

Media Units 1 & 2

Chapter 6 — Australian stories: structure, codes and style

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

Attribution: Classbasics Pty Ltd, vwx.au

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content has been excluded as accuracy cannot be guaranteed, and it is better to be respectful than cover the entire curriculum inaccurately.

Significant effort has been made to ensure this content is legal. Please send any areas of concern to admin@vwx.au with appropriate document/legal references so errors can be verified and changes be made.

Contents

Section	Page
6A Australian stories: structure, cultural histories and institutions	2
6B Codes and conventions that engage audiences and communicate meaning	16
6C The style of Australian media creators and producers	29

Chapter 6 Australian stories: structure, codes and style — 6A Australian stories: structure, cultural histories and institutions

Theory

This chapter turns to **Australian stories** — narratives by Australian media creators and producers, with primarily Australian content, studied across **two or more media forms**. The outcome asks you to analyse how the **structural features** of Australian fictional and non-fictional narratives engage audiences, and how those narratives are consumed and read. This subtopic owns the first half of that job: **what the structure is, and where it came from**. 6B takes the codes and conventions used inside the structure; 6C takes the individual style of the maker.

Narrative structure. The **structure** of a media narrative is the way it is organised: the parts it is divided into, the order those parts are placed in, and the points at which it turns. A **structural feature** is one identifiable piece of that organisation — an opening, an act break, a turning point, a segment, a cliffhanger, a running order, a resolution. Structure is not the events themselves; it is the *shape* those events are poured into, and it is **constructed**: every structure could have been otherwise. A documentary maker could have opened at the end; a newsroom could have led with the third story. Someone decided. That is why the study design asks where structure *arises from* — “the structure of Australian fictional and non-fictional media stories **arising from cultural histories and institutions**”. Two sources, and a good answer names them.

Fictional structures. Fictional narratives — films, dramas, serials, comedies, games — are usually built on some version of the shapes below. Learn the terms; you need them to name a feature precisely.

Structure	How it is organised	Key structural features
Three-act structure	set-up, complication, resolution	the inciting incident (the event that starts the story), turning points (moments where the direction of the narrative changes), the climax (the point of greatest tension), the resolution
Episodic	each episode is a complete story; the situation resets	a self-contained problem and solution inside each episode; characters largely unchanged at the end
Serialised	one story continues across episodes	the season arc ; cliffhangers that hold the story open; “previously on” recaps
Anthology	separate stories share a world, a place or a theme rather than a continuing plot	a new set of characters each episode; the place or idea, not a protagonist, is the through-line
Non-linear	events are not delivered in the order they happened	flashback , dual timeline , frame narrative (a story told inside another), circular structures that end where they began
Open structure	resolution is deliberately withheld	an unanswered question at the close; no restoration of order

Non-fictional structures. Non-fictional narratives — news, current affairs, documentary, podcasts, print features, advertising, photo essays — have their own shapes, and they are just as constructed.

Form	How it is organised	Key structural features
News bulletin, and the item inside it	a running order (or rundown) — stories ranked by news value; each item ordered most-important-first	the lead story ; related items grouped so the bulletin does not jump between subjects; the fixed

Form	How it is organised	Key structural features
		segments, sport and weather, near the end; and, in the item, the inverted pyramid — the answer up front, detail descending, so it can be cut from the bottom
Current affairs	either one issue at length, or a magazine of several shorter items	the reporter's set-up, interview blocks, a turn where the evidence shifts, a closing statement
Documentary	chronological, thematic, or observational (events unfold without narration)	a hook; chapters or acts; a structuring device such as a journey, a countdown or a returning location
Podcast episode	segments strung along a spoken through-line	a cold open (a moment lifted from later in the episode, played first); chapters; a mid-episode break; a tease for the next episode
Print feature	a headline block, then a descending argument	the standfirst (the short block under the headline), the nut graf (the paragraph that states the point of the piece), the body, the kicker (the closing line that lands the piece)
Advertising, photo essay	compressed to a fixed slot; or a sequence of images read in order	problem-solution, before-and-after or testimonial shapes built to 15 or 30 seconds; an establishing frame, a developing middle, a closing frame that resolves or unsettles

Cultural histories. A **cultural history** is the accumulated body of stories, traditions, shared experience and *ways of telling* that a culture carries over time. Structures are inherited. An Australian maker does not invent narrative shape from nothing; they work with, against, or around shapes that Australian audiences already recognise. The point to grasp — and it is the point students most often miss — is that a cultural history can show up as **structure**, not only as subject matter. A story can be “about” the bush without being *shaped* by it; the analysis you are being asked for is about shape.

