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91493



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NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

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Level 3 Media Studies, 2014

91493 Demonstrate understanding of a relationship between a media genre and society

9.30 am Friday 28 November 2014
Credits: Four

Achievement	Achievement with Merit	Achievement with Excellence
Demonstrate understanding of a relationship between a media genre and society.	Demonstrate in-depth understanding of a relationship between a media genre and society.	Demonstrate perceptive understanding of a relationship between a media genre and society.

Check that the National Student Number (NSN) on your admission slip is the same as the number at the top of this page.

You should write an essay on ONE of the nine statements in this booklet.

If you need more room for any answer, use the extra space provided at the back of this booklet.

Check that this booklet has pages 2–12 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

YOU MUST HAND THIS BOOKLET TO THE SUPERVISOR AT THE END OF THE EXAMINATION.

Excellence

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INSTRUCTIONS

Choose ONE **media genre** that you have studied.

Discuss the **relationship** between your chosen media genre and society by responding to ONE of the statements below.

Note: 'Society' refers to a community in a specific time and place, or the audience for a genre.

You may agree and/or disagree with your chosen statement.

You must respond to your chosen statement.

STATEMENTS (Choose ONE)

The statements below relate to aspects of a media genre.

1. Genre is not set in stone.
2. Genre and identity are closely linked.
3. Genre is really about money.
4. Genre changes society.
5. Specific events lead to changes in genre.
6. Genre does not reflect indigenous culture(s).
7. Genre and technology are closely linked.
8. Genre has historical significance.
9. Genre shows society what it wants to see.

In your essay, you should focus on the relationship between your media genre and society by:

- explaining the **relationship** between your chosen media genre and society
- explaining the **impact** of this relationship on your chosen media genre and/or society
- drawing conclusions about the **wider significance** of this relationship by including **relevant, specific supporting detail** from at least THREE media texts, and any evidence from other sources.

Write your chosen media genre, society, and statement number on page 3.

Plan your essay on page 3.

Begin your essay on page 4.

Media genre: Film Noir filmsSociety: 20th century AmericaStatement number: 9

Note: Responses made in this space may be used as evidence for assessment.

PLANNING

Explanation of the **relationship** between your chosen media genre and society:

1. Intro
2. ~~Nov. Germany 1933-1939~~
3. ~~War-post disillusion 39-45~~
4. ~~Post-war realism 45-58~~
5. ~~50s - Baby boom decline of noir~~
6. ~~70s - Re-emergence~~
7. ~~2000s~~
8. ~~Re-emerge again~~

Phyllis DietrichsonHolly Martins 'I write cheap
novellettes'The **impact** of this relationship on your chosen media genre and/or society:

~~'I killed him for money & for a woman. I didn't get
the money & I didn't get the woman.'~~ 'Redly out if'

In Italy under the Borgias they had ^{was} bloodshed, murder & terror
and yet they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci &
the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherhood - 500
years of democratic peace and what did they produce?

The cuckoo clock. - Harry Lime, Third Man

The **wider significance** of this relationship:

introspection ~~less a unified style, than an attitude, or state of mind~~

~~"if you look into an abyss for long enough, the abyss will
look back at you"~~ ^{-Horst} the abyss

Jettie - 1940 - LuptonMatthew - 1940DI - 44Third Man - 49Caruso - 58Touch of Evil - 58China 74Minority 2002"four catalytic elements"war post-war disillusionmentpost-war realismGerman influenceHard boiled tradition.

You must respond to your chosen statement.

The suggested maximum for your essay is 800 words (6–7 pages). The quality of your writing is more important than the length of your essay.

Support your discussion by **drawing conclusions** with **relevant, specific supporting detail** from at least THREE media texts, and any evidence from other sources.

Begin your essay here:

Genre shows society what it wants to see.

"If you look into an abyss long enough, the abyss will look back at you." (Nietzsche) Film Noir films emerged, disappeared and re-emerged in response to socio-political events that occurred in the 20th century. Audiences of these periods, in film history, required films that had a gritty realism to them and Film Noir films served this purpose by providing society with a metaphorical mirror, when they were at their worst. The relationship between Film Noir films and the 20th century American society, that produced it, is inextricably linked and this is evident as Film Noir films rise and drop in popularity with changes in the social, economic and political structures.

