

Media Units 1 & 2

Chapter 2 — Media representations

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Chapter 2 Media representations — 2A The nature and form of media representations

Theory

Chapter 2 asks three questions about media representations: what one **is**, how one is **built**, and how representations differ across time, location and context. This subtopic owns the first — the **nature and form** of media representations. 2B takes the processes by which a representation is constructed (selection, omission and construction); 2C takes the comparison of representations across different periods of time, locations and contexts.

What a representation is. A **representation** is the constructed depiction of a person, group, place, event, idea or issue in a media product. The word carries its own definition: the media does not present the world, it *re-presents* it — presents it again, in a new shape, made from media codes and conventions and delivered to an audience. What reaches that audience is never the subject itself; it is a version of the subject, framed, lit, cut, worded and arranged by someone, for someone, at a particular time and place. The **subject** of a representation is the person, group, place, event, idea or issue depicted; the representation is the version of that subject the product delivers. The gap between the two is where this Area of Study lives. A three-hour council meeting becomes ninety seconds of television news; a working life becomes one portrait photograph. Something enormous has been turned into something small, ordered and made — and the audience receives the made thing.

The nature of media representations. “Nature” means what representations are like *by their very kind* — the properties every one of them has, whether it is a feature film, a school newsletter or a news photograph. There are six.

1. Constructed and codified. Every representation is made: someone chose the shot size, the light, the take, the order of the cuts, the headline font, the paper it was printed on. Those choices are made out of **media codes** — the technical and symbolic tools used to construct meaning, including camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, and paper stock for print — and out of **media conventions**, the rules or generally accepted ways of constructing meaning and organising media products (conventions of media forms and products, genre conventions, narrative conventions). The study design’s word for this is **codified**: a representation is not a window onto its subject but an object assembled from codes, taught in 1B and 1C and used here as the material a representation is made of.

2. Realism and naturalism are effects, not proof. The study design puts it exactly: the construction of media products “suggests a sense of realism and naturalism that belies their nature as codified representations”. **Realism** is the quality of seeming true to life; **naturalism** is the quality of seeming unarranged, as though the product had simply caught the world as it happened. Both are *achieved*. Handheld camera, available light and unpolished sound do not prove that nothing was constructed — they are the codes by which the feeling of “nothing was constructed” is built. This matters most in the forms that look least constructed: news, documentary, reality television, photojournalism. The more natural a representation looks, the harder its construction is working.

3. Partial. A representation is a selection out of a much larger subject and therefore always leaves things out: a portrait shows one expression of a face that makes thousands; a news package uses eight seconds of forty minutes recorded. A representation is always *a* version and never *the* version — another product could depict the same subject entirely differently and be no less accurate about the parts it chose. The mechanics of that choosing belong to 2B; what matters here is that partiality is a property of all representations, not a flaw in particular ones.

4. Value-bearing. Because someone chose, every representation reflects something of what its makers and audiences take to be normal, important or unremarkable — the study design says representations “reflect the values of media makers and audiences at the time, location and context of their construction”. This holds even where a product looks neutral: a bulletin’s choice of which crime leads and which is not mentioned is a value-laden choice made in a form designed to look value-free. *Looking ahead:* Units 3 & 4 turn this into a formal analytical frame called views and values.

5. Reliant on shared understanding. Representations “rely on a shared understanding of media forms, codes and conventions and the processes of selection, omission and construction”. A low camera angle reads as power only because makers and audiences have both learnt that association. Change the audience and the representation changes with it — a representation is a relationship, not a message posted one way.

6. Situated. Representations “are influenced by social, industrial, economic and technological factors existing at the time, and in the location and context of their creation, production, distribution and consumption” — so every representation carries the fingerprints of when, where and under what conditions it was made.

Factor	What it looks like in a representation
Social	what counts as ordinary, funny, shocking or admirable to the group the makers belong to and address
Industrial	the practices of the industry making it — format, running time, house style, crew roles, the slot the product is cut to fit
Economic	budget, who paid, what the product must earn, the funders it must not offend, the market it must reach
Technological	what the cameras, microphones, editing tools, printing processes and distribution channels of the time made possible

Use this Area of Study’s own list — **social, industrial, economic and technological**. Comparing how these factors shift a representation between one period or place and another is 2C’s task; here you need only situate a single representation in the conditions that produced it.

Within and across media products and forms. **Within** a product means the representation built inside one product: how a documentary depicts a town across fifty-five minutes, or how a magazine depicts ageing across its cover, feature and advertising. At this scale a representation can be sustained, developed, complicated or contradicted.

Across products and forms means the same subject depicted in many products: a country town in a drama series, a tourism poster, a news bulletin and a podcast. At this scale patterns appear that no single product shows. Where a partial depiction of a group recurs across enough products and forms that it begins to stand in for the whole group, it hardens into a **stereotype** — a reduced, repeated representation. A stereotype is not a different kind of thing from a representation; it is what a partial representation becomes when repetition makes it feel like the truth.

The form of a representation — sense 1: the shape it takes. This is the particular version of the subject the product delivers, written as a claim someone could disagree with. Students routinely write a topic where a claim is required.

Topic (not a representation)	Form of the representation (a claim)
“The film is about farmers.”	“Drought-country farmers are represented as isolated, watchful and worn down.”
“The article is about young people.”	“Young people are represented as reckless and in need of supervision.”
“The podcast is about a small town.”	“The town is represented as close, ordinary and quietly generous.”

The test: if another product could depict the same subject and produce a different sentence, you have written the form of the representation. If the sentence would be true of every product on that subject, you have written the topic.

The form of a representation — sense 2: the media form it is realised in. Media forms are the technological means and channels by which the media is created, produced, distributed, consumed and read. Each form makes a different set of codes available, so each builds a different kind of representation. Read the third column as consequences, not features.

Media form	Codes chiefly available	What this does to the representation
Moving image (film, television, video, animation)	camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, colour	it is built <i>over time</i> — established, developed and overturned across a sequence, at the maker’s pace
Still image (photography)	camera, mise en scene, lighting, colour, visual composition	it is frozen in a <i>single frame</i> : everything is carried by what is inside it, plus any caption — nothing

Media form	Codes chiefly available	What this does to the representation
Audio (radio, podcast)	sound (voice, music, effects, silence), acting, editing	is revealed later it is built with <i>no visual codes at all</i> , from voice, pace, atmosphere and pauses, and completed by what the listener pictures
Print (magazine, zine, comic, graphic novel, newspaper, poster)	typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, paper stock, still images	it is taken at the <i>audience's own pace</i> and arranged spatially, so size and placement do the ranking; the physical object carries meaning
Digital (online and streaming video and audio, podcast, magazine, comic, newspaper, video game, blog, website, app)	all of the above, plus interface, hyperlink structure and interactivity	it can be <i>navigated</i> , and in a game <i>acted inside</i> , so the audience's own choices determine which parts of it they meet
Convergent or hybridised (two or more forms combined)	the combined codes of the forms joined	it is <i>assembled by the audience</i> from parts met in different places and often in different orders

Explaining the nature and form of a representation. Five steps, in order:

1. **Name the subject** — the person, group, place, event, idea or issue represented.
2. **Name the product and its media form** — which establishes the codes in play.
3. **State the form of the representation** as a claim: “X is represented as A, B and C”.
4. **Evidence it** — the specific codes and conventions, at a named moment, that build each quality.
5. **Situate it and mark its limits** — the time, location and context of production, the social, industrial, economic and/or technological factors bearing on it, and the fact that this version is partial.

Every claim must be pinned to a code at a named moment. That discipline is what separates describing a representation from retelling a product, and the worked examples below model it four times over.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Explain the nature and form of the representation of older Australians in *Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds* (ABC, 2019). (5 marks)

Working	Comment
<i>Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds</i> (ABC, 2019) is an Australian factual series in which a group of four-year-olds spends time each week with residents of a retirement community. The subject is older Australians ; the media form is moving image .	Steps 1 and 2. Name subject and form first — the form tells the marker which codes you are about to use.
Older Australians are represented as capable, playful and socially hungry rather than frail or finished.	Step 3. The form of the representation, written as a claim. “The show is about old people” would be a topic.
This is built through camera and editing : the series holds close-ups on a resident's face as a child arrives, and cuts between a resident struggling with a task alone and the same resident managing it with a child beside them. Mise en scene places residents in bright, open play spaces rather than beds or corridors.	Step 4. Evidence — named codes at named moments, each tied to the quality it builds.
The construction “suggests a sense of realism and naturalism” — observational filming, no obvious	The nature of the representation. This is the marks-bearing insight: a factual product is still a construction.

performance — yet the representation is **codified and partial**: residents were selected, weeks were compressed into episodes, and the moments of connection were chosen out of far more footage.

It is also **situated**: made for a national public broadcaster in 2019 (industrial) during sustained public argument about aged care in Australia (social), so it is a version of older Australians shaped by that moment and that remit.

Step 5. Situate using this Area of Study's factor list — social, industrial, economic and technological.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Read the stimulus and explain the nature and form of the representation of Marrindal. (4 marks)

Stimulus. The front page of *The Quandara Ledger*, a weekly regional newspaper, carries one photograph across two-thirds of the page: a wide shot of an empty main street at midday, taken from a low position so the road fills the bottom of the frame, with three shuttered shopfronts in soft focus behind. The masthead is heavy black serif type. The headline beneath reads **MARRINDAL HOLDS ON**, in condensed capitals almost as tall as the masthead. A second item at the foot of the page — two columns, no image — reports that the town's swimming club has taken on twelve new junior members.

The subject is the country town of **Marrindal**; the media form is **print**, so the codes in play are visual composition, still image, typography and page arrangement.

Steps 1 and 2. Naming the form stops you reaching for codes it does not have — there is no editing or sound here.

Marrindal is represented as a town that is **emptying and struggling, but enduring**.

Step 3. One sentence, a claim, capturing the tension the page actually builds.

Visual composition does most of the work: the photograph takes two-thirds of the page while the good-news item gets two columns and no image, so the page ranks decline above recovery. The **low camera position** on an empty road makes emptiness the dominant fact, and the **soft-focus shuttered shopfronts** put closure behind everyday life. **Typography** completes it — condensed capitals at near-masthead size give the headline the weight of a verdict, while “holds” grants endurance rather than defeat.

Step 4. Evidence, code by code. Print items are won on composition and typography: the size and position of things on a page *is* an argument.

Nothing here is untrue, but the representation is **partial and constructed** — one midday photograph chosen from many, ranked above a story about a growing swimming club. A page that reversed the two items would represent the same town as recovering.

The nature of the representation. The sharpest way to show partiality is to describe the version that was not published.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Describe the form of the representation of ordinary people in *Conversations* (ABC). (3 marks)

Conversations (ABC) is a long-form radio interview program and podcast in which a single guest, usually not a public figure, talks about their life for around an hour. Ordinary people are represented as **complex, articulate and worth extended attention**. Because the media form is **audio**, this is built entirely without visual codes: an unhurried speaking pace, very little music, and the retention of pauses, hesitations and laughter that most editing would remove. The convention of the single-guest, uninterrupted interview is itself part of the representation — giving one non-famous person an hour of a national broadcaster's airtime asserts that an ordinary life will repay that much listening. *Takeaway*: describing the form of a representation means naming the qualities the subject is given, then the codes and conventions of that media form that give them.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Explain the nature and form of the representation of the village in *Untitled Goose Game* (2019), and how the digital game form shapes it. (7 marks)

Untitled Goose Game (House House, 2019) is a video game made by a Melbourne studio in which the player controls a goose loose in a tidy village. The subject is the **village and the people in it**; the form is **digital** — specifically a game, so the representation is built not only from image and sound but from **interactivity**: what the player is permitted to do.

The village is represented as **orderly, house-proud and comically defenceless**. **Mise en scene** and **visual composition** establish this: neat hedges, swept paths, folded washing and carefully arranged shop displays build a world whose defining quality is tidiness. **Colour** keeps the palette soft and pastel, so the setting reads as gentle rather than threatening, and **sound** is sparse and reactive — a piano motif that starts and stops with the chase — framing each disruption as a small comic episode rather than a real emergency.

What the **game form** adds is decisive. The player is not shown the village but placed inside it as the goose, and the only meaningful actions available are honking, grabbing, dragging and hiding. Because the audience meets the village exclusively through acts of small-scale mischief, the villagers are represented almost entirely as *obstacles and reactions* — people defined by what they are protecting and how badly they cope when it is taken. A film about the same village could pause on a villager alone and give them an interior life; the game's interactivity forecloses that, because a villager not currently reacting to the goose is barely represented at all.

By nature the representation is therefore **constructed, partial and value-bearing**: the tidiness is not a fact about villages but a choice that makes the disruption funny, and the villagers are thin by design. *Takeaway*: in a digital or game form, what the audience is allowed to *do* is part of the representation, and often the largest part.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. (2 marks) (a) Define the term **media representation**. (b) A news bulletin runs a ninety-second item about a flooded town. Name the subject of the representation.

Q2. (3 marks) (a) State what it means to say a representation is **constructed**. (b) State what it means to say a representation is **partial**. (c) Explain, in one sentence, why realism is described as an *effect* rather than as proof that a representation is true.

Q3. (3 marks) (a) Name four media codes. (b) Name the three kinds of media convention. (c) Explain what the study design means when it calls representations **codified**.

Q4. (4 marks) (a) Explain the difference between stating the *topic* of a media product and stating the *form* of the representation it builds. (b) Rewrite each of the following as a statement of the form of a representation: (i) “The documentary is about nurses.”; (ii) “The poster is about the beach.” (c) State the test you would use to check that a sentence states a representation rather than a topic.

Q5. (4 marks) (a) Name the six media form families. (b) Name two media codes available in the audio form, and two available in print but not in audio. (c) Explain one thing a representation in a moving-image product can do that a representation in a single photograph cannot.

Q6. (4 marks) (a) Name the four factors the study design lists as influencing media representations in this Area of Study. (b) For two of those factors, give one example each of how it could shape the representation of a hospital in a television drama. (c) Explain what it means to say a representation is **situated**.

Q7. (4 marks) (a) List, in order, the five steps for explaining the nature and form of a representation. (b) For a media product you have studied this year, complete steps 1 to 3. (c) Complete steps 4 and 5 for the same product.

Unscaffolded

Q8. Identify two reasons why a media representation of an event is never the same as the event itself. (2 marks)

Q9. (*Stimulus.*) Study the description of the photograph below.

Stimulus. A press photograph accompanying a story about apprenticeships. A young woman in workshop overalls stands at a lathe, shot slightly from below so she fills the frame. Her hands are on the machine and she is looking off-frame at her work, not at the camera. A single hard light from the left picks out her face and the metal she is cutting; the rest of the workshop falls into shadow.

Describe the form of the representation of the apprentice in this photograph. (3 marks)

Q10. Outline why a media representation depends on a shared understanding between makers and audiences. (3 marks)

Q11. (*Stimulus.*) Read the description of the magazine spread below.

Stimulus. A two-page feature in *Bellamby Quarterly*, a printed lifestyle magazine, headed “The Weekend Grower”. The left page is a full-bleed photograph of a woman in her sixties standing in a vegetable garden at dawn, holding a basket, lit from behind so the steam off the soil is visible. The right page carries the article in a single narrow column of light serif type surrounded by generous white space, with a small inset photograph of seed packets. The magazine is printed on heavy uncoated stock.

Explain the nature and form of the representation of retirement in this spread. (4 marks)

Q12. (*Stimulus.*) Read the description of the podcast episode below.

Stimulus. Episode 1 of *Kellowbridge Road*, a narrative podcast about a street due for demolition. The episode opens with ninety seconds of unnarrated location sound: magpies, a screen door, a distant mower, children on bikes. A resident then speaks in an unedited take, hesitating twice and laughing once. There is no music until the final thirty seconds, when a single sustained note rises under a council officer reading the demolition notice aloud.