Cultural history	The structural shape it produces
Oral storytelling and the yarn — digressive, conversational, circling back to where it began	narratives that wander before arriving; comedy built from loosely joined episodes; non-fiction that lets a subject talk at length rather than cutting them into short grabs
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander storytelling traditions — the world's oldest continuous storytelling cultures	narratives organised around Country and place and told cyclically, returning rather than climbing to one climax and stopping; anthology shapes that hold many voices of a community rather than one protagonist's arc
Landscape as an active presence	the journey out and the return; the character who goes into the landscape and does not come back; the withheld resolution — as in <i>Picnic at Hanging Rock</i> (1975), where the disappearance at the centre is never explained
Migration and multicultural experience	dual-timeline and dual-place structures — a then-and-there cut against a here-and-now; family narratives moving across generations rather than across a week
Suburbia and the everyday	the long-running serial, built from small, continuous, low-stakes events among neighbours rather than from crisis — the shape that has kept <i>Neighbours</i> (from 1985)

The battler and the larrikin**Public ritual and the calendar**

running for decades

underdog-versus-institution: an ordinary protagonist, an early squeeze by something big, escalating refusals, and a resolution won on principle rather than on power — the shape *The Castle* (1997) runs to a courtroom

the build, the event, the aftermath, delivered on a date the audience already knows — sport seasons, commemorations, anniversary broadcasts

Two cautions. The **impact of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and perspectives on our national identity and story** is the subject of 7A; here your work is confined to the structural consequence, and the safe move is always to describe what a specific narrative does rather than to generalise about a culture. And these are tendencies visible in the record, not rules: plenty of Australian narratives do none of them, and a maker may deliberately refuse an inherited shape — itself a structural decision worth analysing.

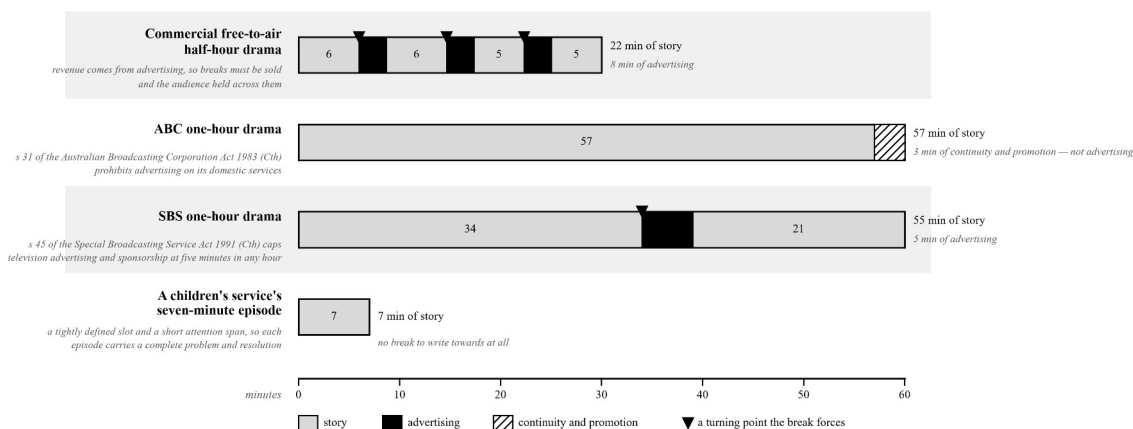
Institutions. An **institution** is an organisation that commissions, funds, makes, schedules, publishes or distributes media: a broadcaster, a production company, a streaming service, a publisher, a newsroom, a community station, a screen funding agency. Institutions shape structure for a blunt reason — **an institution's business model, remit and delivery slot decide the shape a story has to be poured into.** The narrative must fit the container the institution provides.