Ultimately, as society reproduces these societal factors that led to the formation of the Film Noir genre, initially, Film Noir will re-occur in times of human introspection and show society the dark and shadowy underbelly of human experience.

Cynical, pessimistic, nihilistic, dark, melancholic and dreary are words that could be used to describe Film Noir films. As a genre, it is difficult to define, because, like German Expressionism, "it is less a unified style than an attitude, a state of mind" (Horst Uhr) Film Noir films, and the tone that is

set by them through aesthetic and narrative qualities, is a reflection of the mood of society from the late 1930's to the late 1950's. 'Film Noir', literally meaning 'black film' was coined by French critic Nino Frank after watching an American film retrospective in 1946. He noted the thematic and visual similarities that all evoked the "dark" tone of Film Noir films. The Film Noir period is considered 1940-1958 and is thought to have been produced by "four catalytic elements; war and post-war disillusionment, post-war realism, German influence and hard-boiled tradition." (Paul Schrader, Notes on Noir, 1972) Film Noir films are generally characterised by either visual or narrative qualities. Cinematically they are shot in black and white, with deep focus and obscure angles. They are usually set in the seedy underground, gritty backstreets and ^{dim} hotel rooms or abandoned warehouses. The visual qualities of Film Noir films can usually be defined by wartime depression, meaning low budgets. This often meant little ~~set~~ or no set at all and this, in turn, produced the chiaroscuro lighting & heavy contrasts between dark and light, which set the tone for the films.

In a narrative sense, Film Noir films are defined by desperately flawed characters who reflect the society ~~it~~ and its fears, that produced it. The flawed male protagonist is a down-on-his-luck loser who, in trying to avoid his past, often makes the same mistakes due to human weakness. He reflects the disillusionment of US soldiers going to fight in a war and "protect people" by dropping A-bombs. Holly Martins from Carol Reed's 'The Third Man' (1949) is the perfect embodiment of this character; he

* The femme fatale is a reflection of the fears of female empowerment. With men away at war, women were required to not only tend the children and be a home-maker but to also work in order to supply the industry.

writes "cheap novellettes" for a living and has a girl's name. He desperately attempts to save his best friend Harry Lime and is instead dragged into a world of underground crime. The female counterpart of this man is the deadly Femme Fatale who would "just as soon kill you, as love you". Alluring, intelligent and independent, she drags the flawed male protagonist to hell and back in order to achieve better means for herself - usually by having him kill her unsuspecting husband. 'Double Indemnity's' (1944) Phyllis Dietrichson is just as deadly, as she is beautiful and uses her 'womanly charms' to convince her flawed male protagonist to help her murder her husband, in order to receive his life insurance payout.*

The narratives of Film Noir films differ from the crime or gangster films of the 1930's, in that, although they confine to the doctrine of the Hays Production Code, they do not always end 'happily' with those who deserve it, being dealt just punishment. Instead they are filled with a nihilistic sense of pointlessness; "I killed him for money and for a woman. I didn't get the money, and I didn't get the woman. Pretty isn't it?" (Walter Neff, Double Indemnity) Film Noir films do not "feel any moral responsibility" (~~Walter~~ Christopher McQuarrie), instead they reflect the harsh realism of the period of 1939-1958. They possess an emotional undercurrent, somewhat due to the influence of the Hays Code requiring them to create in a unique way, but also because they are a psychological reflection of disillusioned and pessimistic America.

The Hays Production Code came into practice in 1937 and prohibited immoral and unlawful behaviour to be displayed on screen. It

* However this did not prevent their artistic expression. "In Italy under the Borgias they had war, bloodshed, murder and terror, yet they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love - 500 years of democracy and peace, and what did they produce? The cuckoo clock." (Harry Lime, The Third Man)

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was an attempt to prevent violence and sexual content being

shown. ~~Due to this~~ * Due to this, directors and filmmakers were

forced to produce in a very unique and creative fashion -

'I want to say this, but I cannot use these words.'

