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91473



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Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Level 3 English 2023

91473 Respond critically to specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence

Credits: Four

| Achievement | Achievement with Merit | Achievement with Excellence |
|---|--|--|
| Respond critically to specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence. | Respond critically and convincingly to specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence. | Respond critically and perceptively to specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence. |

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

Write ONE essay in this booklet.

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

Do not write in any cross-hatched area (⊘). This area will be cut off when the booklet is marked.

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

Excellence

TOTAL 07

INSTRUCTIONS

Write an essay on at least ONE **visual or oral text** that you have studied, in response to ONE of the statements below.

Give the details of the text(s) in the box on page 3.

VISUAL OR ORAL TEXTS

Discuss the extent to which you agree with your chosen statement. Respond critically to the statement by making a close analysis of the text(s).

STATEMENTS (Choose ONE)

1. Great texts skilfully combine sound and vision to deliver important truths.
2. Villains are convincing because they reveal both dark and light sides.
3. The treatment of time in unusual ways offers us unexpected insights into our world.
4. A skilful director/creator uses challenging ideas to change the audience's mind.
5. Complex relationships between characters convey the director/creator's purpose.
6. Important ideas are revealed through the details of settings.
7. Successful texts have one key moment that unsettles the audience.
8. The way characters are challenged by their settings encourages us to examine our own world.

Visual or oral text type(s):

Tick (✓) your selection

Film

Radio programme

Graphic novel

Television programme

Oral performance

Drama production

Multimedia/digital/online text

Title(s): _____**Director(s)/creator(s):** _____**PLANNING**

You should aim to write a concise essay of no more than 5–6 pages in length. The quality of your writing is more important than the length of your essay.

In your essay, discuss the extent to which you agree with your chosen statement. Respond critically to the statement by making a close analysis of the text(s).

Begin your visual or oral text(s) essay here:

The 1999 romance film *American Beauty* directed by Sam Mendes, skilfully combines sound and visuals to deliver important truths to its audience. An ensemble of sound and cinematography are vital to the impact of important truths on the film's audience, and are what make *American Beauty* a great film. The collection of sounds and visuals the director used in the film revealed important truths regarding the human condition such as the beauty of life no matter the mundanity one suffers, the negative effect of spontaneous emotion, and the beauty found in death. These three factors intertwine with each other throughout Sam Mendes' film via the use of sound and visuals that impact the audience by delivering the important truths hidden within.

American Beauty combines lighting and non-diegetic sound to deliver an important truth that there is beauty in life no matter the mundanity that it may present. Ricky Fitts is the main character's (Lester Burnham's) neighbour, and is seen throughout the film as a two faced angel of freedom. He is the one who directly states "I know I am the only who knows it. That there is beauty in the mundane." He makes this claim while showing his girlfriend, Lester's daughter Jane, a video he recorded of a plastic bag floating in the wind that he called "the most beautiful thing I have ever seen." The pair sit together in a dark room illuminated by Ricky's Tv. The music in the scene is light-hearted, fresh, and at the same time soothing. The notes jump around to match the movement of the bag, and when the scene cuts to Jane and Ricky's faces in the darkness they share a moment of silence, and the depth of the music increases. Sam Mendes has intentionally made it so that the couple's faces are lit only by the Tv to convey a mood that they are both in total admiration for the beauty they bare witness to (not just the plastic bag, but also each other). He has purposefully chosen a plastic bag as something for the pair to admire as plastic bags are not something the majority of people consider beautiful. Furthermore, the Tv is the only light to Jane and Ricky's darkness in the scene, and along with the music being loudest when the camera is fully zoomed in it is inferred that the greatest life force within the scene is that of an object that cannot feel, nor see. These factors work together to bring life to an inanimate object that much of the audience would have completely bypassed before watching the film. Beauty is created in a mundane and equally inanimate object. This connects to the human experience because it conveys an important idea that sound matched with what we see can have the ability to change our outlook on normally mundane looking objects to turn them into substantially beautiful ones with major functional applications. Therefore, this scene successfully supports the argument that sound and beauty work together to deliver important messages like beauty in life that is present in all objects.