Explain how the audio form shapes the representation of the street in this episode. (4 marks)

Q13. Explain the difference between analysing a representation **within** a media product and analysing a representation **across** media products and forms, and state what each reveals that the other does not. (4 marks)

Q14. Discuss how a partial representation repeated across many media products and forms can become a stereotype, and why a stereotype is best understood as a representation rather than as a separate kind of thing. (5 marks)

Q15. A student writes: “News photographs are not representations, because the photographer did not make anything up — the camera just recorded what was there.” Discuss why this claim misunderstands the nature of media representations. (5 marks)

Q16. (*Stimulus.*) Read the description of the app below.

Stimulus. The Shire of Tarrawin has released a heritage-trail app. The home screen is a map with eleven numbered pins. Tapping a pin opens a photograph, two paragraphs of text and a ninety-second audio recording. Nine of the eleven pins sit within four blocks of the town hall; the other two are at the old railway yards. There is no set order, no index and no way to see all eleven entries as a list — a user reaches an entry only by finding its pin on the map.

Explain how the digital form shapes the representation of Tarrawin’s history that a user receives. (5 marks)

Q17. Explain how the time, location and context in which a media product is made are visible in the representation it builds. In your response, refer to *SeaChange* (ABC, 1998) or to another media product you have studied. (6 marks)

Q18. Explain the nature and form of a representation in a media product you have studied this year. In your response, name the subject, state the form of the representation as a claim, and support it with evidence from specific media codes and conventions. (8 marks)

Media product: _____

Q19. Analyse how the media form in which a representation is realised shapes the form that representation takes. In your response, refer to representations of the same subject in **two different media forms**. (10 marks)

Subject: _____ Forms: _____

Answers

Q1. (a) The constructed depiction of a person, group, place, event, idea or issue in a media product — a version of the subject, not the subject itself. (b) The flooded town and its residents. **Q2.** (a) It is made: every element results from a maker's choices. (b) It is a selection that necessarily omits, so it is *a* version, never *the* version. (c) Realism is produced by codes — a product that looks unarranged was constructed to look that way. **Q3.** (a) Any four of: camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, paper stock. (b) Conventions of media forms and products; genre conventions; narrative conventions. (c) That it is assembled out of media codes, not a window onto its subject. **Q4.** (a) A topic is true of any product on that subject; the form of the representation names the qualities the subject is given and could be contradicted by another product. (b) e.g. (i) "Nurses are represented as overstretched but unshakeably competent."; (ii) "The beach is represented as empty, sunlit and freely available." (c) Ask whether a different product on the same subject could produce a different sentence — if not, it is a topic. **Q5.** (a) Moving image; still image; audio; print; digital; convergent or hybridised. (b) Audio: any two of sound, acting, editing. Print but not audio: any two of typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, paper stock. (c) Build the representation over time; a photograph must carry everything in one frame. **Q6.** (a) Social, industrial, economic and technological. (b) Two plausible examples, e.g. industrial — a 44-minute format forces the ward to be a place of weekly resolved crises; economic — one recycled set, so the hospital reads as small and enclosed. (c) That it carries the marks of when, where and under what conditions it was made. **Q7.** (a) 1 subject; 2 product and media form; 3 form of the representation as a claim; 4 evidence in codes and conventions at named moments; 5 situate and mark its limits. (b)–(c) Any studied product, correctly worked through the five steps (model in the solution). **Q8. Identify (2).** Any two of: it is constructed from codes by makers who chose every element; it is partial; the media form limits the codes available; it carries the values and conditions of its production. **Q9. Describe (3).** Skilled, absorbed and authoritative — the low camera position (stature), the off-frame gaze at her work (concentration and command), the hard single light isolating her and the cut metal (the work as the point). **Q10. Outline (3).** Codes carry meaning only by learnt association; makers select codes expecting audiences to decode them the same way; where that understanding is absent the representation is read differently or not at all. **Q11. Explain (4).** Retirement as unhurried, productive and quietly affluent — the full-bleed backlit dawn photograph, the basket (producer, not consumer), the narrow column in white space (time and ease), the seed-packet inset, the heavy uncoated stock (craft, permanence). Nature: constructed and partial. **Q12. Explain (4).** No visual codes, so the street exists in sound and in what the listener pictures. Unnarrated location sound represents it as inhabited and ordinary; the unedited take builds naturalism; withholding music makes the sustained note the first intrusion, so demolition arrives from outside. **Q13. Explain (4).** Within = the representation inside one product, showing how it is sustained, developed or contradicted, and allowing precise evidence. Across = the same subject in many products and forms, showing patterns, repetition and the effect of form, but rarely evidenced as closely. **Q14. Discuss (5).** Every representation is partial; repetition makes one partial version familiar; familiarity is mistaken for truth, so it stands in for the whole group. It is a representation because it has the same nature and differs only in having been repeated until naturalised. **Q15. Discuss (5).** Not inventing is not the same as not constructing: the photographer chose moment, position, angle, lens, distance and what to leave out of frame; an editor chose the frame and the caption. Realism is the effect of those choices, not evidence of their absence. **Q16. Explain (5).** Interface and interactivity are the codes. Map-only navigation means the user assembles the history in their own order and likely never sees all eleven entries. Nine of eleven pins near the town hall represents heritage as civic and central, the railway yards peripheral. **Q17. Explain (6).** A named product; time, location and context stated precisely; at least two of the social, industrial, economic and technological factors identified; specific codes shown carrying those conditions into the representation; the representation as a version produced by that moment. **Q18.** See Fully-worked solutions for a full model and common errors. **Q19.** See Fully-worked solutions for a full model, band descriptors and common errors.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) A **media representation** is the **constructed depiction of a person, group, place, event, idea or issue in a media product** — a version of the subject built from media codes and conventions, never the subject itself. (b) The **subject** is the flooded town and its residents. *Marker's note:* the subject is what is depicted; the representation is the particular version of it the ninety seconds delivers.

Q2. (a) **Constructed** means *made*: every element the audience receives — shot size, light, the take that was kept, the order of the cuts, the headline type — results from a maker's choice. (b) **Partial** means it is a selection out of a much

larger subject and so omits most of it. (c) **Realism** is an effect because it is produced by codes: handheld camera, available light and unpolished sound make a product feel unarranged, so a product that looks unconstructed has been constructed to look that way. *Common errors*: treating “it looks real” as evidence that a product is not a representation — exactly what the study design means by realism and naturalism belying the codified nature of representations.

Q3. (a) Any four of **camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, paper stock**. (b) **Conventions of media forms and products, genre conventions, narrative conventions**. (c) **Codified** means the representation is *assembled out of media codes*: the audience is not looking through a window at the subject but at an object built from technical and symbolic tools, every one of which was selected. *Marker’s note*: do not offer a closed list of codes that omits **acting** — it is on the study design’s own list.

Q4. (a) A **topic** names what a product is about; it is true of every product on that subject and so says nothing about this one. The **form of the representation** names the particular qualities the subject is given, and could be contradicted by another product on the same subject. (b) (i) “Nurses are represented as overstretched but unshakeably competent.” (ii) “The beach is represented as empty, sunlit and freely available.” (c) Ask whether **another product on the same subject could produce a different sentence**. *Common errors*: opening an extended answer with the topic and never producing a claim — the marks for “form” cannot be awarded until a claim is on the page.

Q5. (a) **Moving image; still image; audio; print; digital; convergent or hybridised**. (b) Audio: any two of **sound, acting, editing**. Print but not audio: any two of **typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, paper stock**. (c) A moving-image product can build a representation **over time** — establish a quality, develop it, then complicate or overturn it — so a character introduced as harmless can be revealed as dangerous. A photograph has one frame and no later moment, so composition, posture, light and caption must carry everything at once.

Q6. (a) **Social, industrial, economic and technological**. (b) For example: **industrial** — a commercial network’s 44-minute slot with act breaks forces the hospital to be represented as a place where a crisis arrives and is resolved weekly, because the format has no room for an unresolved case; **economic** — a limited budget means a single recycled ward set, so the hospital reads as small and enclosed rather than sprawling. (c) **Situated** means the representation carries the marks of when, where and under what conditions it was made. *Common errors*: substituting a different factor list — this Area of Study’s list is social, industrial, economic and technological.

Q7. (a) **1** name the subject; **2** name the product and its media form; **3** state the form of the representation as a claim; **4** evidence it with codes and conventions at named moments; **5** situate it and mark its limits. (b)–(c) *Model response (studied product: a television news item on a housing development)*: **1** The subject is the residents of an outer-suburban estate. **2** A commercial television news item — moving image, so camera, editing and sound are in play. **3** They are represented as reasonable, aggrieved and locally rooted. **4 Camera**: each resident is interviewed in medium close-up at eye level in their own front yard, so they read as equals speaking from home ground; **editing**: their statements are cut into short uninterrupted sentences while the developer’s reply is a written statement read over an exterior shot; **sound**: no music, only location atmosphere, which lends naturalism. **5 Situated** — a metropolitan commercial newsroom, public argument about housing supply (social), a ninety-second slot (industrial) — and partial, since only residents who agreed to appear are represented. *Marker’s note*: the five steps must connect; naming a code and then retelling what happened is the standard way this answer collapses.

Q8. “*Identify*” asks for the facts, briefly. **First**, the representation is **constructed** — a maker chose the framing, the light, the words and the order, so the audience receives an assembled object, not the event. **Second**, it is **partial** — only a fraction of the event is selected and the rest omitted. (Also creditable: the media form limits the codes available; the representation carries the values and conditions of its production.) *Common errors*: answering “because the media is biased” — that names a possible motive, not the nature of representation, which holds even for a maker trying hardest to be fair.

Q9. “*Describe*” asks for the qualities and how they are built. The apprentice is represented as **skilled, absorbed and authoritative**. The **low camera position** lets her fill the frame and gives her physical stature, so she reads as substantial rather than junior. Her **gaze off-frame at the work** rather than at the camera represents her as concentrating on a task she commands — she is not posing for us. The **single hard light** picks out her face and the cut metal while dropping the workshop into shadow, so the composition isolates the person and the work as the only things that matter. *Marker’s note*: three marks require the qualities *and* the codes that build them; “she looks like a good worker” names neither.

Q10. “Outline” asks for the key features briefly. Representations depend on shared understanding because **media codes carry meaning only by learnt association**: a low angle reads as power and heavy condensed capitals read as urgency because makers and audiences have both learnt those associations from years of media use. Makers therefore select codes **expecting** them to be decoded the same way, and the study design accordingly describes representations as relying on a shared understanding of media forms, codes and conventions and the processes of selection, omission and construction. Where that understanding is not shared, the same construction is read differently, or not at all. *Common errors*: describing shared understanding as agreement about the *message*; it is shared understanding of the **code**, which is what makes different readings of one product possible.

Q11. “Explain” requires a chain from the codes to the representation, plus its nature. Retirement is represented as **unhurried, productive and quietly affluent**. The **full-bleed photograph** of a dawn garden, **backlit** so steam is visible off the soil, represents retirement as an abundant, restorative time of day rather than an emptied-out one, and the **basket** makes the woman a producer rather than a consumer. **Visual composition** on the right page carries as much as the picture: a **single narrow column in generous white space** represents its subject as someone with time, where a crowded page would imply pressure. The **inset of seed packets** adds small, deliberate labour, and even the **heavy uncoated stock** associates the subject with craft and permanence rather than disposability. By nature the representation is **constructed and partial**: a version of retirement available only to someone with land, health and money, omitting retirement lived in a flat, in poor health, or still working. *Marker’s note*: paper stock is a media code on the study design’s own list and is often the strongest single observation in a print item.

Q12. “Explain” asks how the form conditions the representation. Because the form is **audio**, the street is built with **no visual codes at all**: the listener never sees it, so everything is carried by sound and completed by the listener’s own picture. The **ninety seconds of unnarrated location sound** represents the street as inhabited, ordinary and alive before any argument is made about it, and does so by evidence rather than assertion. The **unedited take**, with two hesitations and a laugh retained, represents the resident as a real person rather than a presented one — keeping the imperfections is the naturalism-building choice, where a tidied take would have made her a spokesperson. **Withholding music** until the final thirty seconds means the **single sustained note** under the demolition notice is the first non-natural sound in the episode, so the demolition is represented as an intrusion arriving from outside the street’s own soundscape. *Marker’s note*: the marks are for the **form’s** consequences — an answer that would read identically if the product were a film has not addressed the question.

Q13. “Explain” asks for the distinction and what each scale yields. Analysing a representation **within** a product means examining the version of a subject built inside one product: how it is established, developed, complicated or contradicted across that product’s own running time or pages. This scale reveals the **construction in detail** — you can name the shot, the cut, the headline, the page — and can show a representation changing, as when a character introduced as a threat is reframed as a victim by the final episode. Analysing a representation **across** products and forms means examining the same subject in several products, often in different forms: a country town in a drama series, a tourism poster, a news bulletin and a podcast. This scale reveals **patterns and repetition** invisible from inside one product — which qualities recur, which never appear, and how each form’s available codes change the depiction. *Common errors*: treating “across” as simply meaning “more than one example” — the pattern is a finding in its own right.

Q14. “Discuss” asks you to develop the point and reach a position. Every representation is **partial**: it selects some qualities of its subject and omits the rest. A **stereotype** is what happens when one partial version is repeated across enough products and forms that it becomes the familiar version. If a group is depicted the same narrow way in drama after drama, in advertising, in news framing and in comedy, the repetition does what no single product could: it makes that version feel like an observation about the group rather than a choice about how to depict them. Familiarity is then mistaken for truth, and the stereotype begins to shape what audiences expect of real people and what makers assume audiences will accept. A stereotype is best understood as a representation rather than a separate kind of thing because it has exactly the same **nature**: constructed and codified, partial, value-bearing, reliant on shared understanding, and situated. What distinguishes it is not its nature but its **circulation** — it has been repeated until it is naturalised — which means it is analysed with the same tools as any other representation. *Marker’s note*: the strongest answers identify the **omissions** the repetition normalises, not just the qualities it asserts.

Q15. “Discuss” asks you to test the claim and reach a position. The claim confuses **not inventing** with **not constructing**. A photographer who fabricates nothing still makes a series of choices that build the representation: **when** to release the shutter out of a continuous event, **where** to stand, **what angle and focal length** to use, **how close**

to get, and — most consequentially — **what to leave outside the frame**. A photographer twenty metres to the left, at the same moment, with the same honesty, produces a different representation. The choosing continues afterwards: a picture editor selects one frame from hundreds, a sub-editor writes the **caption** that tells the audience what the picture is of, and a page editor decides its size and position, which ranks it against everything else on the page.

The claim also mistakes **realism for evidence**. A photograph resembles its subject, and that resemblance is precisely what the study design warns about: the sense of realism and naturalism a photographic product suggests **belies its nature** as a codified representation. The position to hold is that accuracy and construction are compatible: a news photograph can be entirely truthful about what is inside its frame and still be **partial** (most of the event is outside it), **situated** (shot on the equipment, to the deadline and for the publication of its moment) and **value-bearing** (deciding that *this* is the image of the day is a judgement about what matters). *Common errors*: answering by asserting that news is biased — the argument that wins here is about the nature of the form, and it holds even for the most scrupulous photographer.

Q16. “*Explain*” asks how the digital form shapes what the user receives. In an app, **interface and interactivity** are the codes doing most of the work. **Map-only navigation with no list and no index** means the user must find each pin to reach each entry, so the user **assembles the history in their own order** and almost certainly never encounters all eleven entries: the representation is not merely partial by selection, as every representation is, but partial *differently for every user*, with no beginning, no end and no argued sequence. A printed heritage booklet with the same eleven entries would impose an order and be read through; the app’s structure represents the town’s past as a **browsable field** rather than a story.

Distribution on the map is also a compositional choice: **nine of the eleven pins sit within four blocks of the town hall**, representing Tarrawin’s heritage as **civic and central** — proximity to the seat of local government is what qualifies a place as historic — while the two pins at the old railway yards read as peripheral, so working and industrial history is represented as marginal to the town’s account of itself. Each entry is also a **hybrid unit** of photograph, text and audio whose pace the user controls, and because listening is optional the audio — the element carrying a voice, and therefore a person — is the part most easily skipped. *Marker’s note*: describing what the app contains does not answer the question; the marks are for what the **form** does — navigation, distribution and user control.