Institution	What drives the shape	Structural consequence
Commercial free-to-air networks (licensed under the <i>Broadcasting Services Act 1992</i> (Cth)); revenue comes from advertising	breaks must be sold, and the audience must be held across them	narrative built in acts with a hook immediately before each break; a “half-hour” slot carries roughly 22 minutes of story
The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (established by the <i>Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983</i> (Cth); s 31 prohibits advertising on its domestic services)	no advertising to break for, and a Charter obligation to reflect Australia's cultural diversity and contribute to a sense of national identity	an uninterrupted arc — a one-hour drama can run close to 57 minutes continuous, so the turning points sit where the story wants them, not where a break falls; support for anthology and place-based structures
The Special Broadcasting Service (established by the <i>Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991</i> (Cth); s 45 limits television advertising and sponsorship to no more than five minutes in any hour)	a multilingual, multicultural Charter and a tight advertising cap	fewer and later breaks than commercial television; structures that carry multiple languages and multiple perspectives rather than one narrating voice. NITV has operated as part of SBS since 2012
Subscription streaming services	subscriptions, not breaks; whole seasons released at once; autoplay	episodes that end on a hook into the next episode rather than into an ad break; variable episode lengths; recaps that become optional
Screen funding agencies — Screen Australia (<i>Screen Australia Act 2008</i> (Cth)) and VicScreen , Victoria's screen agency (the trading name of Film Victoria, a statutory body under the <i>Film Act 2001</i> (Vic))	development money is granted against a written treatment, outline or script	the structure is fixed on paper before a frame is shot , and it is fixed in the shape the funding round asks for — a feature outline, a six-part series, a short-form online series of ten-minute parts
Newsrooms (metropolitan, regional, broadcast or online)	deadlines, fixed space, and a reader or viewer who may stop at any moment	the inverted pyramid in the item and the running order in the bulletin; the structure is designed to survive being cut
Community broadcasters	volunteer-made, locally accountable,	programs built as short local

Institution	What drives the shape	Structural consequence
	no commercial imperative	segments around station identification, with talk given room to run
Children's broadcasters and commissioners — a broadcaster's children's arm, such as the ABC's children's service, which commissions <i>Bluey</i> with BBC Studios	short attention spans, and a tightly defined slot to fill	very short episodes with a complete internal problem and resolution — <i>Bluey</i> (from 2018) is built in roughly seven-minute units
Book and magazine publishers	a printed object of fixed extent — pages are printed in sections, so the page count is settled before the work is finished — delivered to a reader who sets their own pace	the narrative is built to fall on double-page spreads , with the page turn as the reveal; there is no break to write towards and no next episode, so the story must land on the last spread

Four of those containers are drawn below on a single minute scale, so the claim can be checked rather than taken on trust. A commercial “half-hour” holds **22 minutes** of story in four acts, because three breaks have to be sold and each one has to be written towards; an ABC hour holds **57 minutes** uninterrupted, so its turning points fall where the story wants them rather than where a break falls; SBS’s five-minute cap leaves **55 minutes** and room for a single late break; and a seven-minute children’s episode has no break to write towards at all, so the problem and its resolution must both fit inside it. The lengths, the breaks and the act blocks are all drawn to the same scale — the visible difference between the lanes *is* the institutional difference.

Four institutions, one minute scale. The narrative does not choose its shape — it is poured into the container the institution provides.



Read the top lane against the second. Both are “an hour” or “a half-hour” of television, and neither carries that much story. The commercial lane is built in four acts because three breaks have to be sold, so the turning points fall where the breaks fall; the ABC lane runs close to fifty-seven minutes uninterrupted, so its turning points fall where the story wants them. Nothing about storytelling requires either shape. The funding model does.

Institutions can also produce structure by making a form viable at all. For decades, Australian content requirements on commercial free-to-air broadcasters included a stand-alone annual obligation to broadcast first-release Australian **drama**, and the cheapest reliable way to deliver many hours of it was the **long-running serial** — permanent sets, a large rotating cast, continuous overlapping storylines. The requirement never prescribed that shape; the economics of meeting it did. The obligation itself has since changed: under the *Broadcasting Services (Australian Content and Children’s Television) Standards 2020* (Cth), in force from 1 January 2021, drama no longer has a quota of its own but counts towards a single flexible annual requirement of 250 points of first-release Australian drama, documentary and children’s programs, alongside the 55% Australian content transmission quota between 6 am and midnight on the primary channel (the position as at 2025). The serial shapes the older rule produced outlasted the rule — which is worth noticing in itself: an institutional condition can leave a structure behind after the condition has gone.