This evoked the ~~use~~ ^{need for} of innuendo, subtext, body language and visual qualities to attain a mood appropriate for these disillusioned narratives and, in consequence, generally produced better

acting and more realism. Another influence upon Film Noir films was from German Expressionism. Under wartime pressure,

many creative types fled Europe, for America, and thus made a great impact upon the aesthetic qualities of these films. Directors

such as Fritz Lang ('M' and 'Metropolis') emerged and the film,

coined as the first Film Noir, 'The Stranger on the Third

Floor' (1940, Ingster) is essentially American 'Nosferatu'. In

addition Americans were under the prohibition era in the 1930's.

Pop culture was filled with cheap pulp fiction, on which many Film Noir films were based on - writer James M. Cain was prolific during

this time. The hard-boiled tradition of German Expressionism

and 1930's America under the influence of the Hays Code evoked

the birth of Film Noir, which embodied the cynical attitude

of society who no longer craved justice, they just wanted

truth.

Following 'Stranger on the Third Floor' came the first commercially

successful Film Noir - 'The Maltese Falcon' (1940). This confirms

that the dark and cynical nature of Film Noir films were what

audiences wanted. Due to the nature of block-booking, Film Noir

films were often B-grade films sold with A-grade blockbusters to

achieve larger revenue from cinemas. 'Double Indemnity' (1944) marks an increase in the popularity of Film Noir films again, as an A-grade film with an A-list cast. This era from 1939 to 1945 is heavily marked by WWII, where humanity witnessed, arguably, the most horrific acts committed by mankind. In addition to the Holocaust, the bombings at Pearl Harbour and Hiroshima and Nagasaki tainted the American moral. Film Noir films reflected crimes against humanity, showing humans doing horrible things to other humans, from which a sense of catharsis is achieved for audiences. A sense of schaudenfreude emerges - a pleasure in witnessing another person's misfortune. Especially in this period, the films of this genre reflected society and showed them exactly what they wanted to see. Particularly during WWII the relationship between the Film Noir genre and the wider society is inextricably linked.

'The Third Man' (1949) marked the influence of Film Noir films across the globe. A British Noir, set in war torn Vienna, but still retains all the qualities of Film Noir. From the end of WWII onward, Film Noir gets undeniably darker, however with the invention of the television and economic decline, audiences start to lose interest in the dark reflective quality that Film Noir provides. Instead, the Baby Boom, causing a generational shift, changes the focus of Pop Culture to something more light-hearted, that reflects their interests and their life experience. The birth of rock'n'roll and the 'teenager' occurred in the early 1950s along with a significant boost in economy resulting in ~~new~~ commercialism. 'The Big Combo' (1955) is generally considered

the last Film Noir film to fit the aesthetic criteria of Noir, whilst Orson Welles' 'A Touch of Evil' in 1958, arguably the darkest Noir, marks the end of the Film Noir period. The disappearance of Film Noir films can be put down to audience requirement - the core audiences no longer wished for the harsh realism presented in the hard-boiled dialogue and cynical narratives of Film Noir and so they ceased to be produced.

As society replicates the circumstances, which initially brought about Film Noir films, the genre re-emerges as Neo-Noir - a style applicable to almost any genre. ~~Disappearance~~ In the 1960's horror emerged as the popular genre with films such as 'Psycho' and 'Cape Fear' being hugely commercially successful. These films were filled with violence and sexuality as the Hays Code gradually became redundant. In 1968, the abolition of the Hays Production Code occurred and was replaced with the Motion Picture Production Code and rating system that is used today. This didn't allow directors completely free reign, however it allowed them to produce films to a specific audience and therefore allowed for violence and sex to be shown onscreen. In addition this period marked the height of the Cold War and the fears of communist spread and overall paranoia was expressed through genres such as Science-Fiction. However, with America increasing the war effort in Vietnam after the Gulf of Tonkin incident, a sense of war-disillusionment was occurring. As the 1970's approached, this increased, as did dissatisfaction with the light-hearted mindset of the American Dream. The Watergate Scandal in 1972 shocked America - if they could

