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91493



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Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Level 3 Media Studies 2025

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 five 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 the margins (//////). 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



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INSTRUCTIONS

Choose ONE **media genre and society**. (Note: 'Society' refers to a community in a specific time and place, or the audience for a 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.

STATEMENTS (Choose ONE)

1. An emerging* genre can reflect cultural change.
2. For better or worse, genre shows us how society used to be.
3. Genre echoes political ideologies.
4. Social discourse** shapes genre.
5. Genre peers into society's shadows.

*emerging becoming recognised

**discourse exchange of ideas

Media genre:

Society:

Select your statement: ▾

PLANNING

1. racism - get out - genre has changed (shaped) to include black protagonists instead of white
"the sunken place is the industrial-prison complex, its the dark hole we throw black people in." JP
written at the same time as BLM started
"[Get Out] is a film that uses society for horror. Humans and the way we interact is the bad guy" JP

2. feminism and social inequality - handmaid's tale - everything included in the story has already happened
"The Handmaid's Tale is happening right in front of your very eyes." MA
"totalitarianism is always deciding who has the babies and what is done with the babies." MA
"Break the girl and then mold her into a man's image." Nimco Ali - co-founder of Daughters of Eve
nolite le bastarades carborundorum - don't let the bastards grind you down - getting tattooed / became a fight phrase.

3. rise of AI - BM / be right back - connects to CW new app 2wai & the dependance on AI chatbots
"Speculative fiction gives important interventions into discourses about science, technology, and so called progress."
Aimee Bahng, in her dissertation for UC San Diego in 2009.
"black mirror is the box on every wall ... in the palm of every hand; the dark, shiny screen of every TV, monitor and smartphone." CB

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 ☰ ▾ ☰ ▾ ↶ ↷ ? ABC ▾

At its core, genre acts "as a kind of shorthand to increase the 'efficiency' of communication," as David Chandler words in his thesis *Introduction to Genre Theory*. Significantly shaped by current and historical social discourse, the genre of Speculative Fiction acts as a communicator for topical movements and ideologies within 21st century Western society. An umbrella genre, Speculative Fiction explores the 'what ifs' in society; the plausible possibilities for a near future or alternate present. As Margaret Atwood explains, "Speculative Fiction encompasses what could actually happen." Through its reflection of social discourse such as racism, feminism and rising technology, Speculative Fiction allows for unexplored perspectives and contexts to emerge—and fuel the flame for social change.

After centuries of discourse, racism has become ever topical in 21st century Western society—a movement that has morphed the shape of Speculative Fiction. Looking back to the genre of Speculative Fiction in the 20th century, films such as *The Truman Show* (1990) or *Blade Runner* (1983) explore plots of certain speculation, yet fall into a trope of white male leads with little-to-none black cast. Jordan Peele's directorial debut *Get Out* (2017) finds power in its subversion of this convention, featuring a black man as the hero, and the white elite class as the homicidal antagonists. This intentionally unique narrative is directly correlated to the social discourse of the mid-2010's, as Peele finished his first draft in 2013—the same year the significant movement *Black Lives Matter* was formed after the acquittal of the murder of Trayvon Martin. Over the coming years, this discourse only grew, through the election of Donald Trump and re-emergence of extreme and blatant racism. The film itself was shaped by this social scape, as Peele initially wrote the ending to find the protagonist swept into the prison system, yet after filming—which aligned with the presidential election—realised "The audience needs to see a win." He rewrote an escape, allowing the viewers to see hope in their crumbling society. Further, Peele comments on the incarceration system through a detailed metaphor of the hypnotised state the black people are trapped in, saying "The sunken place is the industrial-prison complex. It's the dark hole we throw black people in." *Get Out* envelops extreme racism and neo-slavery in its narrative, combining horror and social commentary into a poignantly plausible tale. Speculative Fiction as a genre is shaped to reflect the injustices of black communities in America, allowing audiences to gain incredible understanding and provides power to the minorities it explores. *Get Out* gives audience a sense of discomfort because it's not impossible. As Peele explains, "The film uses society in its horror. Humans and the way we interact is the bad guy."