Boundary — 6A and 7B. Both subtopics involve institutions, and they ask different questions. **6A asks: what shape did the institution give the story?** 7B asks what the institutional, economic, social and political environment allowed, prevented, funded or blocked — constraints on *production and distribution*.

Act breaks, running orders, episode lengths and where a turning point falls belong here; whether the program got made, and how it reached an audience, belongs to 7B.

The two sources usually work together, and the strongest answers show them meeting. An anthology series set in one suburb draws a place-centred shape from a cultural history and is made possible by a public broadcaster that does not need a returning protagonist to sell breaks — as with *Redfern Now* (2012–2015), an ABC drama in which each episode tells a self-contained story about a different household in the same Sydney suburb. A crime feature that intercuts a present-day investigation with a past summer, as *The Dry* (2020) does, takes its dual timeline from a storytelling tradition of a past that will not stay buried, and its single-sitting shape from **cinema exhibition** — the distributor and the cinemas that deliver the whole narrative in one uninterrupted session.

A method for structure questions. For any question asking how an Australian story's structure arises from cultural histories and institutions: (1) **name the narrative and its form**, and say whether it is fictional or non-fictional; (2) **name a specific structural feature at a specific point** — “the cliffhanger that closes episode one”, “the running order placing the council story third”, not “it has an interesting structure”; (3) **trace it to its source** — a cultural history, an institution, or both — and show *how* that source produced that shape; (4) **say what the structure does**, meaning what it makes the audience do: wait, compare, return, keep watching, keep reading past the fold. Because the outcome requires **two or more media forms**, run steps 2–4 twice, in narratives drawn from **two different families** on the study design's list — moving image (film, television, video, animation); still image (photography); audio (radio, podcast); print (magazine, zine, comic, graphic novel, newspaper, poster); digital; and convergent or hybridised media. A film and a television drama both sit in **moving image**, so that pair does not satisfy the requirement.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Explain how the act structure of an Australian television serial arises from the institution that commissions it.
(5 marks)

This is the basic institution-to-structure trace. The narrative is *Half a Street*, a fictional serial drama commissioned by a commercial free-to-air network and stripped across weeknights.

Working	Comment
<i>Half a Street</i> is an Australian fictional serial made for a commercial free-to-air network , which earns its revenue from advertising sold in the breaks inside the program.	Step 1. Name the narrative, the form, and — critically — the institution and its business model . The business model is the engine of the whole answer.
Because the breaks must be sold and the audience must be held across them, each half-hour episode is written in three acts separated by two commercial breaks, with roughly 22 minutes of story in a 30-minute slot.	Step 2. State the structural consequence in concrete, countable terms — acts, breaks, running time.
The structural feature this produces is the act-out : the last beat before each break is a hook. In episode 14 the act ends on a character opening a letter and going silent without the contents being shown.	Step 3. Name a specific structural feature at a specific point . This is where most answers thin out into “it has cliffhangers”.
The audience is left holding an unanswered question across the break, so they stay through the advertising rather than leaving — which is precisely what the institution needs the structure to do.	Step 4. Say what the structure does , and close the loop back to the institution's need.
Had the same story been made for a broadcaster that carries no advertising, the letter would not need to land there at all; the turning point could sit wherever the story wanted it.	Step 5. The counterfactual proves the institution caused the shape, rather than the shape being a natural property of the story.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Analyse how a cultural history and an institution can pull the structure of a non-fictional program in opposite directions, and what a maker does about it. (6 marks)

Example 1 traced a shape an institution **supplied**. This is the harder case, and the one “analyse” rewards: two sources wanting different things from the same narrative. The narrative is *Fenceline*, a proposed six-part observational series following the households of one outer-suburban street across a year, pitched to a commercial free-to-air network for a half-hour weeknight slot.