Q17. “*Explain*” asks for a chain from production conditions to the representation on screen.

Model response (6 marks). *SeaChange* (ABC, 1998) represents a small coastal town, Pearl Bay, as slow, eccentric and restorative — a place where a city professional’s collapsing career becomes an opportunity rather than a disaster. That representation is legible as a product of its time, location and context.

Socially, it was made in Australia in the late 1990s, when leaving a city career for a coastal town was becoming a recognisable national aspiration rather than a failure; the series drew on that shift and gave it a name in common use. A representation made in a decade that regarded such a move as giving up would have given Pearl Bay entirely different qualities. **Industrially**, it was made for the ABC as an hour-long drama series: a public broadcaster’s remit supported an ensemble of local eccentrics with no crime plot to drive them, and the series length let the town be represented cumulatively. **Economically and technologically**, an Australian television drama of that period was shot on location on a modest budget, and the constraint is visible in the representation — the town is built from real streetscapes, beaches and a small number of recurring interiors, so Pearl Bay reads as **small and completely known**.

These conditions are visible **in the codes** — in wide exteriors that keep returning to the same handful of locations, in the ensemble casting, in the unhurried editing — not merely in the history around the product. The representation is a version of coastal life produced by 1998 in Australia by a public broadcaster, and is partial accordingly: it depicts almost nothing of the work, cost or isolation such a town also involves. *Marker’s note*: if you use a different product, keep the same discipline — name the production conditions, then show them in the codes. Historical background never connected to a construction choice earns little.

Q18. *Command term — explain*: produce a how/why chain from the codes to the representation, not a definition and not a retelling.

Media product: a television documentary series about a suburban emergency department

Model response (8 marks). The **subject** is the staff of a suburban public hospital emergency department. The **product** is an observational documentary series and the **media form** is **moving image**, so camera, editing, sound and mise en

scene are the codes available. The **form of the representation** is this: the staff are represented as **improvising, physically exhausted and quietly authoritative** — competent not because the system supports them but in spite of it.

Camera builds the improvisation: the series is shot handheld and follows staff from behind at walking pace through corridors, so the audience arrives at each situation at the moment they do and with no more information, and when an explanation comes it comes on the move. **Editing** builds the exhaustion: sequences run long within one case, then hard-cut to an unrelated case with no establishing shot to reorient the audience, and cutting to a wall clock at intervals through what proves to be a single shift makes duration the point. **Sound** and **mise en scene** build the authority: there is no non-diegetic score, only monitor alarms and overlapping conversation, and against that noise the calm, unraised voices of senior staff stand out — the code doing the work is the **contrast** between a chaotic environment and steady speech, while corridors lined with occupied beds place the staff permanently among more work than the space can hold.

By **nature** the representation is constructed and partial despite the documentary form: weeks of footage were compressed into episodes, the cases shown are those where consent could be obtained, and the staff who appear are those who agreed to be filmed. Its apparent realism is an achieved effect, produced by the handheld camera, the absent score and the retained ambient noise — the very choices that make it look unconstructed. It is also **situated**: made for broadcast during sustained public argument about hospital waiting times (social) and cut to a weekly episode format (industrial), which is why each episode resolves on individual competence rather than on the systemic question the series keeps raising.

Common errors: stating the topic and never producing a claim; naming codes without saying what quality each builds; and — most commonly with factual products — treating the realism as proof that no representation is involved. At eight marks a full-mark answer names the subject and media form, states the form of the representation as a genuine claim, ties at least three distinct codes to specific qualities at named moments, and addresses the representation's **nature** explicitly.

Q19. Command term — analyse: break the two representations into their constructed elements and show how the **form** in each case shapes what the representation can be. The comparison is about form, not about which product is better.

Subject: a country town at the end of a drought · Forms: **still image** (photography) and **audio** (podcast)

Model response (10 marks). The same subject — a country town in the weeks after a long drought breaks — produces two markedly different representations in the still image and audio forms, because each form makes a different set of codes available and positions its audience differently.

The still image. A press photograph must carry the entire representation in one frame, since photography has no later moment in which to revise a first impression. Its codes are camera, mise en scene, lighting, colour and visual composition, so the representation is built by **arrangement**: what is placed against what inside the frame. A photograph of a farmer standing where green is just returning through cracked ground, shot wide and slightly low with sky filling the top two-thirds, represents the town as **small, exposed and cautiously renewing** — the low horizon dwarfs the figure, the wide lens keeps the isolation visible, and the single frame forces the two states of the land, cracked and green, into simultaneous contrast. Because the form freezes one moment, the representation reads as a **condition**: this is how the place *is*. Two consequences follow. The photograph cannot show change, so it can represent recovery only by juxtaposition inside the frame, never by sequence; and because the audience takes it in at their own pace, the composition must rank its own elements, while the **caption** — a text-and-graphics code — becomes decisive in fixing which available reading the audience takes.

The audio. A podcast episode on the same subject has no visual codes at all. Its codes are sound — voice, atmosphere, effects, silence — plus editing, so the representation is built through **duration and voice**, and the town becomes something the listener assembles rather than sees. Two minutes of rain on a tin roof with no narration represents relief as something **endured over time** rather than observed; a farmer's unedited speech, hesitations and the long pause before answering left in, represents the community as **worn, undemonstrative and not performing for anyone**. Where the photograph gives a condition, the audio gives a **process**: the subject is represented as still happening. Two consequences follow here too. Because the listener supplies the images, the representation is completed differently by every audience member. And audio can hold **silence**, which is unavailable to the still image as a code at all; the pause before an answer carries meaning a photograph could only gesture at through expression.

What the comparison shows. The difference is not one of accuracy or skill but of **what each form’s codes can do**: the still image can rank elements against one another simultaneously but cannot unfold; audio can unfold and can use silence but cannot show anything. Each form leans on the strength it has, and each is **partial in a way characteristic of its form** — the photograph omitting time, the podcast omitting sight. This is why the study design asks for the nature and form of representations within media products **and forms**. The nature is constant: both are constructed, codified, partial, value-bearing, reliant on shared understanding and situated. The **form** is not constant — it is determined jointly by the makers’ choices and by the material the chosen media form gives them to choose from. A complete analysis names both.

Band descriptors (out of 10):

- **High (8–10):** both forms named with their available codes; a distinct form-of-representation claim for each; specific code-level evidence at named moments in both; the **consequences of the form** analysed — what each form can and cannot do to a representation — rather than merely described; the constant nature and the variable form distinguished explicitly.
- **Mid (5–7):** two forms treated unevenly, or analysis that stays at “the photo shows X and the podcast shows Y” without explaining why the form produces the difference; some claims unanchored; the nature of representation asserted rather than shown.
- **Low (1–4):** one form treated properly and the other only mentioned; description or retelling in place of analysis; codes listed without linking them to the representation.

Common errors: comparing the two **products** instead of the two **forms**; evaluating which representation is “better” or “more real”; treating the difference as a matter of the makers’ skill; and using codes the named form does not have — attributing editing rhythm to a single photograph, or lighting to a podcast, ends the analysis immediately.

Chapter 2 Media representations — 2B Constructing representations: selection, omission and construction

Theory

A media representation does not simply appear. Somebody made it. Between the world and the audience sits a chain of decisions — what to point the camera at, what to leave out of the shot, which take to keep, which words to put underneath, which sound to lay over the top — and it is those decisions, not the world itself, that the audience finally receives. Where the previous subtopic established *what* a media representation is, this one sets out **how** one is built.

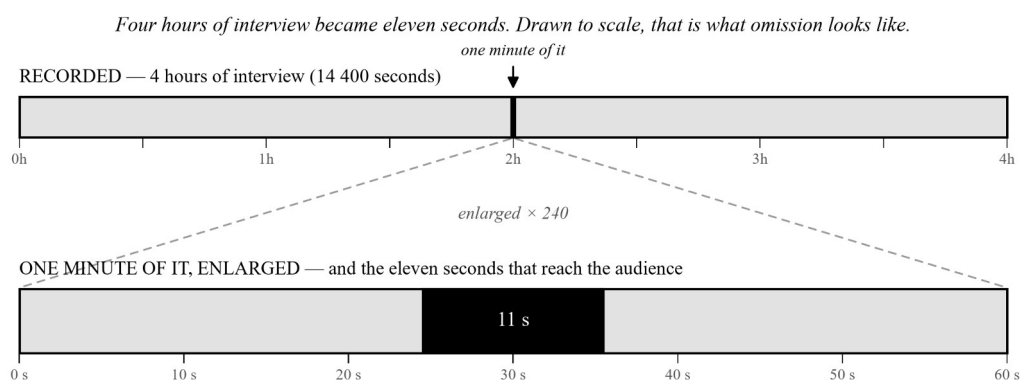
The three processes. The study design is precise about the mechanics: representations rely on a shared understanding of media forms, codes and conventions **and the processes of selection, omission and construction**. Those three words are the whole of this subtopic, and they must be used exactly — there are three named processes, not two and not four.

- **Selection** is *choosing what to include* — which subject, moment, location, performer, framing, take, shot, word, sound or image on the page.
- **Omission** is *leaving material out* — everything that could have been included and was not. Omission is not an accident or a gap; it is a decision, and it carries meaning as strongly as what remains.
- **Construction** is *shaping and assembling the selected material* using media codes and conventions so that it communicates a particular meaning — the arranging, ordering, juxtaposing, timing, repeating and emphasising that turn raw material into a representation.

Selection and omission are one decision seen from two sides. Every media product is finite — a frame has edges, a package has a running time, a page has space — so including one thing necessarily excludes everything that could have occupied its place. A photographer who frames a tight close-up of one protester’s face has *selected* that face and, in the same act, *omitted* the size of the crowd, the counter-protest across the road and the police line behind. So always ask both questions: *what is here?* and *what is not here that could have been?*

Omission is powerful because it is invisible. An audience can examine what is on the screen or the page; it cannot examine what was never put there. A viewer has no way of knowing, from the product alone, that four hours of interview became eleven seconds, or that the tidy beach in the advertisement was framed to exclude the car park behind the camera. Selection announces itself; omission works in silence — so a strong analysis names a specific absence and says what that absence *does*.

That first figure is worth taking literally, because the sentence “four hours became eleven seconds” is easy to read and impossible to picture. Drawn to scale below, the four hours run the full width of the page; the eleven seconds that reach the audience are **0.076%** of it — one second kept for every 1309 recorded — so the surviving fragment has to be enlarged 240 times before it is even visible. Everything else was omitted, and the finished product carries no trace of it.



The eleven seconds are 0.076% of what was recorded — one second kept for every 1 309 recorded.
The finished product carries no trace of the rest, which is why an audience cannot audit an omission and a student must name one.

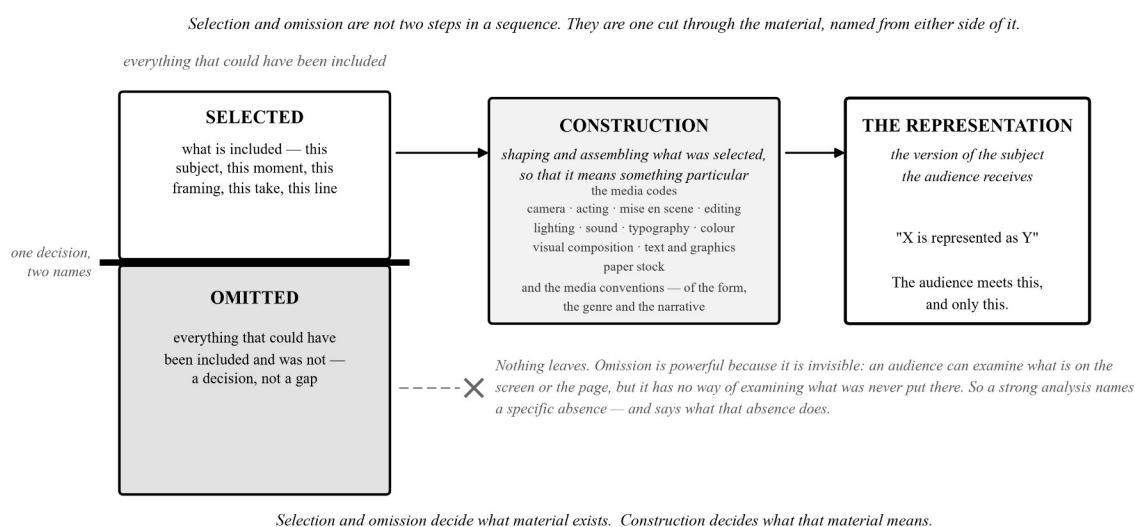
Construction: the tools are codes and conventions. Selection and omission decide *what material exists*.

Construction decides *what that material means*. Its instruments are the **media codes** — the technical and symbolic tools listed by the study design as camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, and paper stock for print — together with the **media conventions**, the rules and generally accepted ways of constructing meaning or organising media products. Both are studied in Chapter 1; here they are the instruments of the third process.

Decision a producer makes	Process at work	Code or convention doing the work
Filming a farmer rather than a supermarket buyer	Selection	— (a subject choice, before any code is applied)
Framing him chest-up, keeping the drought-bare paddock out of shot	Selection and omission	Camera (framing); visual composition
Shooting him from slightly below eye level	Construction	Camera (angle) — reads as stature and authority
Warm, low, late-afternoon light on his face	Construction	Lighting; colour
Holding the shot eight seconds with no cut, under a sustained string note	Construction	Editing (duration); sound
Opening the segment with an establishing wide shot of the property	Construction	Convention of the form (the news package's standard opening)

Read downwards: the first rows decide what exists, the later rows decide what it means. “The camera is used” names a tool without a decision or a meaning; “the low angle places the farmer above the viewer, constructing him as someone whose account should be trusted” completes the chain. Note too that making one element louder, larger, longer or more repeated than another — **emphasis** — is a construction choice worth discussing, but not a fourth process.

The three processes are drawn below, and notice what the drawing refuses to do: it does not put selection, omission and construction in a row of three boxes, because that would say they happen one after another. There is **one cut** through the possible material, and the two halves it makes are what *selection* and *omission* name. Only the material above the cut travels on into construction, where codes and conventions turn it into the representation an audience receives. Nothing at all leaves the omitted block — which is exactly why the audience cannot audit it, and why you must name the absence yourself.



The processes run through the whole production. The same representation is selected, omitted and constructed several times over across development, pre-production, production, post-production and distribution: a documentary team selects a subject, then a location, participants and questions, then framings and takes; omits most of the recorded material in the edit while constructing the survivors into a sequence; and finally selects a title, a thumbnail and a

platform. The stages belong to Chapter 4; the point here is that construction is cumulative, and the edit and the packaging are as decisive as the shoot.

Realism, naturalism, and why non-fiction is not exempt. The study design puts the difficulty plainly: the construction of media products suggests a sense of **realism** and **naturalism** that *believes* their nature as **codified** representations. The better a product is made, the less made it looks, and the audience stops seeing the choices that produced it — so “it looks real” is never evidence that a representation is uncomposed, only that the construction is skilful. This applies to non-fiction exactly as it does to drama, a point that costs students marks every year: a camera operator at a football match selects which player to follow and omits the rest of the field, a director selects a replay angle, a commentator constructs a meaning over the top of it. Being truthful about real events and being constructed are not opposites — every non-fictional product is both.

What shapes the choices. Producers do not choose in a vacuum. In this area of study the factors named are **social, industrial, economic** and **technological**, existing at the time of a product’s creation, production, distribution and consumption, and in its location and context. (Other parts of the course use different factor lists for different purposes; this is the list that belongs here.)

Factor	What it pushes on	Worked instance
Social	What a community at a given time and place treats as normal, interesting or offensive	An advertisement selects a family group its audience will read as ordinary, omitting arrangements the same audience might find unusual
Industrial	Industry practices, formats, house styles, deadlines and obligations	A nightly news package runs about ninety seconds, so a two-hour public meeting is omitted down to one speaker and one line of reply
Economic	Budget, revenue, sponsor interests, and what an owner believes will sell	A campaign is shot across two days at one accessible location, so the cheap-to-reach places come to stand for a whole region
Technological	What the available tools can capture, and how the product will be viewed	A product made for phone screens selects close framings and omits wide detail that would be lost at that size

None of these factors *excuses* a representation. “They only had ninety seconds” explains why a selection was made; it does not stop that selection from constructing a particular version of the meeting. Name the pressure **and** its effect.