Another important idea within the film, is one that suggests diegetic sounds and cinema techniques work together to convey the negative effect of spontaneous emotion. Towards the end of the film Jane, Ricky, and Angela argue over Angela's persistent seduction of Lester, and Jane's desire to run away to New York with Ricky. The argument takes place in Jane's bright orange bedroom during a rain storm. Jane's bedroom is the only room in the house that isn't filled with depressing

grey's and blue's indicating she is the only light left in the family. This is the first scene in the film with torrential weather increasing the tearful mood of the scene. Once the argument begins Angela warns "Jane he's a freak!" But Jane bursts into emotion claiming "well so am I, and we'll always be freaks, and we'll never be normal, and you'll never be a freak because you're just too ... perfect." To which Angela rebuts with "well at least I'm not ugly," however, Ricky steps up and calls Angela out suggesting "yes you are, and you're ordinary, and you know it." Within the scene Jane and Ricky are arguing from the entrance of her bedroom that leads into an abyss of shadowed blues and greys (the rest of the house) suggesting they'll be leaving the safe and happy security of Jane's room to face the imperfect world of the American Beauty. On the other hand, Angela argues from in-front of a window where the pouring rain becomes all the more obvious, however there are still oranges, and other light colours surrounding her. This may suggest a pool of sadness brewing within Angela that is beginning to consume her cheerfulness. As the sound of the rain dramatically increases throughout the scene, Angela reaches a tipping point where her emotions overwhelm her and she storms out into the complete darkness away from Jane's room. The tone's characters argue with also impact the scene. While Jane and Ricky are very calm and direct with their rebutles, Angela is angsty and shouts. The contrast of tone's and language used elaborate on the emotions felt by the characters to the audience, and further support the delivery of the message on the negative effect of spontaneous emotion. Ultimately, Jane and Ricky win the argument and sit in the room for a small while which may show their happiness as they surround themselves with bright colours for the first time. I feel Mendes directed this scene the way he has to show that the human condition is one that suffers from spontaneous emotion. Jane and Ricky have always felt the way they have in this scene, so although their actions are spontaneous, their words are thought through, unlike Angela's. Angela lets the spontaneity of her emotion overrule her thought, and causes her to lose the argument. Alongside the window of darkness and rain manipulated the audiences view on Angela from a typical cheerleader to an insecure young girl that struggles to stand up for herself, Angela is negatively effected by the argument because she is no longer the confident person she was before it happened. Therefore, American Beauty is a great film due to the use of diegetic sounds like rain, and contrasting colours like the darkness of the window within an orange room that worked together to increase the audiences awareness over the impact of their spontaneous emotions during the human experience. American Beauty fulfils the argument that the combination of sound and visuals work together to deliver important truths because of the mentioned factors.

American Beauty is a great film whose director skilfully combines sound and vision to deliver important truths such as there is beauty in everything, even death. When Lester is murdered at the end of the film the audience experiences glimpses of his life (in a time before the film took place), and we hear him say "I guess I could be pretty pissed off about what happened to me, but it's hard to stay mad when there's

so much beauty in the world." All before the camera pans to his bloody head smiling dead on a counter in front of a vase of roses. This scene is near silent, and becomes totally so once it reaches Lester's smiling corpse. The silence addresses the absence of life within Lester, and his words along with his smile, and the red colours featured within the scene all work together to impart the idea of beauty in all experiences to the audience as red is often associated with love, beauty, passion, and pain. Lester, although not happy to be dead, dies happily as he feels fulfilled by the memories he experiences. Him being shot and dying in-front of a vase of roses, along with the red blood flowing out his head work together to show there was still passion and love within him, and that he viewed his life as beautiful despite what he may have otherwise said throughout the film. Mendes has purposely done this to show that even those people who seem empty on the outside and full of hatred, can still pick out the beautiful moments of their lives to find happiness. This scene summarises the human experience as it makes us ponder upon the beauty of our lives and how people become bitter. The human experience is one that is unpredictable and different for everyone, however we all feel beauty within our memories. Mendes' combination of silence and colour to show the beauty Lester experiences in death have skilfully been selected to deliver the important truth that there is beauty in everything to the audience. They successfully work together, and leave a lasting impact on the viewer. Therefore, American Beauty successfully combines its sound with what the audience see's to deliver an important message that there is beauty to be found in anything, including death.

The 1999 film American Beauty directed by Sam Mendes skilfully combined sound and visuals to successfully deliver important truths to its audience. This film successfully combined sound with lighting and colour to deliver truths over the human condition. It was successful because it delivered deep truths including the beauty of life no matter the mundanity one suffers. the effect of spontaneous emotion. and the beauty of death.

Excellence

Subject: English

Standard: 91473

Total score: 07

| Q | Grade score | Marker commentary |
|---|-------------|--|
| 1 | E7 | <p>Statement: 1</p> <p>Visual / oral text: <i>American Beauty</i> (Sam Mendes)</p> <p>This is an insightful discussion of techniques and how they work together. References to these techniques are integrated into a discussion of the important truth that as humans we can find beauty in simple things, and this key focus is sustained in a logical, structured way throughout the essay.</p> <p>To be awarded a higher grade score, paragraphs could have been more clearly linked to form a more integrated whole, and the argument could have been extended to contexts beyond the confines of the text. However, this is a perceptive, engaging, and fluently written response.</p> |