Working	Comment
<i>Fenceline</i> is an Australian non-fictional television series built out of suburbia and the everyday — small, continuous, low-stakes events among neighbours, filmed observationally and ordered by the street’s own calendar rather than by a crisis.	Step 1. Name the narrative, the form, and the shape the cultural history supplies: its scale (small), its continuity (nothing resets) and its ordering principle (the calendar, not causation).
That inherited shape has no natural climb in it. Nothing in a fortnight of an ordinary street rises to a question urgent enough to hold an audience across an advertisement.	Step 2. State the inherited shape’s structural limitation . This is the half of the analysis most answers skip.
The institution wants the opposite. A commercial free-to-air network sells the breaks inside the program, so a half-hour episode carries roughly 22 minutes of story in three acts , each ending on a hook, and the break pattern is fixed before a frame is shot.	Step 3. Second source, with its business model and the countable demand it makes — 22 minutes, three acts, two act-outs.
The two pull against each other: manufacture jeopardy and the everyday is falsified; keep the everyday and there is nothing to park at the break. The maker’s structural compromise is a dated event inside the ordinary — each episode is built around a real, low-stakes deadline (a council notice with a lodgement date, an enrolment day, the last collection before the tip closes), so a genuine open question exists at each act-out.	Step 4. Name the conflict , then the compromise, and treat the compromise as a structural decision rather than a matter of tone. This is the move the marks are for.
The act-out closing act one of episode three is therefore not danger but a lodgement form left on a kitchen bench with a date on it. The audience carries a small, real question across the break, and the series keeps both things at once: the institution’s hook, and the scale the cultural history gave it.	Step 5. A specific feature at a specific point , with both sources visible in the one structural moment, and the effect on the audience stated.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Outline the structure of an Australian non-fictional podcast episode and identify one cultural history it draws on. (4 marks)

The Mirrindale Tapes is a local-history podcast about a fictional regional Victorian town, made by two volunteers at a community radio station. Each episode is structured as a **cold open** — thirty seconds of archival tape lifted from later in the episode — then a host introduction, three interview chapters separated by short music beds, and a closing tease. The structure draws on the cultural history of the **yarn**: interviewees run long and digress, and the chapters are joined by association rather than by argument, so the episode wanders towards its point instead of stating it up front. The cold open is the one concession to a different pressure — a listener scrolling a feed decides in seconds, so the strongest moment is moved to the front. *Takeaway*: podcast structure is a conversational, inherited shape with a modern hook bolted to its opening.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Describe how the same Australian story can be structured differently when it is told in two media forms. (4 marks)

Wattlebank Pictures releases *The Silo Road*, a feature documentary about the closure of a fictional branch grain line, and the same maker later writes it up as a long-form print feature. In the **film**, the structure is a **journey**: the narrative follows the line from one end to the other, each stop a chapter, and the closure is revealed at the final station — the audience is held in a single sitting, so the point can be withheld until the end. In the **print feature**, the structure inverts. A newsroom's readers may stop at any paragraph, so the piece opens with a standfirst and a **nut graf** that states the closure and its consequence in the first hundred words, then descends through the detail. Same events, same maker, two shapes — because one institution, a cinema exhibiting the film in a single session, delivers an audience held for ninety minutes, and the other, a newsroom, delivers a reader who may leave after two paragraphs. *Takeaway*: the form and its institution set the shape; the story is poured into it.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

- Q1.** Define each of the following terms: (3 marks) (a) narrative structure; (b) a structural feature; (c) a turning point.
- Q2.** Fictional narratives are commonly built on a three-act shape. (4 marks) (a) Name the three acts in order. (b) State what an inciting incident does. (c) State the difference between an **episodic** and a **serialised** structure.
- Q3.** Non-fictional narratives have structures of their own. (4 marks) (a) State what a running order is. (b) State what the inverted pyramid is and why a newsroom uses it. (c) Name one structural feature of a podcast episode and state what it is for.
- Q4.** Structures are inherited from cultural histories. (4 marks) (a) Define what is meant by a cultural history in the study of narrative structure. (b) Name two Australian cultural histories that show up as narrative structure. (c) For one of them, state the structural shape it produces.
- Q5.** Structures are also shaped by institutions. (5 marks) (a) Define what is meant by an institution in the media. (b) Name three different kinds of Australian media institution. (c) For each, state one structural consequence of the way that institution operates.
- Q6.** For each structural feature below, classify its main source as a **cultural history** or an **institution**, and name the source. (5 marks) (i) A hook placed immediately before every commercial break. (ii) A crime narrative that intercuts a present-day investigation with a past summer. (iii) A seven-minute animated episode with a complete problem and resolution inside it. (iv) A feature documentary that never explains the disappearance at its centre. (v) A news item written so that it still makes sense if the last three paragraphs are cut.