Shared understanding — why construction works at all. Representations *rely on* a shared understanding of forms, codes, conventions and these processes: a low angle suggests stature, a hand-held camera immediacy, a minor key unease, a full-page photograph greater importance than a column of text. Where that shared understanding is missing — a different generation, a different culture, an unfamiliar form — the constructed meaning can fail or invert. Chapter 3 develops how audiences read; carry from here that construction *proposes* a meaning rather than guaranteeing one.

The method for this subtopic. Four steps carry almost every 2B question.

1. **Name the subject and the product.** Who or what is represented, in which product and media form.
2. **Selection.** Name one or two *specific* inclusions — a named shot, image, line, sound or layout element. Never “the camera work”; always the instance.
3. **Omission.** Name something absent that a reasonable alternative version would plausibly have carried, and say what its absence does.
4. **Construction.** Name the code or convention, the instance, and the meaning it makes; then state the representation in one sentence — “X is represented as Y.”

Step 4 is the one students skip. A list of techniques is not an analysis of a representation; the answer has to arrive at what the product is saying about its subject.

Looking ahead: in Units 3 & 4 this same deconstruction becomes the evidence base for arguing how a representation reflects or challenges the **views and values** of its context.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Stimulus. The front page of the *Kellamarra Post*, a fictional regional weekly. Above the fold: one large photograph of four teenagers sitting on the concrete edge of a skate bowl at dusk, shot from across the park with a long lens, faces in shadow. The headline, in heavy black capitals, reads YOUTH GATHER AT PARK. A 40-word caption reports that the council received eleven complaints about the park last year. There is no daylight photograph of the park and no quotation from anyone under 30. A short item on councillors' parking permits sits below the fold.

Explain how selection, omission and construction have been used to build the representation of young people on this front page. (6 marks)

Working	Comment
The page constructs a representation of local young people as an anonymous group to be watched with suspicion.	State the representation first, in one sentence. It gives the answer something to prove.
Selection. It selects one photograph — dusk, long lens, from across the park — and one item of information, the eleven complaints, placed directly beneath it.	Name specific selections. “A photo of teenagers” is too vague; the time of day, the distance and the figure are the evidence.
Omission. It omits any daylight image, any count of how many people use the park, and any voice belonging to a person under 30. The teenagers are represented but never heard.	Name absences a reasonable alternative front page would have carried. The omitted <i>voice</i> is the strongest point available.
Because those omissions leave the complaint figure unanswered, the reader has nothing to weigh it against, so eleven complaints stand for the whole community's view.	Say what the omission <i>does</i> . This step separates a 6-mark answer from a 3-mark list.
Construction. The long lens flattens the group into a distant huddle and the dusk light holds their faces in shadow, so they read as unidentifiable rather than individual; the heavy capitals of YOUTH GATHER AT PARK borrow the typographic weight reserved for serious news, and “gather” suggests massing where “meet” would not.	Two codes — camera and lighting, then typography — each with instance and meaning, plus the word choice.
Running the photograph above the fold at full width, with the parking item beneath, uses the page's own hierarchy to rank this as the more urgent matter — producing a representation of young people as a faceless, unheard presence associated with complaint.	Visual composition and a print convention as construction; close by returning to the representation.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Explain how omission alone can construct a representation. Refer to a promotional campaign. (4 marks)

Working	Comment
Verrindale Shire Council commissions Brightsalt Pictures to make a 60-second tourism spot representing the shire as an unspoiled coastal escape.	Establish product, maker and intended representation. Both organisations are invented.
Everything in the spot is true: the beach, the headland walk and the bakery all exist and look as they appear.	Concede the accuracy. Omission works without any falsehood, and saying so sharpens the point.

Working	Comment
What the spot omits is the working port, the highway carrying traffic past the town, the caravan park adjoining the beach, and the fact that the headland walk is closed four months of the year.	Name specific absences, not “the bad bits”.
Because those elements are absent, the viewer has no material from which to assemble a competing version: the shire is not <i>argued</i> to be unspoiled, it is simply never shown as anything else.	Explain the mechanism — omission removes the alternative rather than defeating it.
The representation is therefore built almost entirely from what is missing, which is also why a viewer is unlikely to notice it happening.	Close on invisibility: an audience cannot inspect what was never included.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Explain how a feature film uses selection and omission to construct a representation of a family. Refer to *The Castle* (1997). (5 marks)

The Castle (Rob Sitch, 1997) constructs a representation of the Kerrigans as a suburban Australian family whose ordinariness is its strength. The film **selects** a narrow band of material: the small house beside Melbourne Airport, the dinner table, the greyhound, the verandah extension, and Darryl Kerrigan’s steady approval of everything his family produces. It **omits** almost everything a film about a compulsory acquisition could have carried — the case *for* the airport expansion, which is never put as an argument the audience has to weigh, and, more consequentially, any unsympathetic view of the family from outside it: every outsider the film brings in, from the neighbours who join the fight to the suburban solicitor and the QC who carries the case to the High Court, ends up on the Kerrigans’ side. That omission is decisive: with no competing perspective available, the audience is given no vantage point from which to look down on them. The **construction** completes the representation, most obviously through the youngest son Dale’s voice-over narration, which delivers the family’s world in an admiring, matter-of-fact register, so details another film would present as limitations arrive as achievements. The Kerrigans are represented not as a family who lack things but as a family who have what matters. *Takeaway*: what a film refuses to show can shape the representation as firmly as anything it puts on screen.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Explain how media codes and conventions are used to construct a representation of family life in an animated television series. Refer to *Bluey* (2018–). (5 marks)

Bluey (Joe Brumm, Ludo Studio, 2018–) constructs a representation of contemporary Australian family life as small, ordinary and worth taking seriously. The material it **selects** is deliberately minor — a game invented on the way to the shops, a delayed bedtime, a father asked to play one more round — and the events of a wider adult world are **omitted** almost entirely. The **construction** does the rest. **Colour** is high-key and warm, reading as safety rather than realism. **Visual composition** repeatedly puts the parents down at the children’s level and inside the same frame — kneeling, sprawled on the floor, drawn into the game rather than watching from the edge of the shot — constructing them as participants in the play rather than supervisors of it. **Mise en scene** anchors the series to a place: the raised Queenslander house, the timber verandah and the backyard are recognisably Brisbane, so “family” here is Australian and suburban rather than generic. **Acting** — the vocal performances — keeps the parents unhurried and amused even under provocation, constructing patience as the normal adult register. The **convention of the short episode**, at roughly seven minutes, is itself part of the representation: a family story that resolves in seven minutes is a family whose problems are small and solvable. *Takeaway*: codes and the conventions of the form together decide what the selected material means.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. (3 marks) Define (a) **selection**; (b) **omission**; (c) **construction**, as processes in the construction of media representations.

Q2. (4 marks) (a) Classify each decision as primarily selection, omission or construction: (i) a producer chooses a 22-year-old apprentice rather than a manager as the interview subject; (ii) an editor cuts a three-second reaction shot into the middle of an answer; (iii) a photographer frames a portrait so the derelict building behind the subject is out of shot; (iv) a designer sets a magazine headline in a thin, widely spaced typeface. (b) Explain why every act of selection is at the same time an act of omission.

Q3. (4 marks) (a) Name the media code being used in each choice: (i) shooting a speaker from slightly below eye level; (ii) holding a shot for twelve seconds without cutting; (iii) placing a single sustained low note under a scene. (b) State one media *convention* — not a code — that a producer could use to construct a representation.

Q4. (4 marks) (a) Name the four factors this area of study identifies as influencing media representations. (b) Classify each influence under one of those factors: (i) the product must be watchable on a phone screen; (ii) the network's news package format runs to ninety seconds; (iii) the sponsor will not fund a second shooting day; (iv) the intended audience would find the scene confronting.

Q5. (6 marks) (*Stimulus.*)

Stimulus. Corryn Grove Orchards, a fictional fruit grower, posts a 90-second recruitment video for seasonal pickers. It opens on a wide shot of rows of trees at sunrise, then shows four workers in their twenties laughing as they fill a bin, a supervisor demonstrating a technique in close-up, and a group eating together at a long outdoor table. The pay rate, the hours, the accommodation and the temperature are not mentioned. Bright acoustic guitar runs underneath throughout.

- (a) Identify who or what is represented in the video.
- (b) Identify one detail that has been selected.
- (c) Identify one omission and state its effect on the representation.
- (d) Explain one construction choice and the meaning it makes.

Q6. (5 marks) (a) Explain what is meant by the claim that the construction of a media product suggests a sense of realism and naturalism that belies its nature as a codified representation. (b) Explain why a non-fictional media product is still a construction.

Q7. (5 marks) For a media product you have studied this year: (a) identify the subject of one representation in it; (b) describe one significant omission; (c) explain one construction choice and the meaning it makes.

Media product: _____

Unscaffolded

Q8. Outline the difference between selection and omission in the construction of a media representation. (2 marks)

Q9. Describe how construction differs from selection. Use one example to support your answer. (3 marks)

Q10. (*Stimulus.*)

Stimulus. A press photographer's original frame shows a woman speaking into a microphone at an outdoor rally, with roughly two hundred people behind her and a row of empty barricades to one side. The published version is cropped tightly to her head and shoulders against open sky.

Describe how the crop changes the representation of the event. (3 marks)

Q11. Explain why omission is a powerful process in the construction of media representations. (4 marks)

Q12. (*Stimulus.*)

Stimulus. Two fictional local papers publish the same wire photograph of a half-built housing estate on the edge of town. *The Ashfern Dispatch* runs it at a quarter page under the headline "Homes at last", captioned with the number of dwellings approved. The *Quilby Point Gazette* runs the same image across the full width of page one under "Paddocks going, going...", captioned with the hectares of farmland rezoned.

Explain how the two papers construct different representations of the same event. (4 marks)

Q13. Explain how media codes are used to carry out the process of construction. Refer to two different codes in your response. (4 marks)

Q14. (Stimulus.)

Stimulus. Extract from a pre-production shot list for a short promotional film for Riverpath Youth Service, a fictional community organisation.

Shot	Description	Note
1	Wide, empty street at dawn, hand-held	“Before”
2	Close-up, hands opening the centre’s roller door	Slow
3	Mid shot, staff member listening, no dialogue	Hold 8 sec
4	Wide, full room, natural light, laughter	“After”

Note at the foot of the page: *no shots of the waiting list or the referral office.*

Explain how the decisions recorded in this planning document will construct a particular representation of the service. (5 marks)

Q15. Discuss how economic and industrial factors influence what is selected and omitted in a media representation. (5 marks)

Q16. Explain how a non-fictional media product constructs a representation through selection, omission and construction. Refer to a product you have studied or know well. (6 marks)

Q17. (Stimulus.) A student wrote the response below.

Stimulus. “The documentary is not a representation, because everything in it really happened. The director used the camera and the editing, which made it look professional. Nothing was left out that mattered.”

Discuss two ways this response misunderstands the construction of media representations. (6 marks)

Q18. (Stimulus.)

Stimulus. A double-page spread in *Wintervane*, a fictional Australian outdoor magazine. The left page is a single full-bleed photograph of one climber alone on a ridge at sunrise, shot from below against clear sky. The right page carries 300 words of text in a narrow column, a small portrait of the same climber, and a boxed list headed “The kit she carried”, with prices. There are no images of the four other people on the trip, the vehicles that carried the equipment, or the track notes.

Analyse how selection, omission and construction work together across this spread to represent outdoor adventure. (8 marks)

Q19. (Extended response.) Analyse how a media product you have studied this year constructs a representation of a person, group, place or event. (10 marks)

Your response should:

- identify the media product, its media form and the subject of the representation
- address all three processes — selection, omission and construction — with specific evidence
- refer to at least one social, industrial, economic or technological factor influencing the choices
- state clearly what the representation says about its subject

Media product: _____

Answers

Q1. (a) Choosing what to include. (b) Leaving material out — a decision, not an accident, that carries meaning. (c) Shaping and assembling the selected material with media codes and conventions so it communicates a particular meaning.

Q2. (a) (i) selection; (ii) construction; (iii) omission (equally acceptable as selection of the frame, since the two are one decision); (iv) construction. (b) Including one thing excludes everything that could have occupied that place — frame, running time and page space are finite.

Q3. (a) (i) camera (angle); (ii) editing (shot duration); (iii) sound. (b) Any valid convention, e.g. the news package's establishing wide shot, the above-the-fold hierarchy of a front page, the three-act structure, the interview two-shot.

Q4. (a) Social, industrial, economic and technological. (b) (i) technological; (ii) industrial; (iii) economic; (iv) social.

Q5. (a) Seasonal fruit-picking work at Corryn Grove Orchards, and the young workers who do it. (b) Any one selected detail — the sunrise wide shot, the workers laughing, the shared outdoor meal, the supervisor's demonstration. (c) Omission of pay, hours, accommodation or temperature; effect — the viewer has nothing against which to test the appeal, so the work reads as social rather than conditional. (d) Any one code with its meaning, e.g. bright acoustic guitar constructing the work as light and companionable.

Q6. (a) Skilful construction makes a product feel natural and unmediated, hiding the codified choices that produced it — “it looks real” evidences good construction, not absence of it. (b) Real material is still selected, omitted and arranged: the events are real, the representation is made.

Q7. (a)–(c) Any studied product: subject named; one significant absence described with its effect; one code or convention named with its instance and meaning.

Q8. *Outline (2).* Selection = what is put in; omission = what is left out; both are decisions and both shape the representation.

Q9. *Describe (3).* Selection decides what material exists; construction decides what it means, via codes and conventions; one example showing the same selection constructed two ways.

Q10. *Describe (3).* The crop omits the crowd and the barricades and selects the speaker alone against sky; the event is re-represented as one individual's statement rather than a gathering, and scale and support become unreadable.

Q11. *Explain (4).* Audiences can inspect what is present but not what is absent; omission removes the alternative rather than arguing against it; and it is naturalised by the product's own realism.

Q12. *Explain (4).* Same image, different construction: size and page position, headline wording (“Homes at last” vs “Paddocks going, going...”) and the caption's chosen measure (dwellings vs hectares) construct progress in one paper and loss in the other.

Q13. *Explain (4).* Two named codes from the study design's list, each with an instance and the meaning it constructs — not a list of tools.

Q14. *Explain (5).* The dawn-empty/room-full pairing constructs a before-and-after; hand-held constructs immediacy; the 8-second held listening shot constructs attentiveness; the noted omission of the waiting list and referral office removes the service's limits.

Q15. *Discuss (5).* Economic — budget, sponsor and revenue pressures narrow what can be shot and kept; industrial — formats, durations, house style, deadlines and obligations narrow it again; both explain choices without excusing their effect; reach a position.

Q16. *Explain (6).* A named non-fictional product; a specific selection; a specific omission with its effect; a named code or convention with the meaning constructed; the representation stated.

Q17. *Discuss (6).* Two of: real events do not make a product unconstructed; naming codes without naming meaning is not analysis; “nothing important was left out” is unknowable from the product alone, because omission is the one process a viewer cannot inspect.

Q18. *Analyse (8).* See Fully-worked solutions.

Q19. See Fully-worked solutions for a full model, band descriptors and common errors.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) **Selection** is the process of choosing what to include in a media product — the subject, moment, location, performer, framing, take, word, sound or image. (b) **Omission** is the process of leaving material out; it is a decision rather than an accident, and what is absent shapes the representation as strongly as what remains. (c) **Construction** is the process of shaping and assembling the selected material through media codes and conventions so that it communicates a particular meaning. *Marker's note:* the study design names exactly these three — do not add a fourth.