not trust the president, then who could they trust. In 1974, Nixon resigned and Roman Polanski's 'Chinatown' was released. This film, in particular, embodies what a Film Noir film would have looked and felt like if it had been produced under the Motion Picture Production Code. The release of the Hays Code, coupled with wartime disillusionment set the right conditions for Noir to re-emerge. Chinatown personifies the corrupt nature of the American political system at the time through its characters, especially Noah Cross who controls the city's waterways as well as raping his daughter who falls pregnant and spends her life trying to keep her daughter and her sister away from the man. Deep psychological undertones are buried throughout the film, again, showing humanity a mirror of itself at its absolute worst. The pessimistic nature of the narrative is summed up by the final line of the film, said to the flawed male protagonist, Jake Gittes, "Forget it Jake, it's Chinatown" after the villain wins and corruption has grown. With these themes, Film Noir, in the evolved form of Neo-Noir shows audiences what they subconsciously want to see - a portrait of their horrifically corrupt world. However, again, with generational shifts and a change in audience mindset, Noir films gradually disappeared again.

With the 9/11 bombings of 2001, in addition to America's involvement with Afghanistan in the Gulf War, the conditions for Noir re-occured and set the stage for the genre to re-emerge. However, much more so as a style,

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than in the 1970's; Neo-Noir emerges. 2002 film 'Minority Report' really falls under the genre of Science Fiction, however the elements of Noir are undoubtedly present. A flawed male protagonist trying to escape his past set in the grim, seedy backstreets of a dystopian America, filled with corruption and pessimism. Again, the genre of Noir films emerges when society hits its low points, often provoked by wartime or socio-political events; It shows the audience what they want to see and thus the relationship between the genre and the wider society is inextricably linked. In times of darkness and trouble, humanity will always reach for Film Noir - something that will truthfully reflect the underbelly of human experience. 'Minority Report' also shows how the genre has evolved into, arguably, more of a style, yet it retains the essence of Noir and applies this to other genres.

Will Noir re-emerge again? Absolutely. No matter what, humanity will drop into points of time where they crave truthful reflection of the dark side of the human psyche. Since the beginning of time, methods of expression have existed for this purpose such as Fairytales or Gothic literature. Film Noir films show the nihilistic nature of humanity, speaking truth in times when it is hard to speak or even see it. In our current times, the world is waged by the War on Terror. As this progresses, it is possible that the wartime disillusionment and need

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for expression will provide Noir to re-emerge, perhaps manifesting in a new way. However the nature of the war of terror is based firmly in a war against an idea - unlike WWI when the enemy was distinguishable by a different colour to the allies, ~~the~~ ^{humanity can} not be sure who is friend and who is foe. In addition, the war on terror is an enemy that won't die simply because it is an idea. Therefore, Noir films will undoubtedly re-emerge and show society what it wants to see - reflecting an image of a gritty reality - humanity at their worst. This is because of the hugely strong relationship between the genre and society; each time society replicates the conditions to predispose the psychology of Film Noir films, they will undoubtedly re-appear.

In conclusion, Film Noir films, as a genre, reflects the society that it comes from. It shows audiences what they want to see, subconsciously or not, and when that cynical narrative is no longer appropriate - it disappears. ~~The~~ However, due to the nature of society, as it reproduces the conditions necessary to evoke Film Noir, the genre will re-emerge, as it did in response to social, political and economic events during the 1930-50's. Film Noir will always be relevant because humanity will always require the gritty realism that is idiosyncratic to the genre and this is due to the

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inextricably strong relationship between the Film Noir genre and the society of 20th century America. Through the "four catalytic elements; war and post-war disillusionment, post-war realism, German influence and hard-boiled tradition" the initial forming of Film Noir occurred and as society replicates these conditions and the psychological need for truth becomes apparent; Film Noir re-emerges and manifests in different forms. Finally, Film Noir films will continue to re-emerge throughout history because they reflect a dark psychology and a deep emotional layer that is hugely relevant to the human experience, and is something that is unique to its genre, showing society what they want to see. //

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