Unscaffolded

- Q7.** Identify one structural feature of a fictional media narrative and one structural feature of a non-fictional media narrative. (2 marks)
- Q8.** Outline why the structure of a media narrative is described as constructed rather than natural. (2 marks)
- Q9.** Outline how a television news bulletin is structured. (3 marks)
- Q10.** Describe one structural consequence of a national broadcaster carrying no advertising on its domestic television services. (3 marks)
- Q11.** (*Stimulus.*) Read the commissioning brief below.

Stimulus. Commissioning brief, *Saltpan Stream* (subscription streaming service). “Eight episodes, released together on the launch date. Episode length flexible between 38 and 52 minutes. No advertising breaks. Autoplay runs the next episode four seconds after the credits begin. Recaps optional.”

Explain how this delivery model would shape the structure of a fictional Australian drama made for it. (4 marks)

Q12. Explain how the tradition of the ordinary person taking on a larger body shows up as narrative **structure** rather than only as subject matter. (4 marks)

Q13. Describe how an anthology structure allows a series to tell many stories of one place, and what that structure does for the audience. (4 marks)

Q14. Explain how landscape or place can work as an organising structural principle in an Australian narrative, including in a narrative that withholds its resolution. (5 marks)

Q15. (*Stimulus.*) Read the two running orders below. Both cover the same day in the same town.

Stimulus. *Mirrindale Community Radio*, breakfast program: (1) station identification and acquittal of last week's fundraiser; (2) twelve-minute interview with the hospital auxiliary president; (3) community noticeboard; (4) local music set; (5) the flood-levee decision, as talkback.

The Mirrindale Advocate, page one: (1) the flood-levee decision — headline, standfirst, nut graf in paragraph two; (2) hospital auxiliary, six paragraphs, page five; (3) fundraiser result, two paragraphs, page eleven.

Discuss how each institution has shaped the structure of the same day's news. (5 marks)

Q16. Explain how a screen funding agency's development process fixes a narrative's structure before production begins. (6 marks)

Q17. Explain how a serialised structure and an episodic structure engage an audience differently, and identify an Australian institution whose delivery model favours each. (6 marks)

Q18. Analyse how the structure of one Australian **non-fictional** narrative arises from cultural histories and institutions. In your response, refer to a media narrative you have studied this year. (8 marks)

Q19. Analyse how the structures of **two** Australian narratives, in **two different media forms**, arise from cultural histories and institutions. In your response, refer to media narratives you have studied this year. (10 marks)

Your response must address:

- one specific structural feature in each narrative, located at a specific point;
 - the cultural history and/or institution each feature arises from, and how that source produced it;
 - what the difference in media form does to the shape of the two narratives.
-