Q2. (a) (i) **selection**; (ii) **construction** — the edit arranges material to shape meaning; (iii) **omission** — the frame excludes the building (equally defensible as selection of the frame, because the two are one decision); (iv) **construction** — typography shaping how the words are read. (b) “*Explain*” asks for the reasoning. Every media product is finite: a frame has edges, a package has a running time, a page has space, a budget has a limit. Putting one thing in that finite space necessarily means everything else that could have occupied it is left out. Selecting a close-up of one face *is* omitting the crowd; selecting one interviewee *is* omitting everyone else who could have spoken. The two are not separate stages — they are one decision described from two directions. *Common errors:* treating omission as “what the producer forgot”.

Q3. (a) (i) **camera** (angle); (ii) **editing** (shot duration); (iii) **sound**. (b) Any valid convention: the establishing wide shot that opens a news package; the above-the-fold hierarchy of a front page; the interview two-shot; a three-act structure. *Marker's note:* a **code** is a technical or symbolic tool (camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, paper stock); a **convention** is a rule or accepted way of organising the product. Acting is a code — do not leave it off the list.

Q4. (a) **Social, industrial, economic and technological** factors, existing at the time and in the location and context of a product's creation, production, distribution and consumption. (b) (i) **technological** — what the delivery device can display; (ii) **industrial** — the format and routine of the news industry; (iii) **economic** — funding limits the shoot; (iv) **social** — what the audience of that time and place will accept. *Common errors:* importing a different factor list from elsewhere in the course; this area of study names these four.

Q5. (a) Seasonal fruit-picking work at Corryn Grove Orchards, and the young workers who do it. (b) Any one specific selection: the sunrise wide shot of the rows; the four workers laughing as they fill a bin; the supervisor's close-up demonstration; the group meal at the long outdoor table. (c) The video **omits** the pay rate, the hours, the accommodation and the temperature. Because those are absent the viewer is given nothing against which to test the appeal of the work, so the job is represented as a social experience rather than a set of conditions — and the omission is invisible, because a viewer cannot miss a number they were never shown. (d) *Code, instance, meaning.* The **sound** code — bright acoustic guitar under the whole video — constructs the work as light and companionable, since audiences read that register as ease rather than labour. (Alternatively, the **lighting** of the sunrise opening constructs the day as fresh and beginning rather than long and hot.) *Marker's note:* (c) carries two marks because the *effect* of the absence must be stated, not just the absence named.

Q6. (a) “*Explain*” asks what the claim means. A skilfully made product feels natural and unmediated — it appears to show something that simply happened rather than something composed, and that impression is what **realism and naturalism** names. But the impression **belies** — contradicts — what the product is: a **codified** representation assembled from a long series of choices about framing, lighting, performance, cutting, sound and layout. The better those choices, the less visible they become, so a sense of realism is evidence of good construction rather than of no construction. (b) A non-fictional product draws on real material, but real material still has to be **selected, omitted and arranged**: a documentary maker decides who is interviewed, which minutes of many hours survive the edit, and in what order they appear. The events are real; the representation of them is made. *Common errors:* “it looks realistic so it is not constructed” reverses the point exactly.

Q7. *Model response (studied product: MasterChef Australia, 2009–):* (a) The subject is the amateur home cook, represented as an ordinary Australian whose cooking deserves to be taken as seriously as a professional's. (b) A significant **omission** is the apparatus that makes the program: the crew, the cameras, the lighting rigs and the

producers running the day are never in frame, and the real duration of a cook is compressed into a sequence the viewer reads as continuous. Because none of that is supplied, the pressure appears to belong to the cooking itself rather than to a television production built around it, so the contestants' urgency reads as the natural condition of a kitchen rather than something the format produces. **(c)** One **construction** choice is the **editing** of an elimination cook: as the clock runs down the cutting accelerates, alternating between the on-screen countdown, hands working at speed and the judges' faces. Because pace and duration are what tell an audience how much is at stake, an everyday domestic activity is constructed as a contest with consequences. *Marker's note:* (b) needs the *effect* of the absence; (c) needs code or convention, instance, and meaning.

Q8. "Outline" asks for the key distinction, briefly. **Selection** is choosing what goes into a media product; **omission** is leaving other material out. Both are deliberate decisions and both shape the representation — a photograph that selects one protester's face simultaneously omits the size of the crowd around her. *Marker's note:* two marks need both processes defined and the point that omission is a choice.

Q9. "Describe" asks for an account of the difference. **Selection** determines *what material exists* in the product; **construction** determines *what that material means*, by shaping and assembling it with codes and conventions. The same selected subject can be constructed to mean opposite things: a mid shot of a woman answering a question is one selection, but lit warmly, held for eight seconds and left uninterrupted she is constructed as considered, while cut after two seconds and intercut with a sceptical listener she is constructed as evasive. Same selection, different construction. *Common errors:* defining construction as "putting the product together", with no code and no meaning attached.

Q10. "Describe" asks for an account of the change. The original frame **selects** the speaker, roughly two hundred people behind her, and a row of empty barricades. The published crop **omits** both the crowd and the barricades, selecting only her head and shoulders against open sky. Because the crowd is gone the reader cannot read the scale of the rally or judge how much support the speaker has; because the barricades are gone, the sense of an event being managed or contained also disappears. The event is re-represented as one individual making a statement rather than a gathering of people — and the crop alone does it, since no element of the published image is untrue. *Marker's note:* three marks reward naming what was omitted **and** saying what the omission does to the meaning.

Q11. "Explain" asks for a how/why chain. Omission is powerful for three linked reasons. First, it is **invisible**: an audience can examine everything present in a product but has no way of inspecting what was never included, so the decision is never available to be questioned. Second, it **removes the alternative rather than defeating it** — a representation that omits competing material does not have to argue its case, because no competing version has been supplied for the audience to weigh. Third, omission is **naturalised by the product's own realism**: the more skilfully the remaining material is constructed, the more complete the product feels, and a product that feels complete does not prompt anyone to ask what is missing. Omission can therefore shape a representation decisively while every individual element remains accurate. *Common errors:* four marks are not earned by defining omission again — the question asks why it is *powerful*.

Q12. "Explain" asks how the difference is produced. Both papers begin from **identical selected material** — the same wire photograph — so every difference between the two representations is produced by **construction** and by a further layer of **selection** in the words. *The Ashfern Dispatch* constructs the event as progress: the image runs at a quarter page, which by the conventions of page hierarchy signals a routine item; the headline "Homes at last" supplies relief and resolution; and the caption selects the measure of **dwellings approved**, a figure counting what is gained. *The Quilby Point Gazette* constructs the same event as loss: the image runs across the full width of page one, signalling a matter of consequence; the headline "Paddocks going, going..." borrows the auctioneer's phrase to suggest something being sold off and about to be gone; and the caption selects **hectares of farmland rezoned**, a figure counting what is lost. Scale, position, wording and unit of measurement therefore construct two opposed representations from one photograph. *Marker's note:* the strongest answers notice that the *unit* in each caption is itself a selection.

Q13. "Explain" asks for two codes with meanings attached. Media codes are the technical and symbolic tools through which construction is carried out: a producer applies a code to selected material so that the material carries a particular meaning. **Lighting** is one. An interviewee lit softly from the side, with the shadows opened up, is constructed as approachable and candid, while the same interviewee lit by a single hard source that drops half the face into shadow is constructed as guarded or suspect — the person and the words are unchanged, and the lighting alone has produced the difference. **Mise en scene** is a second, and it works on the same shot: a wall of books and a desk of papers placed behind that interviewee constructs expertise the audience is invited to defer to, while a bare wall in an empty room constructs isolation, because a setting is read as evidence about the person put in it. In each case the chain is code,

instance, meaning — and it is that chain, not the naming of the tool, that constitutes construction. *Common errors:* naming the tools and stopping there — “the lighting and the sound were used well” carries no instance and no meaning.

Q14. “*Explain*” asks how the planned decisions will build the representation. The shot list constructs Riverpath Youth Service as a place that turns an empty situation into a full one. Its **structure** is a before-and-after **convention**: shot 1, a wide, empty street at dawn labelled “Before”, is answered by shot 4, a wide, full room of natural light and laughter labelled “After”, so the service is constructed as the cause of the change between them. The **camera** code carries the tone — shot 1 is hand-held, which constructs immediacy and a documentary-like truthfulness rather than a staged promotion. The **editing** code appears in the note against shot 3: an eight-second hold on a staff member listening, with no dialogue, constructs attentiveness as the organisation’s defining quality, because duration is what tells the viewer this is the point of the film. Finally, the footnote records a deliberate **omission** — no shots of the waiting list or the referral office — which removes the service’s limits, and the demand it cannot meet, from the representation entirely, so the viewer sees only capacity. *Marker’s note:* the footnote is the most valuable evidence on the page; a planning document that names its own omission is rare gold.

Q15. “*Discuss*” asks you to develop both factors and reach a position. **Economic** factors act first and hardest, because they decide what can be made at all. A budget funding two shooting days rather than six means the locations that are cheap and close are the ones that appear, so those places come to stand for a whole region; a production dependent on a sponsor is unlikely to select material that damages the sponsor’s interest; and an owner’s judgement about what will sell shapes which subjects are commissioned at all. **Industrial** factors narrow the result again: formats and durations are fixed by industry practice, so a ninety-second news package cannot carry a two-hour public meeting and one speaker with one line of reply is selected while the rest is omitted; house style, deadlines, standard shot patterns and regulatory obligations constrain what may be selected and how it must be constructed. The two overlap — that ninety-second package exists partly because of the economics of a commercial bulletin. The position worth reaching is that these pressures **explain** choices without **excusing** their effects: a deadline is a genuine reason why only one participant was interviewed, but not a reason to read the resulting representation as complete. *Marker’s note:* five marks need both factors developed with a concrete instance each, plus a stated position.

Q16. *Model response (6 marks). Studied product: Sherpa, 2015.* *Sherpa* (Jennifer Peedom, 2015) is an Australian documentary — a non-fictional narrative in the moving-image form — which constructs a representation of the Sherpa workers of the Everest climbing industry as skilled labourers carrying the risk of other people’s expeditions. Its central act of **selection** is a choice of vantage point: the film selects Sherpa workers and their families as its principal subjects and follows the 2014 season from their side of the industry rather than from a client’s. It therefore **omits** the structure a conventional Everest documentary is built on — the client’s summit push as the goal the film drives towards, and a Western climber as the figure whose ambition the audience is invited to share — and that omission is decisive, because with the usual protagonist absent the audience has no familiar figure through whom to read the mountain, and must read it through the people who work on it. The **construction** completes the representation: footage of Sherpa workers carrying loads through the icefall is held by the **camera** and **editing** codes on the repetition and duration of that work rather than cut into a montage, so the labour reads as sustained and dangerous rather than incidental. The result is a representation in which the mountain is a workplace, and the people usually positioned as support staff are positioned as its central figures. *Common errors:* asserting that a documentary is “unbiased” — the question is not whether it is true, but how it is built.

Q17. “*Discuss*” asks you to develop each correction. **First, the response confuses real material with an unconstructed product.** That the events really happened says nothing about whether the product is a representation: real material still has to be selected, omitted and arranged. Which question was asked before the answer the audience hears, whether that answer runs whole or is trimmed to its sharpest clause, which of two participants is given the last word, and where the sequence begins and ends are all decisions taken after the filming, and each one shapes what the material means. Being truthful and being constructed are not alternatives. **Second, the response names codes without naming meaning.** “The director used the camera and the editing” identifies tools but stops before the analysis begins. Construction is a chain: a code, a specific instance of it, and the meaning that instance makes. “It made it look professional” is a judgement about craft quality, not a statement about what the product represents its subject as being. **Third, “nothing was left out that mattered” is unknowable.** Omission is the one process an audience cannot inspect from the product alone; a viewer has no access to material that was never included, which is precisely why omission shapes representations so effectively. Any **two** of these, clearly developed, earns full marks. *Marker’s note:* six marks reward developing two points properly rather than listing three in a sentence each.

Q18. Command term — analyse: break the spread into its parts and show how the three processes work together, with specific evidence from the stimulus.

Model response (8 marks). The *Wintervane* spread constructs a representation of outdoor adventure as solitary, heroic and purchasable. Its **selection** is extremely narrow: from an expedition of five people it selects one climber; from a multi-day trip, a single sunrise moment on a ridge; and from everything that could be told about the trip, 300 words, one small portrait and a priced list of equipment.

Its **omissions** follow from those choices and are the more revealing half. The four other people are absent, so the climb reads as a solo achievement rather than a group undertaking. The vehicles that carried the equipment are absent, so the logistics — and the cost and support behind them — disappear from a spread otherwise happy to discuss cost. The track notes are absent, so the ridge is a place encountered rather than a route planned and navigated. With none of that material supplied, the reader has nothing from which to assemble a competing account of the trip as collaborative and organised.

The **construction** shapes what remains. **Visual composition** carries most of the work: the full-bleed photograph occupies an entire page with no border and no competing element, which by the conventions of magazine layout signals a subject of significance, while the climber is placed alone against clear sky so nothing in the frame shares her space. The **camera** code contributes the low angle — shot from below, she is raised above the reader's eyeline, constructing stature. **Lighting** supplies sunrise, a register read as beginning and effort rewarded. The asymmetry of the spread is itself construction: a full page of image against a narrow column of text tells the reader this is an experience to be looked at rather than a process to be understood. Finally, the boxed list headed "The kit she carried", with prices, is a **text and graphics** element that converts the image on the facing page into an aspiration with a price attached.

The three processes reinforce one another: the selection supplies a single figure, the omissions remove everyone and everything that would qualify her solitude, and the construction elevates what remains. The spread therefore represents outdoor adventure as a solitary, elevated personal achievement the reader may approach by buying the listed kit.

Marker's note: eight marks require all three processes with specific evidence and a stated representation. *Common errors:* describing the photograph at length and never reaching the omissions; treating the priced kit box as an unrelated advertisement rather than part of the representation.

Q19. Command term — analyse: deconstruct the product into selection, omission and construction, show how they work together, and state what the representation says about its subject.

Media product: *Muriel's Wedding* (1994)

Model response (10 marks). Studied product: *Muriel's Wedding*, 1994.

Muriel's Wedding (P.J. Hogan, 1994) is an Australian feature film — a narrative in the moving-image form — which constructs a representation of a young woman, and of the coastal town she comes from, as locked together by the town's own judgement of who counts.

The film's **selection** concentrates on a narrow band of material. It selects Muriel Heslop, an unemployed young woman in the fictional Queensland town of Porpoise Spit; the small social world of the clique who tolerate and then exclude her; her family's dinner table, where her father's contempt is delivered as ordinary conversation; and, repeatedly, her listening to ABBA alone in her bedroom. Those choices establish both halves of the representation at once — the town's verdict on her, and her private life beyond it.

The **omissions** are equally structural. The town is shown almost entirely through its social occasions and the judgements passed at them — Tania's wedding, the Heslop dinner table, Bill's manoeuvring as a local politician, the clique's rulings on who may join them. The ordinary working life of a coastal town is largely absent, so the place is represented as consisting of little except the performance of status. Muriel is given almost no scene in which she is competent at something the town values, so the audience is never handed evidence with which to argue against the town's assessment on the town's own terms — which makes her later move to Sydney read as the only available route rather than one option among several.

The **construction** turns that material into meaning through several codes at once. **Mise en scene** does much of it: the bright coastal palette of the town's public life — beachfront colour, tropical prints, the white of a wedding — is set against the cramped, cluttered Heslop house, so the gap between the town's self-image and Muriel's actual position is

visible in every frame she occupies. **Acting** carries more: Bill Heslop's lines are performed as offhand rather than cruel, constructing the family's dismissal of Muriel as habit rather than event, and therefore as something she has absorbed. **Sound** is the film's most-discussed construction choice — the recurring ABBA songs are placed at the moments Muriel imagines a different life, so the music is constructed as her private counter-argument to the town, and the audience hears her interior life without her stating it. **Editing** reinforces this by cutting from the town's social scenes to those private moments, holding the two versions of her in direct contrast.

