive, and subversive trick to undermine something. Very few candidates considered such negative aspects.

Film noir and science fiction were popular genres and provided successful case studies. Less successful answers did not sufficiently differentiate between explicit themes/topics and underlying messages.

It was disappointing that more candidates did not attempt Quotation Two. The few who did generally wrote strong essays.

Quotations Three and Four were also popular with candidates. Quotation Three led to many responses that discussed negative stereotypes evident in various genre (particularly film noir, westerns, and the many sub-genres of horror), but there was generally little effort made to explore audience response or 'exploitation'.

Quotation Four attracted a wide range of approaches and had much in common with Quotation One. In fact, many candidates could happily have answered either statement with the same material. It offered scope for candidates who had enjoyed a comprehensive film study to respond to the question, although many who attempted this question attempted unsuccessfully to recycle a genre-based approach, and discussed the unexpected element as a change in the genre. Stronger responses were able to discuss elements of particular films or directors' styles to account for cinema as art, or to develop an essay that considered cinema as art vs commercial imperatives of blockbusters and franchise films. Few considered film as 'art form' however, missing potential opportunities to show their analytical ability.

Question Two:

The best responses focused on a specific platform or event and traced its development, while synthesising media theory and critical opinion, considering wider, likely implications. Weaker responses tended to discuss social media in general terms and discussed broad social movements or concepts such as clickbait or Black Lives Matter (BLM) without providing specific or relevant examples.

The best responses to Statement One developed a nuanced approach to the question, considering both the disadvantages and advantages of streaming, challenging the statement to an extent. Whilst it is clear that revenues from music streaming are limited, the apparent or implied phenomenon of the penniless or exploited artist was not developed in a convincing way by candidates. Music is still getting made, and very few people discussed the opportunities that digital music brings in terms of self-publishing and local production. Far too many assumed that the only way to have a successful music career is to be one of the dramatically overpaid music superstars of the past.

For Statement Two, very few candidates clearly defined what was meant by 'young', arguing generally that traditional media companies were out of date and unappealing to some vaguely broad 'young' audience. The problem with this is that most traditional media companies embrace social media to some extent, whilst on the other hand, youth (however defined) are only a small proportion of the market, and generally have very limited buying power anyway. The statement invited all sorts of challenging and interesting approaches and few candidates took up the challenge. For the most part, there were somewhat superficial arguments offered by candidates about how youth liked immediate access and free content dominated. Some of the better essays responded well to 'diverse' as a concept, with the best having clear ideas of the convincing 'needs' of different, specific social groups.

Only a few candidates chose Quotation Three, with no candidates exploring Māori Television, and only a few considering Radio New Zealand, community, and Iwi radio. It appears that the local media scene relevant to this question is not being effectively taught as much as has been the case in the past.

Quotation Four was by far the most popular choice, with many candidates exploring the recent BLM phenomenon. Some chose to comment on Trump, and some notable responses incorporated media stories released even on the day of the exam itself (the Stuff headline story on historical racism). Whilst it was good to see engagement with current media issues, what was surprising was the underlying assumption in most responses that the BLM social media phenomenon was a first for history. No candidate drew historical comparisons with the LA riots of 1984, equally as traumatic and driven by the then equivalent of social media, the rather 'old-fashioned' network television coverage of the beating of Rodney King. Few linked BLM to the very long history of Black Civil Rights protest in the United States and more recent recorded examples of police brutality from the past ten years were ignored. It was almost as if this was the first time that Black Lives did matter in the public consciousness. Such a breathtaking disregard for history and obsessive regard for the supposedly revolutionary power of social media were sobering. It would be useful for candidates to develop an understanding of media history when considering current media issues. Beyond this, media studies as a social phenomenon requires a strong understanding of whatever social context is being considered, and this was often lacking in candidate responses.

Question Three:

Candidates continued to provide a range of good responses to this production question. All four statements/quotations were chosen by candidates, with Quotation Two being the most popular, followed by Quotation Three. Most statements/quotations were broad enough to allow candidates to approach them from a range of different perspectives. Unfortunately, many candidates were armed with only a limited range of texts and scenarios, in some cases outliers or extreme examples, and often cherry-picked these to argue their point of view. Such responses were unconvincing.

As stated in the 2019 report, the best responses by candidates were often reflective of the successes and challenges faced during a media production, and how the choices made had an impact on the outcomes of the product. Successful candidates clearly linked specific aspects of their production experience to the question, and relevant exemplary production processes from film-makers/media producers they had studied, or were familiar with. Nevertheless, some candidates either focused too heavily on professional film-makers/media producers with only cursory coverage of their own media production, or covered their own production in great detail, with only limited consideration of professional practices by other media producers in a particular medium. Effective responses described the intended audience for their product and were able to discuss how design and production choices were made to appeal to that audience and evaluate the success of those choices. Less successful responses made non-specific or no references to an audience. These candidates were generally not able to achieve Scholarship level grades.

Notably, the best responses tended to explore production concepts that made sense within school production contexts. Given the massive limits on their resources and skill, it does not make a lot of sense, e.g. to make films or documentaries that sound like they should be being made by professional production companies for commercial release. What was more impressive generally was the productions where candidates dealt with authentic 'youth' concerns and did so in a way that respected the limits candidates face in terms of time, money, and skill. Adolescents are, after all, arguably the best people to make genuine stories about themselves for other young people. In a number of candidate responses, the actual production plan and concept were part of the problem – teacher guidance on this would be useful. It is suggested that candidates work in an authentic way on authentic stories for audiences that they know and understand.

Part B: Report on performance standard

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with **Outstanding Performance** commonly:

- included well-considered, thoughtful analysis with considerable insight and/or originality
- developed a clear, convincing argument that addressed the quote or statement
- had a strong understanding of historical context and could make connections between the past and current trends/events/developments
- “unpacked” the quotation/statement and argued from a range of positions
- demonstrated considerable understanding of ambiguity and subtlety in their argument
- applied their considerable subject knowledge in a convincing argument
- used media theory in a knowledgeable and appropriate way
- appropriately stated personal opinions and questioned both historical and contemporary decisions and trends
- analysed in depth their production experience with convincing reference to other texts.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- responded effectively to the quotation/statement and developed an argument using their subject knowledge
- included well-considered analysis with some insight
- used evidence from a range of sources in support of their argument
- demonstrated some understanding of ambiguity and subtlety in their argument
- demonstrated an understanding of historical context in relation to the quotation/statement and how it fitted within the context of the question (going beyond giving an historical summary, by offering thoughtful reasons for specific developments).
- showed broad and/or deep subject knowledge through their argument
- used media theory where appropriate
- analysed their media production experience with some reference to other texts.

Candidates who were **not** awarded Scholarship commonly:

- did not address the quotation/statement in a convincing way
- developed simplistic arguments
- applied pre-learnt answers to questions that were not reflective of the question raised
- made sweeping claims without clear supporting evidence
- used inappropriate or insufficient evidence
- did not attempt or complete all three essays
- argued from one narrow point of view
- described their production experience with limited analysis or reflection.

[Subject page](#)

Previous years' reports

[2019 \(PDF, 225KB\)](#) [2018 \(PDF, 101KB\)](#) [2017 \(PDF, 47KB\)](#) [2016 \(PDF, 192KB\)](#)

