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NZQA

Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Level 3 Media Studies 2023

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

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 four 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.

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.

High Achievement

TOTAL 04

HIGHLIGHT AND NOTES >

Page 1

INSTRUCTIONS

Choose ONE media genre.

Write an essay discussing the **extent** to which you agree with ONE of the statements below.

Respond critically to the statement by evaluating the **influence, impact, and wider significance** of a relationship between your chosen media genre and society.

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

STATEMENTS (Choose ONE)

1. Genre can subvert or reinforce societal norms.
2. Genre fosters social connection and identity.
3. Genre offers an escape from reality.
4. Genre tells us stories about ourselves.

Media genre: Film Noir

Society: 1940s

Select your statement: 4. Genre tells us stories about ourselves.

PLANNING

B I U | ⌂ ⌂ | ⌂ ⌂ | ← →

ESSAY

Type your essay in the space below. You should aim to write a concise essay of no more than 800–900 words. The quality of your writing is more important than the length of your essay. (The counter will change colour when you reach the recommended word count.)

Make sure you **respond only to your chosen statement** throughout your essay, and include **relevant, specific supporting detail** from a range of media texts.

B I U | ☰ ⌂ ⌁ ↪ ↤

Film Noir is an iconic genre that reached its height in popularity at the beginning of the 1940s through to the 1950s. It's unique stylistic features automatically sets itself apart from other genres, ranging with harsh lighting contrasts, symbolic figures, unique camera angles, etc. During the peak of the genre's popularity, there were many societal and political problems revolving the world, and they were released in a time of so much change happening-- and these films in a time of strife and war told dramatised stories about us as a society. In this essay, I'll be talking about three noir films that I think can help tell us stories about ourselves.

Film Noir is a french term translated to 'black film'. A noir film has very distinct features and story-lines that are all very similar, but each bring their own unique flare. Around the time of noir films peaking in popularity, it was also around the same time that World War II was finally coming to a close. These films offered a sense of escape during times of strife and war, comforting us with over dramatic plot-lines and characters that weren't actually too different from ourselves. The typical noir film often stars the main protagonist of a male detective, a witty, heavy drinker, whom is usually trying to uncover something but often ends up breaking the law himself to help unveil the truth. *The Maltese Falcon* directed by John Huston (1941) is a film that released in the height of the war, and just shortly after The Great Depression had settled. The film focuses on Sam Spade, who is destroyed when he finds out that his partner in his detective agency has been murdered. The film is dark and bitter, and Spade wasn't the perfect hero, which I believe many people at the time needed to see. Men coming back from the war with huge amounts of survivors guilt and not a clue how to get back into the normal life they once knew after having to do the things they did in the war, watching this film would have told them that no hero is perfect and even good men make mistakes. The film has a cynical tone, especially after Spade's partner is murdered and he falls into a spiral of cynicism. I believe this gloomy tone is a reflection of society after The Great Depression, using clever shots and lighting tricks to enhance the feeling of despair and loneliness. John Huston uses noir conventions beautifully to tell a story of how the world had been feeling after The Great Depression, but just disquising it as a silly little mystery novel adaptation.

The femme fatal is an absolutely iconic figure of the Film Noir brand. Translated to 'fatal woman', the femme fatal is a seductive and clever woman, whom is very good at seducing men into doing her dirty work for her without facing any consequences. An example of the common character being used is *Double Indemnity* directed by Billy Wilder (1944). In this film, Barbara Stanwyck's character, Phyllis, is a beautiful, intelligent woman who seduces the main male protagonist into falling in love with her, then tricks him into killing her husband so that she can inherit the insurance money without facing any consequence. It is very common in these films to see a pattern of the male protagonist falling into the femme fatal's trap-- or commonly referred to as their web. This usually tangles the story more and creates new plot-lines and problems to solve in the film, with the protagonist being caught in a flurry of problematic situations that he has nothing to do with. Around the time of releasing, this film could be seen sparking fear in society. World War II was nearing its end, and women were now being forced to resign from their jobs that they'd had to take on while men were away at war. When some women refused to step down from their workplaces to let a man back in, society began to fear women empowerment and what could happen if a woman was given too much power. Because of the fact that in Film Noir, women killing men (usually their husbands) is a very common theme of these films, this just made the fear of women in power grow bigger and bigger. Another film that can represent this fear is *Mildred Pierce* directed by Michael Curtiz (1945). This film displays the rare occasion in Film Noir where a woman is the main protagonist, Mildred Pierce is nothing but a simple housewife to her husband and two daughters in the beginning of the film, but ends the film being a successful business woman. The film's femme fatal is Mildred's daughter, Veda, who wants nothing but to rank high class and own nothing but the nicest things, but this turns Veda against her mother as she thinks because they aren't rich that her mother must not be working hard/be worthless to society. In hopes to bring her daughter back to her, Mildred opens her own very successful restaurant which still doesn't satisfy Veda. I believe the relationship at the time is a reflection of how ourselves as a society can often treat women, like nothing will ever be enough no matter how hard we try. The film released in September of 1945, the same month as the war was coming to an end. This meant even more vets returning home, and more women having to give up jobs. Fear was sparked even further after seeing a female protagonist running

her own business and being successful with it, all while covering things up such as her daughters murder. Women were thought to be nothing but someone to do house chores and look after the children at home, so after seeing a film displaying everything but that-- without blatantly being a 'feminist film'-- society started to think about just how far a woman could go. I think these two films perfectly tell stories of our own society and reflects how people's minds worked back then, even now in 2023 I believe there are still people living amongst our society who are fearful of what a woman in power could be capable of.

Film Noir is an absolutely iconic genre, and although it may not be as popular as it was around eighty years ago, they tell valuable stories and lessons in disguise as a detective story adapted from a hard boiled fiction book. Society has come an amazingly long way, it's interesting to look back on iconic films such as these three and be able to recognise what society was going through at the time of filming, and it's even more interesting to think about how many of these films would have helped people going through hard times. I know that although noir isn't necessarily a genre that people produce anymore, but as long as there are stories to tell about our society, there is a reason for a noir film to re-emerge.

1169 WORDS / 900 RECOMMENDED



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

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Achievement

Subject: Media Studies

Standard: 91493

Total score: 04

Q	Grade score	Marker commentary
1 (4)	A4	<p>The candidate outlined the film noir genre to be discussed and linked this to statement 4: "Genre tells us stories about ourselves". The candidate used strong primary evidence from two texts to support the discussion throughout, approaching the response using conventions of the genre and how these link to aspects of society at the time, in this case reflecting the fears of female empowerment. The candidate also positioned the genre as the central focus of the response rather than addressing individual texts and how they reflect aspects of society.</p> <p>As the choice of genre was from a specific timeframe, the candidate could have discussed society and texts without having to explain the multiple different societies in which films were made, which would have pushed the response to be more text-based rather than genre-based. Personal reflections on what this means, such as "I" statements, were unsupported with other evidence or only mentioned briefly and not explored in enough detail. To gain a higher grade, further discussion of how and why society impacted on the genre and / or the genre impacted on society was required.</p>