Contextual factors sit behind these choices. **Industrial** and **economic** factors shape the film's reach: it was made as a mid-budget Australian feature for theatrical release, a format requiring a single protagonist, a compressed running time and a resolution — one reason the wider town is omitted down to a handful of representative figures. **Social** factors of its early-1990s production context are equally present in what could be selected as ordinary: the assumption that a wedding marks a woman's success is presented as the town's common sense, which is exactly what the film sets out to make visible.

Taken together the three processes work as one. The selection supplies a young woman and a town obsessed with appearances; the omissions withhold any material that would let either be judged on other grounds; and the construction — palette, performance, music and cutting — holds the town's verdict and Muriel's private life side by side until the gap between them becomes the subject. The representation the film finally makes is not that Muriel is a failure or that Porpoise Spit is foolish, but that a place can construct a person's worth so completely that leaving is the only way to dispute it.

Band descriptors (out of 10):

- **High (8–10):** all three processes analysed with **specific** evidence (named moments, named codes); omission identified as a genuine, consequential absence with its effect explained; the representation stated clearly and returned to; at least one factor named and connected to a choice; precise media language; media form identified.
- **Mid (5–7):** processes mostly covered but one thin — usually omission asserted rather than evidenced, or construction reduced to naming codes without meanings; some specific evidence; the representation implied rather than stated; factor mentioned but not connected.
- **Low (1–4):** retells the narrative; techniques listed without meanings; omission absent or described as “what they forgot”; no stated representation; little media language.

Common errors: **retelling the plot** instead of analysing the construction; naming codes without attaching a meaning to each; treating omission as an oversight rather than a decision; naming a contextual factor as an excuse (“they had no budget”) without saying what it did to the representation; finishing without ever stating what the product represents its subject as being.

Chapter 2 Media representations — 2C Comparing representations across time, location and context

Theory

2A established what a media representation is; **2B** established how one is built, through the processes of **selection**, **omission** and **construction**. This subtopic adds the skill the study design words as *compare the construction of representations within and across media products and forms from different periods of time, locations and contexts*.

Read that skill carefully, because students routinely answer a different question. You are asked to compare the **construction** of two representations — the choices made in building them — not the two stories, the two subjects, or which product you preferred. “*The 1968 magazine shows a woman in a kitchen and the 2025 magazine shows a woman in an office*” compares content. “*Both covers place the woman at the optical centre, but 1968 frames her in a mid-shot turned to camera under flat lighting while 2025 crops to a close-up with the gaze off-frame under hard side light*” compares construction. Only the second can then be explained.

The three axes of comparison

The study design names three things that may differ between the representations you compare.

- **Period of time** — *when* each product was created, produced, distributed, consumed and read. A comparison across time may span sixty years or eighteen months.
- **Location** — *where*. Not only country: metropolitan and regional, local and international, the place of making and the place of distribution may all differ.
- **Context** — the societal circumstances surrounding production and reading. The study design defines **media contexts** as the societal context in which media products are produced and read, examined through factors including social, cultural, economic, political and/or historical.

Time and location are easy to state. Context is the one students skip, and it does the explanatory work: two products made in the same year in the same city can still be made in different contexts — a national broadcaster and a fan-run channel are not working under the same circumstances.

Scope: within and across

The skill says **within and across**, and the two words describe three different comparison scopes. Choose the scope deliberately, because it changes what your comparison can prove.

Scope	What you hold constant	What you compare	Typical use
Within a single product	Form, time, location, context, maker	Two or more representations inside the one product	How a product represents two groups, places or generations differently
Across products in one form	Form	Two products	Change over time, or difference by location, with form removed as an explanation
Across media forms	Subject, and usually time	Two products in different forms	How the characteristics of each form shape the representation

A within-product comparison is the most tightly controlled of the three: maker, budget, technology and moment are identical, so any difference between the two representations must come from a deliberate construction choice. That makes it the strongest evidence of intent.

“One form” means one of the study design’s form families — moving image, still image, audio, print, digital, and convergent or hybridised media — not one channel inside it. Radio and podcast are both listed under **audio**, so comparing a radio serial with a podcast holds the form constant. A form is a technological *means* and a *channel*, and

the two halves can point to different families: the podcast is listed under **digital** as well, so a comparison turning on delivery rather than on listening can be argued as a cross-form one — provided you say which half you are relying on.

Basis of comparison and points of comparison

The **basis of comparison** is the shared subject that makes two products comparable at all — the same group, place, occupation, event or idea being represented. Without it you have two descriptions sitting side by side.

“Representations of teenagers”, “representations of drought in western Victoria” and “representations of a first day at work” are bases of comparison.

A **point of comparison** is one specific feature examined in both products — a single code, a single convention, a single construction decision. Three developed points will always outscore nine listed ones. The best are those where both products made a *different choice about the same thing*: both had to light the subject and lit it differently; both had to decide what to leave out and left out different things.

Controlling the variables

If two products differ in form **and** period **and** location, no difference can be attributed to any one of them and the answer reads as guesswork. Wherever you can, change one axis at a time.

Comparison design	What differs	What you can attribute a difference to
Two issues of one masthead, 1968 and 2025	Time (and context)	Change over time in that form
Two 2025 documentaries on one subject, one metropolitan and one regional producer	Location, context	Where the product was made and for whom
A 2025 newspaper front page and a 2025 short-form video on the same event	Form	The characteristics of each form
A 1979 television drama and its 2024 streaming reboot	Time, context, technology, distribution	Several factors at once — say so, and separate them

The last row is not a bad comparison; it is the most common real one. The discipline is to name each factor separately rather than letting them blur into “times have changed”.

The evidence layer: codes and conventions, in pairs

Your evidence is the same evidence you used in 2B, presented in **paired** instances. **Media codes** are the technical and symbolic tools used to construct meaning: camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, and paper stock for print. **Media conventions** are the rules or generally accepted ways of constructing meaning or organising media products — conventions of media forms and products, genre conventions, narrative conventions. A paired instance names the *same* code in *both* products at a *specific* moment:

Weak: “The older film uses lighting to create mood, whereas the newer one is more modern.”

Paired: “In the 1979 opening titles the family is lit with a flat, high-key three-point setup that leaves no facial shadow; in the 2024 reboot’s equivalent sequence the same kitchen is lit from a single practical at window height, so half of each face falls into shadow.”

The paired instance says nothing yet about meaning or cause. That comes next, and only next.

Why representations differ: the Unit 1 factors

The study design’s Area of Study 1 states that representations are influenced by **social, industrial, economic and technological** factors existing at the time, and in the location and context of their creation, production, distribution and consumption. These four are your explanatory vocabulary for this Area of Study.

- **Social** — the attitudes, expectations and everyday arrangements of the group the product was made by and for. What a 1968 audience found unremarkable on a magazine cover, and what a 2025 audience notices instantly, are both facts about the audience, not about the woman on the cover.
- **Industrial** — how the media industry is organised: who commissions, who distributes, what a broadcaster's obligations are, what a platform's specifications require. Under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth), the Australian Communications and Media Authority makes standards requiring commercial free-to-air television broadcasters to carry minimum levels of Australian programming; as at 2025, subscription streaming services carried no equivalent legislated Australian content quota. Classification is industrial too: R 18+ for computer games commenced in Australia on 1 January 2013 under the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995* (Cth), so titles built before and after that date were built to different limits.
- **Economic** — budget, revenue model and who is paying. An advertising-funded magazine represents its readers as people who could plausibly buy what is advertised beside them; a community-funded regional documentary answers to its contributors instead.
- **Technological** — what the available media technologies made possible, cheap or hard. Colour television transmission began in Australia on 1 March 1975, and Australia completed its switch from analogue to digital free-to-air television in 2013. Each shift changed what a producer could put on screen and what an audience could see.

Technology enables; it does not decide. Never write that a representation changed “because of new technology”. Lightweight cameras made handheld footage possible, but a producer still chose it, an industry paid for it, and an audience had to read it as appropriate rather than as error. Pair every technological factor with the social, industrial or economic factor that turned possibility into choice.

Continuity as well as change

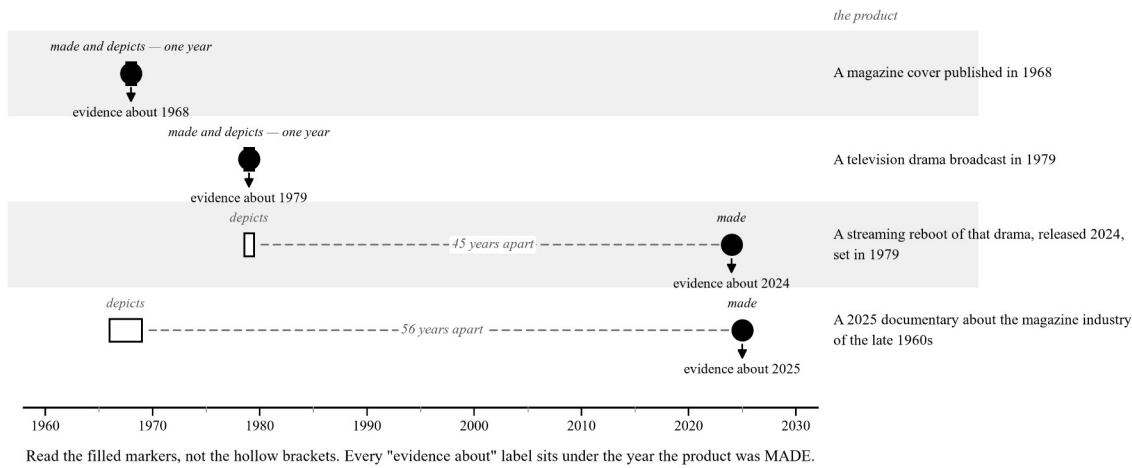
A comparison that finds only differences is half an answer. Conventions persist, often for decades, because audiences read them fluently, so a persisting convention is evidence about the audience just as a changed one is. **Change** is a construction choice made differently; **continuity** is one made identically despite everything else differing. The strongest claims sit on the tension between them — *the subject matter and the technology have changed completely, yet both products still place the interviewee at eye level in a medium close-up, because both are asking the audience to trust her.*

Three disciplines that separate strong answers from weak ones

Attach judgements to the production context, not the depicted period. A 2024 series set in 1979 is evidence about 2024: it records what a 2024 production, funded by a 2024 distributor, believed a 2024 audience would accept as a picture of 1979. Writing “this shows what people believed in 1979” about a 2024 reboot is the commonest error in this subtopic. The 1979 original *is* evidence about 1979; the reboot is not.

The error is a confusion between two dates, so the figure below puts both of them on one timeline. In each lane the hollow bracket marks the period the product **depicts** and the filled marker the year it was **made**; the arrow of evidence always drops from the filled marker. For the first two products the two dates coincide and there is nothing to argue about. For the last two they come apart — by 45 years for the reboot and 56 for the documentary — and in both cases the evidence label lands on 2024 and 2025, not on the period in the bracket.

A product is evidence about the moment it was MADE in, not about the moment it depicts.



The 1979 drama is evidence about 1979. The 2024 reboot is not: it is evidence about 2024 — about what a 2024 production, funded by a 2024 distributor, believed a 2024 audience would accept as a picture of 1979. The documentary is evidence about 2025 for the same reason, and its gap is the wider of the two. Attach every judgement to the production context, never to the depicted period.

Avoid presentism and the progress narrative. Presentism judges an older representation by today’s expectations without naming the context that produced it, turning the answer into a verdict. The progress narrative is its relative — the assumption that representations simply improve over time. Sometimes a construction choice narrows rather than widens.

One product is not an era, and it is not a nation. Write “this 1968 cover” and “this regional documentary”, not “magazines in the 1960s” or “how Australians were shown”.

Writing the comparison

Use **point-by-point** structure unless a question directs otherwise: take one point of comparison and deal with both products inside the same paragraph. **Block** structure — all of product A, then all of product B — almost always collapses into two descriptions, and the comparison never happens. Each paragraph runs: **comparative claim** (the construction difference or similarity, in one sentence) → **paired evidence** (the same code or convention in both, at a named moment) → **meaning** (what each choice invites the audience to read) → **explanation** (which social, industrial, economic or technological factor, at that time, location and context, accounts for it) → **continuity note** where one exists. Useful connectives: *whereas, by contrast, in both products, the same convention is used to opposite effect, this persists across both.*

Looking ahead. In Units 3 and 4 this comparative reasoning becomes the basis for analysing the views and values a narrative reflects; the habit of attaching a judgement to the production context is what makes that work.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Compare the construction of the representation of the home cook on the two covers of *Sandgrove Living* described below. (6 marks)

Stimulus. *Sandgrove Living* is a monthly Australian lifestyle magazine published by Tallowgum Press. In 1968 almost every copy was bought from a newsstand; in 2025 most copies reach readers through a paid subscription.

March 1968 cover. A woman stands behind a kitchen bench in a full-length apron, holding a covered casserole dish toward the camera and smiling directly at the lens. Mid-shot, camera at chest height, flat even lighting with no visible shadow. Warm yellows and creams. The masthead sits across the top in a heavy serif; the cover line reads “Twelve dinners your family will ask for twice”, set in the same serif.

March 2025 cover. A woman in a plain t-shirt leans on a bench mid-task, one hand on a knife, looking down at the board rather than at the camera. Close-up, camera slightly above eye level, single hard side light leaving one cheek in shadow. Desaturated greens and greys. The masthead is a thin sans serif, partly

overlapped by the subject's shoulder; the cover line reads "Cook less, better", set very small in the lower third.

Working	Comment
Basis of comparison: the home cook, on the cover of the same masthead, in the same form, 57 years apart. Time and context differ; form, publisher and subject are held constant.	State the basis and the controlled variables first. Because only time and context vary, differences can be attributed to them — that is what makes this comparison worth writing.
Both covers construct the cook as the sole subject and place her at the optical centre, but the 1968 cover addresses the reader directly while the 2025 cover observes the subject at work.	The comparative claim. It carries a continuity and a change in one sentence.
In 1968 the mid-shot at chest height with direct-to-lens eye contact and a presented casserole positions the reader as the person being served; in 2025 the close-up from slightly above, with the subject's gaze down at the board, positions the reader as an onlooker.	Paired evidence — camera and acting named in both, at a specific element. Notice the same two codes are used for both products, not different codes for each.
The 1968 flat, shadowless lighting and warm cream palette present the kitchen as an untroubled, finished space; the 2025 single hard side light and desaturated palette present it as a working one, mid-task and unresolved.	Second paired point: lighting and colour. Meaning is drawn from each choice rather than asserted.
Typography moves the same way: a heavy serif masthead and a promise of twelve recipes in 1968; a thin sans serif partly occluded by the subject, and a three-word cover line, in 2025.	A third code, and a genuinely comparative observation — the occluded masthead is a construction choice, not decoration.
Socially, the 1968 cover is built for a readership that expected the cook to be the household's provider and the magazine to supply volume; the 2025 cover is built for readers who value restraint and expect to see process rather than product. Economically, the 1968 cover sells the issue on the newsstand and must carry its promise in large type; the 2025 issue reaches most readers by subscription and can afford a quieter cover.	Explanation, using the Area of Study 1 factors and naming which is doing the work. Two factors, each tied to a specific construction choice — not a general statement that "times changed".
Continuity: across both, the cook is a woman, alone, in a domestic kitchen, framed as the single point of interest.	The continuity note. This is the observation most students miss and the one that lifts a comparison.

Takeaway. Hold the masthead, the form and the subject constant, and every difference you find is attributable to time and context.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Two 2025 products report the same event: the closure of a suburban swimming pool. Compare how the media form of each shapes the representation of the residents. (6 marks)

Stimulus. Both products were published on the same day.

Product A — *Quillside Daily*, print front page. A single photograph occupies the upper half: a wide shot of the empty pool, taken from the diving-block end, with four residents standing small at the far side. Headline in 60-point serif above the fold; a 700-word report beneath, quoting three residents and the council's written statement.

Product B — **Loomcast vertical video, 48 seconds.** Opens on a close-up of a resident's face mid-sentence, no introduction. Handheld. Four cuts in the first six seconds. Burned-in captions in bold sans serif appear word-by-word in sync with speech. No council statement. Ends on a freeze frame with the text "Sign it" over the top.