Feminism has and remains to be one of the largest social discourses in the 21st century, shaping Speculative Fiction in its advocative narratives. This is highly exemplified in Bruce Miller's television adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017), from Margaret Atwood's 1980 novel by the same name. The show explores a near future where a totalitarian government has completely stripped women's rights, marginalising them down to their wombs and wifehood. Atwood shares that in the shaping of the story, "nothing was included that humans hadn't already done." This fact makes the drama series hit the audience as a horror, as we are forced to reflect on decades of sexism and misogyny, and further, social injustice as a whole. The Handmaids—women who are forced to bear children for their 'commanders'—are dressed in red cloaks and white, face covering hats. This uniform is reminiscent of many cult attires, including New Zealand's own Glorivale, which Atwood notes as an inspiration. As well as this, the act of separating these women by clothing links back to the Holocaust, as Jews were forced to wear yellow armbands to communicate their identity, and further remind them that they had no rights under German law. *The Handmaid's Tale* was released at a time where feminism social discourse was high, the *#MeToo* movement circulating social media, the overturning of *Roe vs. Wade*, and, like *Get Out*, fresh off the back of Trump's inauguration. The series gave way to new forms of protest and power, many symbols making it from the screen to the streets. The previously mentioned uniforms of the Handmaids were being worn to court, protests and public events, serving as a stark metaphor for the silencing women were facing. Phrases from the show such as *Nolite le bastardes carborundorum*—don't let the bastards grind you down—became powerful messages between women, many getting it tattooed as a form of rebuttal. As Atwood says, "Is it entertainment or dire political prophecy? Can it be both?" *The Handmaid's Tale* breached the realms of TV entertainment and shaped itself into a powerful weapon of protest.

In recent years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has skyrocketed in terms of capability, and with it, Speculative Fiction has shaped into a litany of cautionary tales. The technology is circulated by an ever growing discourse, as many question the morality and ethicality of AI, an idea that is heavily explored in the series *Black Mirror*, created by Charlie Brooker. One episode in particular, *Be Right Back* (2013), frames a world with technology to replicate a deceased loved one's likeness through AI—and talk to them once more. This idea of technological advancement was a reflection of society's fears, as when an AI can replicate us, it could replace us. The plot line follows a trajectory of dependence to rejection, as Marta, the protagonist, first loves her replicated husband until she realises he will never fill the mould that is humanity. *Be Right Back* was Brooker creating a true cautionary tale of seeking comfort in AI, and warns the audience against a future where grief becomes interfered by technology. As Aimee Bahng notes in her dissertation for UC San Diego, "Speculative Fiction provides important interventions into discourse about science, technology, and so-called progress." At the time of release, AI was still fairly early in its advancement, leading viewers to see the story through the lens of impossibility. Nowadays, we have AI chatbots at every disposal, ChatGPT seeing hundreds of millions users daily. In extreme topicality, former Disney star Calum Worthy announced a new app named *2wai*, where users can communicate to an AI version of passed loved ones. Many have instantly rejected this idea directly from the possibilities *Be Right Back* warns us of, an indicator of the impressive effect Speculative Fiction returns onto social discourse.

All three examples of social discourses and the effects they have on shaping Speculative Fiction are indicative of the social change this genre creates. Speculative Fiction has power because it *isn't* fiction, but rather an amalgamation of society's strongest movements. As American Speculative Fiction writer Darja Malcolm Clarke states, "Folks overemphasise the entertainment function of Speculative Fiction; it's about the recognition of the vast possibilities within the field." The genre inspires protest, understanding and change through gained perspectives. It is fuelled by the constant change of social discourse, and importantly, provides ideas for the discourse to change.

Excellence

Subject: Media Studies

Standard: 91493

Total score: 07

Q	Grade score	Marker commentary
1 (4)	E7	The candidate concisely discussed some perception in the understanding of the genre and society by drawing conclusions about the significance of the relationship. Their chosen statement 4: "Social discourse shapes genre" was interrogated with some nuance, and there was relevant and considered detail from texts within the genre, as well as secondary sources in support of the discussion.