Working	Comment
Basis of comparison: the residents, in the same event, on the same day, in the same city. Only form differs — so every difference is attributable to the characteristics of the form.	The cleanest possible design. Say so explicitly; it is worth a mark on its own in a question phrased this way.
Product A constructs the residents as a group within a situation; Product B constructs a single resident as a voice addressing the viewer.	Comparative claim, stated as a construction difference rather than a content difference.
Camera and composition: A uses a wide shot from a fixed position that renders the residents small against the drained pool, subordinating them to the space; B opens on a handheld close-up that fills the frame with one face and removes the location entirely.	Paired evidence on camera and visual composition. Each choice is read for what it does to the subject.
Editing and duration: A is a single still image with 700 words of continuous text, allowing the reader to set the pace; B places four cuts in six seconds and runs 48 seconds in total, setting the pace for the viewer and leaving no room for the council's position.	Editing compared, and the omission is named — a link back to 2B's construction processes, used here as comparative evidence.
Text and graphics: A's 60-point serif headline is separated from the image and reads as the publication's own summary; B's word-by-word burned-in captions are locked to the speaker's voice and read as the resident's own words, even though both were written by a producer.	A strong point: the same function — supplying text — produces opposite attributions of authorship because of the form.
The differences are industrial and technological rather than a difference of opinion between the two producers. A print front page is composed once, to a fixed deadline and a fixed page size, for a reader who has already bought the paper. A vertical video is built for a scrolling feed where the first second determines whether it is watched at all, and where captions must carry the audio for a muted viewer.	Explanation tied to the characteristics of each form, expressed through the Area of Study 1 factors. Note “muted viewer” — a specific, real constraint of the form.
Continuity: both select residents rather than council officers as the human face of the story, and both omit the pool's operating costs.	Continuity across forms — the shared news convention of personalising an institutional decision.

Takeaway. When only the form differs, explain the difference through the demands of each form, not through the intentions of each producer.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Compare the construction of the representation of drought in western Victoria in the two 2025 documentaries described below. Refer to specific construction choices in both. (8 marks)

Stimulus. Both documentaries were released in 2025, run approximately 55 minutes, and take drought in western Victoria as their subject.

Brindlecoat Pictures, *The Long Dry* (Melbourne producer, national streaming release). Opens with a four-minute aerial sequence over cracked paddocks, scored with sustained strings. Interviews are shot in a studio against a black background, lit with a soft key and a rim light. An off-screen narrator provides continuity between segments. Graphics present rainfall data.

Kelpiewire Media, *Nine Seasons* (western Victorian producer, regional cinema and community screenings). Opens on a static wide shot of a farm gate held for ninety seconds with location sound only. Interviews are shot on the properties, handheld, in available light, with the subject continuing to work through the answer. No narrator; segments are separated by intertitles giving a date. No graphics.

Model response (8 marks).

Both take drought in western Victoria as their subject and were made in the same year, so their differences are attributable to the location and context of production rather than to period. *The Long Dry* constructs drought as a national condition surveyed from outside; *Nine Seasons* constructs it as a local condition to be sat inside.

Each opening fixes the position the audience is asked to take. *The Long Dry* begins with four minutes of aerial camera over cracked paddocks — a viewpoint no participant could occupy — scored with sustained strings that supply an emotional reading before anyone has spoken. *Nine Seasons* opens on a static wide of a farm gate held ninety seconds with location sound only: duration and ambience instead of scale and score, leaving the audience to supply its own reading.

The interview setups continue the split. *The Long Dry* removes its subjects to a studio against black under a soft key and rim light, a mise en scene that strips away place and renders each speaker a representative case. *Nine Seasons* shoots on the properties in available light, handheld, with subjects working through their answers, so place, labour and speech stay attached and each speaker remains a particular person on a particular property. Brindlecoat gains authority and comparability; Kelpiewire gains specificity and gives up the ability to generalise. Structure runs the same way — narrator and rainfall graphics bind *The Long Dry* into an argument while *Nine Seasons* offers only dated intertitles, and that absence is as much a construction choice as their presence.

The differences are industrial and economic before they are aesthetic. A national streaming release must be legible to viewers with no connection to the region, which favours aerial establishment, narration and data, and is budgeted to afford aerial acquisition and a studio day. A regional producer distributing through cinema and community screenings addresses an audience that already knows the country, for whom explanation would be condescension, and works at a budget where available light and location sound are the method rather than a compromise. Both nonetheless keep the same core convention: the individual landholder to camera as the authoritative witness, ahead of any agronomist or official — a continuity that says something about where the documentary form assumes truth about drought is located.

Takeaway. Hold the subject and the year constant and the location and context of production are all that is left to explain a difference — so name them, and name the industrial and economic conditions they bring with them.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

A 1979 television drama and its 2024 streaming reboot both represent a small Victorian town in 1979. Discuss what each product is evidence of, and compare one construction choice. (8 marks)

Stimulus. *Fernhollow* (1979) was a weekly one-hour drama produced for free-to-air broadcast. *Fernhollow* (2024) is an eight-part streaming reboot set in the same town in the same year. In the 1979 original, the town's main street is shot in wide masters at midday, evenly exposed, with extras moving continuously through frame. In the 2024 reboot, the same street is shot at golden hour on long lenses, with shallow focus, the background compressed and largely empty.

Model response (8 marks).

The two products depict the same year but are evidence about different years, and separating that is the first move in any comparison across time.

Fernhollow (1979) is evidence about 1979: written, cast, funded and broadcast inside the context it depicts, for an audience living in it, so its construction records what a 1979 production assumed a 1979 audience would recognise as ordinary. *Fernhollow* (2024) is evidence about 2024 — about what a 2024 production, commissioned by a 2024 distributor, believed a 2024 audience would accept as a picture of 1979. Treating the reboot as testimony about 1979 attitudes is the central error in this kind of comparison; it can only testify about the context that produced it.

The main-street coverage shows this precisely. The original shoots the street in wide masters at midday, evenly exposed, with extras moving continuously through frame, presenting the town as populated, ongoing and unremarkable — the setting for the week's story rather than its subject. The reboot shoots the same street at golden hour on long lenses with shallow focus, the background compressed and largely emptied: no longer a place where things happen but an object being looked back at. Same location, same depicted year, opposite constructions.

The explanation is partly technological and industrial, partly social, and the parts should be kept separate.

Technologically, 1979 broadcast production ran to a schedule that made midday wide masters efficient for a weekly hour, and the delivery standard did not reward shallow focus; a 2024 eight-part production can afford restricted golden-hour windows and expects displays that resolve fine focus falloff. **Industrially**, a weekly serial needed reusable coverage while a limited series is built to be distinctive. **Socially**, the 2024 construction reads as “the past” only because a shared visual shorthand for pastness now exists — warm low sun, long lens, thinned crowds — which did not exist in 1979, because 1979 was not the past. One continuity holds through all of it: both place the main street at the centre of the town’s identity and both open episodes on it.

Takeaway. A period product and a period-set product are evidence about different periods; say which is which before you compare anything.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Name the three axes across which the study design asks you to compare representations. (2 marks)

Q2. State the four factors the study design identifies as influencing representations at the time, and in the location and context, of their creation, production, distribution and consumption. (2 marks)

Q3. Define each of the following in one sentence. (3 marks)

- (a) basis of comparison (1 mark)
- (b) point of comparison (1 mark)
- (c) paired evidence (1 mark)

Q4. A student compares a 1990 print advertisement with a 2025 social media video advertisement for beachwear. (4 marks)

- (a) Identify three axes or variables that differ between these two products. (2 marks)
- (b) Explain why this makes it difficult to attribute any single difference to the passage of time. (2 marks)

Q5. Classify each comparison below as *within a single product*, *across products in one form* or *across media forms*. (4 marks)

- (a) Two photographs in the same photo essay, one of a manager and one of an apprentice.
- (b) A 2001 radio serial and a 2025 podcast on the same subject.
- (c) A magazine feature and a video game, both representing a music festival.
- (d) A 2010 newspaper front page and a 2025 newspaper front page from the same masthead.

Q6. Rewrite each weak comparative sentence as paired evidence naming a specific code in both products. Invent plausible specific detail. (4 marks)

- (a) “The old advertisement used better music than the new one.”
- (b) “The regional product feels more real than the city one.”

Q7. A 2023 film is set in 1955. (5 marks)

- (a) State which period the film is evidence about, and why. (2 marks)
- (b) A student writes: “The costume design shows that people in 1955 were very formal.” Rewrite the claim so that it attaches to the correct context. (3 marks)

Unscaffolded

Q8. Identify one continuity and one change you would look for when comparing two front pages of the same newspaper published thirty years apart. (2 marks)

Q9. Outline why a within-product comparison provides stronger evidence of a producer’s construction choices than a comparison across two products. (3 marks)

Q10. Outline the difference between comparing the content of two representations and comparing their construction. (3 marks)

Q11. Describe how an economic factor could account for a difference in the construction of two representations of the same subject made in the same year. (4 marks)

Q12. Describe two industrial factors that could produce different representations of the same event on a commercial free-to-air television news bulletin and on a subscription streaming documentary. (4 marks)

Q13. Explain why “technology improved” is an insufficient explanation for a difference between a 1985 and a 2025 representation, and what a complete explanation must add. (5 marks)

Q14. Wexwood Interactive released a strategy game in 2011 and a sequel in 2015. The 2015 sequel depicts injury and its consequences directly; the 2011 original does not. Explain how an industrial factor could account for this difference, and identify what evidence would be needed to confirm the explanation. (6 marks)

Q15. Two 2025 products represent the same suburb: a Tallowgum Press property magazine feature and a Kelpiewire Media short documentary funded by a community organisation. Discuss how the economic context of each is likely to shape the selection and omission in its representation. (6 marks)

Q16. Read the stimulus, then discuss what can and cannot be concluded from it. (6 marks)

Stimulus. A student writes: “I compared a 1972 tourism poster for a Victorian coastal town with a 2025 Loomcast video for the same town. The poster shows families on the sand in bright flat colour with a serif slogan. The video shows a single surfer at dawn, handheld, no text until the final frame. This proves that Australians became more individualistic between 1972 and 2025.”

Q17. Read the stimulus below.

Stimulus. *Ridgewater* is a 28-minute current-affairs program broadcast in 2025. One episode covers a proposed quarry outside a small Victorian town and represents two groups.

The quarry company. Its operations manager is interviewed seated in an office, framed in a mid-shot at eye level on a locked-off camera, with a soft key and a rim light. His name and job title appear in a lower-third caption. His answers run in two long takes and are not interrupted.

The neighbouring landholders. Three of them are filmed standing at a fence line, handheld, in wide shots that include the road and passing trucks, in available light with wind audible on the microphone. They are captioned by first name only. Their answers are cut into eight short pieces and intercut with footage of trucks; twice, a passing truck covers a phrase.

Analyse how the episode constructs its two groups differently, and explain what each construction invites the audience to conclude about the group it represents. Refer to specific codes and conventions in both representations. (8 marks)

Q18. Two audio products represent the same country football netball club, forty-one years apart.

Stimulus. *The Home Game* (1984) is a 30-minute radio feature made by the regional unit of a state broadcaster and transmitted once, on a Sunday afternoon. A staff narrator introduces every speaker by name and occupation and links the segments. The interviews were recorded after the season in a Melbourne studio. A brass band recording opens and closes the program, and crowd sound appears once, briefly, beneath the narrator.

Change Rooms (2025) is the first episode of an eight-part podcast made by two club members and released on demand through a podcast feed. There is no narrator. It opens with ninety seconds of unedited change-room sound before anyone is identified; interviews are recorded on phones, in cars and at the boundary line; speakers are named by first name only; the episode runs 47 minutes and ends mid-conversation.

Analyse how the construction of the representation of the club differs between the two products, explain the differences using at least three of the Area of Study 1 factors, and identify one continuity. (10 marks)

Q19. “A comparison that reports only what changed has not finished the job.”

Discuss this statement in relation to comparing the construction of representations across time, location and context. Refer to at least two products, described specifically. (10 marks)

Answers

Q1. (2 marks.) Period of time; location; context.

Q2. (2 marks.) Social, industrial, economic and technological factors.

Q3. (3 marks.) (a) The shared subject making two products comparable. (b) One specific feature examined in both. (c) The same code or convention named in both, at a specific moment or element.

Q4. (4 marks.) (a) Time (1990/2025); form (print/video); distribution context (press placement / social feed). (b) Three variables change at once, so no single cause can be isolated; each factor must be named and attributed separately.

Q5. (4 marks.) (a) within a single product; (b) across products in one form — the study design lists radio and podcast together under audio, so the form is held constant (accept “across media forms” only where the student argues it through the podcast’s additional listing under digital, i.e. a change of channel); (c) across media forms; (d) across products in one form.

Q6. (4 marks.) Same code both sides, specific instances. (a) Sound — 1990 carries a continuous orchestral bed under voice-over; 2025 a single licensed track, no voice-over, cutting on the beat. (b) Camera and lighting — the regional product shoots handheld in available light while the subject works; the metropolitan one shoots locked-off in studio under a soft key and rim light.

Q7. (5 marks.) (a) 2023 — made in 2023 by a 2023 production for a 2023 audience. (b) e.g. “The costume design shows what a 2023 production believed a 2023 audience would read as a marker of 1955 formality.”

Q8. (2 marks.) Continuity: e.g. the dominant lead image above the fold, or personalising a story through one named individual. Change: e.g. headline point size, colour reproduction, image-to-text ratio.

Q9. (3 marks.) Maker, budget, technology, time, location and context are identical, so any difference must come from a deliberate construction choice rather than an external factor.

Q10. (3 marks.) Content comparison reports what is shown; construction comparison reports the choices made in building each — codes, conventions, selection and omission — and is the skill the SD names.

Q11. (4 marks.) Any developed answer linking an economic condition to a named code — e.g. budget scale determines how many camera positions and microphones exist, so a funded product can cut between viewpoints no attendee could occupy while an unfunded one holds a single view from inside the crowd. Must name the code affected and the economic condition producing it.

Q12. (4 marks.) Two of: fixed slot broken by advertising versus continuous feature length; Australian content obligations on commercial free-to-air television under ACMA standards versus their absence for streaming as at 2025; broadcast codes of practice versus platform-set standards; commissioning and distribution model.

Q13. (5 marks.) Technology enables but does not decide — a producer chose it, an industry funded it, an audience accepted it. A complete explanation pairs the affordance with a social, industrial or economic factor that turned possibility into choice.

Q14. (6 marks.) R 18+ for computer games commenced in Australia on 1 January 2013 under the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995* (Cth); the 2011 title was built for a market capped at MA 15+, the 2015 sequel was not. Evidence needed: each release’s actual classification, the release market, and a record showing the 2011 content was constrained rather than simply designed differently.

Q15. (6 marks.) Magazine: advertiser-funded, so selection favours renovated interiors and amenity, omitting vacancy, cost pressure and dispute. Documentary: contributor-funded, so selection favours residents’ testimony and unresolved problems, omitting price growth and aspirational imagery. Each must be tied to selection/omission and to the funding source.

Q16. (6 marks.) Can conclude: a real construction difference (colour, visual composition, camera, text and graphics). Cannot conclude: a claim about national attitudes — two products are not an era or a nation, and form, distribution and purpose differ alongside time. Recast as a claim about the two products and their production contexts.

Q17. (8 marks.) Must contain: the scope named — one product, so maker, budget, technology, time, location and context are identical and any difference is a construction choice; at least two paired code or convention instances (camera and framing, lighting, editing and duration, sound, the captioning convention); the audience reading each construction invites — institutional authority and composure against exposure and interruption; and the limit — the episode evidences its own construction of authority, not an industry or an era.

Q18. (10 marks.) Must contain: the controlled and uncontrolled variables named — subject and form (audio) constant, period, maker and channel varying; paired evidence on at least three sound codes or conventions (narration and mode of address, recording location and ambience, editing and duration, naming convention); the meaning each construction invites; at least three Area of Study 1 factors named separately; one continuity.

Q19. (10 marks.) Must contain: a position on the statement; the argument that continuity is evidence about audiences and the durability of conventions; at least two specifically described products showing both a change and a continuity; explanation via the factors; the inertia qualification.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. Period of time, location and context — the three axes named in the key skill “compare the construction of representations within and across media products and forms from different periods of time, locations and contexts”.

Q2. Social, industrial, economic and technological. *Marker’s note:* this is the Unit 1 Area of Study 1 list. Do not substitute the study specification’s media contexts list (social, cultural, economic, political and/or historical) — that defines what “context” covers, not what influences a representation in this Area of Study.

Q3. (a) The **basis of comparison** is the shared subject — the same group, place, event or idea represented in both — that makes the two comparable at all. (b) A **point of comparison** is one specific feature examined in both, such as a single code or convention. (c) **Paired evidence** names the same code or convention in both at a specific moment or element, rather than a different feature in each.

Q4. (a) Time (1990 versus 2025); media form (print versus video); distribution context (a print placement versus a social media feed). Technology and target audience differ as well. (b) With three variables changing at once, an observed difference — say, a static posed image becoming fast-cut handheld footage — could be caused by the passage of time, the move to a moving image form, or the demands of a scrolling feed, and none can be isolated. The student must either change one axis at a time or attribute specific differences to specific named factors. *Marker’s note:* the answer must explain the attribution problem, not merely repeat that the products differ.

Q5. (a) Within a single product — both photographs sit inside one photo essay, so maker, form, time and context are identical. (b) Across products in one form — the study design lists radio and podcast together under **audio**, so the form is held constant and the 24-year gap is the live variable. Accept “across media forms” only where the student argues it through the podcast’s second listing under **digital**: the means (heard sound) is the same, the channel (broadcast transmission versus an on-demand feed) is not. (c) Across media forms — print and digital game. (d) Across products in one form — same masthead, time varies. *Marker’s note:* in (b) the rationale is what is marked. “They are different forms because one is radio and one is a podcast” is wrong on the study design’s own list, which groups both under audio.

Q6. (a) “The 1990 advertisement scores its full 30 seconds with a continuous orchestral bed beneath a voice-over, whereas the 2025 video carries a single licensed track with no voice-over and cuts image on the beat.” (b) “The Kelpewire product films its subject handheld in available light while she continues working, whereas the Brindlecoat product films the same kind of subject on a locked-off camera in studio under a soft key with a rim light.” *Marker’s note:* the same code must appear on both sides. Award nothing for a rewrite describing music in one product and lighting in the other.

Q7. (a) 2023 — the film was written, cast, funded, produced and released in 2023 for a 2023 audience, so its construction records what that production believed its audience would accept. It carries no testimony from 1955. (b) “The costume design shows what a 2023 production believed a 2023 audience would read as a marker of 1955 formality.” *Marker’s note:* accept any rewrite relocating the claim to the production context; do not accept one that merely softens the original (“suggests that people in 1955 may have been formal”).

Q8. A continuity: the single dominant lead image above the fold, or personalising an institutional story through one named individual. A change: headline point size and the ratio of image area to body text, which typically increases across that period.

Q9. In a within-product comparison the maker, budget, available technology, production date, location and societal context are all held constant, because there is only one production. Any difference therefore cannot be explained by an external factor and must be a deliberate construction decision. A cross-product comparison always leaves open the possibility that budget, technology or industry produced the difference rather than intent.

Q10. Comparing content reports what appears in each representation — who is shown, doing what, where. Comparing construction reports the decisions made in building each: which codes were used and how, which conventions were followed or broken, what was selected and what omitted. The key skill asks for the second. Content comparison can supply evidence of selection and omission, but on its own it is retelling.

Q11. Budget scale is the plainest economic factor, because it decides which viewpoints exist before anyone decides what to say. Take two 2025 products covering the same weekend of the Yarrabrae Folk Festival. A broadcaster-funded concert film is shot on eight cameras with a jib and a multitrack feed from the front-of-house desk, so its representation cuts between a crane wide over the crowd, a close-up of a hand on a fretboard and a reverse from the stage — positions no attendee could occupy — over a balanced mix in which the audience is a distant wash. A single-operator online video of the same set is shot on one camera from inside the crowd with on-camera sound, so it holds a single handheld wide, loses the performer behind a raised phone, and carries the person singing along two metres away louder than the band. The economic factor reaches the representation through camera and sound: money buys viewpoints and signal paths, and viewpoints and signal paths are what construct the festival as either a produced spectacle or an event survived from within it. *Marker's note:* name the code the money actually reaches. “It had a bigger budget so it looks better” is not an economic explanation.

Q12. First, format obligations: a commercial free-to-air bulletin is built to a fixed slot broken by advertising, producing short self-contained segments with a reporter piece to camera and a resolved close, whereas a streaming documentary plays continuously at feature length and can leave a question open. Second, content obligations: under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth), ACMA makes standards requiring commercial free-to-air broadcasters to carry minimum levels of Australian programming, and broadcast codes of practice govern complaint handling; as at 2025, subscription streaming services carried no equivalent legislated Australian content quota and set their own standards. Different obligations produce different commissioning, and different commissioning produces different representations.

Q13. “Technology improved” identifies an affordance, not a decision. New equipment makes something possible, cheaper or faster; it does not make a producer use it, an industry fund it or an audience accept it. Lightweight cameras made sustained handheld footage practical, but handheld footage entered mainstream representation only once producers wanted an unmediated look, commissioners accepted it and audiences read it as authenticity rather than error. A complete explanation pairs the technological factor with at least one social, industrial or economic factor: the affordance, plus the reason it was taken up at that time, in that location and context. *Marker's note:* answers that restate that technology changed, without a second factor, sit at the bottom of the range regardless of length.

Q14. The plausible industrial factor is the classification regime each release was built for. The R 18+ classification for computer games commenced in Australia on 1 January 2013 under the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995* (Cth). A Wexwood Interactive title released in 2011 was therefore designed for a market in which MA 15+ was the highest classification available for the form, so depicting injury and its consequences directly risked refused classification and the loss of Australian distribution. The 2015 sequel was developed for a market in which an R 18+ release was available, changing what the studio could depict without jeopardising distribution. The construction difference is a response to a distribution constraint, not a change of artistic mind.

Confirming it would need three things: the classification actually carried by each release; confirmation that the 2011 title was released into the Australian market under that regime rather than made elsewhere for elsewhere; and a record — a developer statement, a classification decision, a reported edit — showing the 2011 content was constrained rather than simply designed differently. Without the third the explanation stays plausible but unproven, and should be written as such. *Marker's note:* full marks require both halves. Asserting the classification cause as fact, with no evidence condition, loses the final marks.

Q15. Model response (6 marks). The products share a basis of comparison — the same suburb, the same year — so location and period are controlled and economic context is the live variable.

The Tallowgum Press feature is advertiser-funded, and its revenue comes from agents, builders and retailers whose interests align with the suburb appearing desirable. That shapes selection before a photograph is taken: renovated interiors, established streets, satisfied residents, morning or late-afternoon light, a styled mise en scene. It omits vacant shopfronts, rental cost and any resident whose account contradicts the desirability the advertising depends on. The Kelpiewire documentary answers to contributors who commissioned it because they want a situation recorded, so its selection runs the other way — residents speaking at length in unstyled rooms, streets shot as they are rather than at the flattering hour, problems unresolved at the close — and it omits price growth, aspirational imagery and the agent's view, none of which serve the reason it was funded.

The comparison is not between an honest product and a dishonest one. Both are constructed, both select and both omit, and in each case the pattern is predictable from who paid and why. That is what makes the economic factor an explanation rather than an accusation. *Marker's note:* answers that moralise about the magazine, instead of analysing the economic condition producing its selections, cap in the middle band.

Q16. Model response (6 marks). The student has done the first half of the work well and the second half not at all.

The stimulus supports a claim about two products. The 1972 poster and the 2025 video are genuinely constructed differently, and specifically so: bright flat colour and a group of families against a single figure at dawn; a serif slogan carried throughout against no text until the final frame; a composed, staged image against handheld footage. Those are legitimate paired observations about colour, visual composition, text and graphics, and camera.

The conclusion is not supported, for three reasons. One product is not an era and is not a nation, so two items cannot evidence a claim about how Australians changed. The products differ on several axes at once — period, form, distribution channel and budget — so no difference can be attributed to time alone. And they were made for different purposes under different conditions: a printed tourism poster of that period was made to be read at distance, on a wall or in a window, where legibility requires flat colour, large type and a readable group, while a 2025 platform video is built for a scrolling feed on a handheld screen, where a single figure and withheld text are conventions of the form rather than statements about individualism.

Recast to what the evidence carries: the two products construct the same destination for different audiences under different industrial and technological conditions, and the shift from a legible group image to a single-figure atmosphere piece reflects the demands of the channel each was built for. *Marker's note:* a full-mark answer names the specific logical fault, rather than saying the conclusion is “too broad”.

Q17. Model response (8 marks). This is a within-product comparison, and saying so is the first move: one production, one budget, one crew, one week, one broadcast. Nothing outside the episode can account for the difference between its two representations, so whatever separates them is a construction choice.

Camera does most of the work, and it constructs the company as composed and the landholders as exposed. The operations manager is held in a mid-shot at eye level on a locked-off camera: the frame does not move, the distance is the conversational one, and the background is an office wall, so nothing in the image competes with him. The landholders are held in handheld wide shots that keep the road and the passing trucks inside the frame, so each speaker shares the image with the thing being argued about, and the frame moves whether or not they do. Lighting continues the split. He is lit with a soft key and a rim light — a two-source setup that lifts him off the background and takes a working half-hour to rig; they are lit by whatever the sky is doing, and the wind is audible on the microphone, so the audience hears the conditions of the recording alongside the words. Stillness, separation and a controlled acoustic read as authority; a moving wide frame, available light and wind read as people standing in the middle of something they do not control.

Editing and the captioning convention then decide who is permitted to be a source. His answers run in two long takes and are not interrupted, so his account reaches the audience as continuous argument on his own terms. Theirs are cut into eight short pieces and intercut with trucks, so their account reaches the audience as a series of fragments the edit has arranged, and twice a truck covers a phrase — an audible reminder that this recording was not controlled either. The lower-third caption gives him a name and a job title, the standard convention for institutional expertise; the landholders are given a first name only, the convention for personal testimony. One caption generator, one episode, opposite attributions of standing.

Taken together, the two constructions invite opposite readings. The manager is offered as a source: composed, credentialed by his caption, allowed to finish, and lit by a crew that had time to rig for him — so the audience is invited to receive his account as information about the quarry. The landholders are offered as affected parties: interrupted by the edit and by the trucks, identified as people rather than office-holders, and audibly recorded inside the conditions they are describing — so the audience is invited to receive their accounts as experience of the quarry, to be felt rather than checked. That division does an argument's work without stating one, putting expertise on one side of the fence and consequence on the other and leaving the audience to weigh them. Because it all sits inside one product, no difference in money, equipment, schedule or audience is available to explain it, so the reading is anchored: the episode is evidence of how it assigns authority. The limit is equally strict — it evidences this episode's choices, not current-affairs television as a form and not 2025 as a period. *Marker's note*: the second half of the question is marked on the reading each construction invites, not on a fourth code. Answers that list six differences and never say what the audience is invited to conclude cap in the middle band.

Q18. Model response (10 marks). Begin with the design, because it decides what the differences can be attributed to. Both products are audio — the study design lists radio and podcast together under that form — and both represent the same club, so form and subject are controlled. Period, maker and channel are not: forty-one years, a state broadcaster's regional unit against two club members, one Sunday transmission against an on-demand feed. Every difference therefore has to be attached to a named factor rather than to 1984 as such.

Mode of address separates them first. *The Home Game* places a staff narrator between the club and the listener, introducing every speaker by name and occupation and linking the segments, so each voice arrives already framed and evaluated and the club is constructed as a subject being explained to an audience assumed not to belong to it. *Change Rooms* removes the narrator entirely and opens on ninety seconds of unedited change-room sound before anyone is identified, so the listener is put inside the room and left to work out who is speaking; the club is constructed as a place the listener has been let into rather than told about. The naming convention runs the same way — full name and occupation, the broadcast convention for a credited source, against first names only, the convention of people who already know each other.

Recording conditions and structure carry the same split. The 1984 interviews were recorded after the season in a Melbourne studio, so the acoustic of the club is absent from every voice, and crowd sound appears once, briefly, beneath the narrator: the place is a garnish on an account assembled elsewhere. The 2025 interviews are recorded on phones, in cars and at the boundary line, so the place is continuously audible underneath the speech and cannot be separated from it. The brass band recording that opens and closes the 1984 program is a framing convention announcing a civic institution and a finished account; the podcast's cold open and mid-conversation ending refuse both, and its 47 minutes against a fixed 30 show duration set by the material rather than by a schedule.

Three factors explain this, and they must be kept apart. **Industrially**, a single transmission in a fixed half-hour slot on a broadcaster's Sunday schedule has to carry a listener who arrived by accident, which is what a narrator is for, and has to finish on time; an on-demand feed is chosen by a listener who already wants the subject, so nothing must be explained and nothing must end at a set minute. **Technologically**, 1984 location recording meant a portable tape machine, limited stock and few usable takes, so a studio was the reliable way to obtain clean speech, whereas a 2025 phone records anywhere at no marginal cost, which is what makes a car, a boundary line and a change room viable recording spaces at all. **Economically**, a broadcaster's regional unit paid staff, studio time and a music licence and had to justify each, while a two-person production funded by its makers has no studio to pay for and no commissioner to satisfy — so in 2025 the cheap method and the intimate method are the same method. A **social** factor sits beneath all three: a 2025 listener reads hesitation and unedited ambience as authenticity and an authoritative narrator as institutional distance, close to the reverse of the 1984 reading.

One continuity holds through all of it. In both products the people who speak about the club are the ones who play for it or work at it; in neither does a league administrator, a council officer or an outside journalist get a voice. Across forty-one years, two channels, two budgets and two opposed methods, both productions locate the truth about the club in its members — which says more about the durability of that assumption than any of the differences do. *Marker's note*: the factors must be argued separately. “The podcast is more personal because technology has changed” folds three factors into one and loses the explanation marks.

Q19. Model response (10 marks). The statement is correct, because continuity is evidence, not the absence of it.

A comparison reporting only change treats the products as a before and an after, which invites the progress narrative and produces a verdict rather than an analysis. What persists across two products made decades apart, or in different places under different conditions, is a construction choice that survived everything which changed around it, and that survival needs explaining just as much as a difference does.

The *Sandgrove Living* covers show it. Almost everything about their construction changed between March 1968 and March 2025: a mid-shot at chest height with direct-to-lens eye contact became a close-up from slightly above with the gaze turned down; flat shadowless lighting and a warm cream palette became a single hard side light and a desaturated one; a heavy serif masthead with a twelve-recipe promise became a thin sans serif partly occluded by the subject. Reporting only that would suggest a complete break. Yet across both the cook is a woman, alone, in a domestic kitchen, framed as the single point of interest — a continuity surviving fifty-seven years, a changed distribution model and a changed visual style, and the more interesting finding, because it shows which assumption the magazine never needed to revisit. The *Quillside Daily* front page and the Loomcast video make the same point across form: their constructions have nothing in common, from fixed wide photograph and 700 words against handheld close-up and four cuts in six seconds, to reader-controlled against producer-controlled pacing — yet both select residents rather than council officers as the human face of the story and both omit the pool's operating costs, which locates that decision in the news convention rather than in either form.

One qualification. Continuity is not always meaningful: a convention may persist because it is cheap, because the workflow was built around it, or because nobody reconsidered it — inertia, not intention. A strong comparison distinguishes a continuity doing work for the audience, like the trusted eye-level interview, from one that is simply the path of least resistance, like a masthead position that has never had reason to move.

So the statement holds, with that refinement: a comparison reports change and continuity, and explains each through the social, industrial, economic and technological factors present at the time, location and context of production. Change tells you what the conditions of production did to the representation; continuity tells you what those conditions never touched. *Marker's note*: the inertia qualification distinguishes the top band. Treating every continuity as meaningful is not yet reasoning.