Answers

Q1. (3) (a) The way a narrative is organised — its parts, their order, and the points at which it turns. (b) One identifiable piece of that organisation (act break, turning point, running order, resolution). (c) A moment at which the direction of the narrative changes. **Q2.** (4) (a) Set-up, complication, resolution. (b) It is the event that starts the story, pushing the situation out of its opening state. (c) Episodic = each episode is a complete story and the situation resets; serialised = one story continues across episodes and is held open between them. **Q3.** (4) (a) The ranked order of stories in a bulletin. (b) Most important information first, detail descending — so the item can be cut from the bottom and still make sense. (c) Any one of: cold open; chapters; mid-episode break; closing tease — with its purpose. **Q4.** (4) (a) The stories, traditions, shared experience and ways of telling a culture carries over time, which makers inherit. (b) Any two from the Theory table. (c) A matched shape — yarn → digressive, circling structure; landscape → the journey out and back, or the withheld resolution; migration → dual timeline; battler → underdog-versus-institution escalation. **Q5.** (5) (a) An organisation that commissions, funds, makes, schedules, publishes or distributes media. (b) Any three of: commercial free-to-air network; ABC; SBS (including NITV); streaming service; screen funding agency; newsroom; community broadcaster; a broadcaster's children's arm; a book or magazine publisher. (c) One consequence each, per the Theory table — e.g. commercial network → acts and act-outs around sold breaks; ABC → uninterrupted arc; funding agency → structure fixed on paper in the shape the round asks for. **Q6.** (5) (i) Institution — an advertising-funded commercial free-to-air network. (ii) Cultural history — stories of two homes and of a past that will not stay buried, producing the dual timeline. (iii) Institution — a children's broadcaster (the ABC's children's service commissions *Bluey*), whose slot sets the length. (iv) Cultural history — landscape as an active presence, producing the withheld resolution. (v) Institution — a newsroom working to deadline in fixed space. **Q7.** (2) One fictional feature (act break, cliffhanger, inciting incident, turning point, climax, resolution, flashback) + one non-fictional feature (running order, inverted pyramid, cold open, nut graf, standfirst, kicker, chapter). One mark each. **Q8.** (2) Someone chose the order — the same events could have been arranged differently — so the shape carries meaning and can be analysed as a decision, not a natural property of the events. **Q9.** (3) A **running order** ranked by news value; **lead story** first; related items grouped together so the bulletin does not jump between subjects; sport and weather near the end; each item an inverted pyramid so it can be trimmed to a fixed duration. **Q10.** (3) No breaks to write towards → one uninterrupted arc (a “one-hour” program can carry close to 57 minutes), so turning points sit where the story needs them, not immediately before a break. **Q11.** (4) No breaks → no act-outs; autoplay in four seconds → episodes end on a hook **into the next episode**; flexible 38–52 minutes → length set by the story, not a slot; whole season with optional recaps → plot carried across episodes without restatement. **Q12.** (4) It supplies a shape, not just a subject: ordinary protagonist, an early squeeze by a large body, escalation through refusals, resolution won on principle rather than power — *The Castle* (1997). **Q13.** (4) Each episode a self-contained story with new characters; the place, not a protagonist, is the through-line — *Redfern Now* (2012–2015). Effect: the audience reads the place as the subject, and no one household stands for everybody. **Q14.** (5) Place as organising principle: the journey out and the return; the narrative that goes into the landscape and does not come back; place rather than plot causality ordering the parts. Withheld resolution: *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) never explains the disappearance, leaving the audience holding the question as the point of the film. **Q15.** (5) Community radio: volunteer-made, member-accountable, no commercial imperative → long segments, station identification and fundraiser acquittal first, the levee decision last as talkback. Newspaper: deadline, fixed space, a reader who may stop → levee leads page one, nut graf in paragraph two, minor items cut and pushed deep. Position: same events, opposite orders, because the institutions serve different obligations. **Q16.** (6) Money follows written documents, so acts, episode count and turning points are approved **on paper before a frame is shot**; rounds come in defined shapes, so the story is written to that shape; changing it later means returning to the agency. Screen Australia and VicScreen both operate this way. **Q17.** (6) Serialised → the story is held open, engagement built on the unanswered question, audience must return; favoured by streaming services and advertising-funded nightly serials. Episodic → complete satisfaction each time, no entry cost, join anywhere; favoured by broadcasters filling a weekly slot, and above all by children's broadcasters such as the ABC's children's service. **Q18.** (8) See Fully-worked solutions. Must include: a named Australian non-fictional narrative and its form; a specific structural feature at a specific point; a cultural history and an institution each traced to the shape it produced; what the structure does for the audience. **Q19.** (10) See Fully-worked solutions. Must include: two Australian narratives from two different form families on the study design's list (a film and a television drama are both moving image, so that pair does not qualify); a specific structural feature located in each; the source behind each, with the mechanism stated; and an explicit comparison of what the change of form does to the shape.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) **Narrative structure** is the way a media narrative is organised — the parts it is divided into, their order, and the points at which it turns. (b) A **structural feature** is one identifiable piece of that organisation: an opening, an act break, a turning point, a segment, a running order, a cliffhanger, a resolution. (c) A **turning point** is a moment at which the direction of the narrative changes — the story cannot continue as it was after it.

Q2. (a) **Set-up, complication, resolution.** (b) The **inciting incident** disturbs the opening situation and sets the protagonist on the path the narrative follows. (c) **Episodic** — each episode contains a complete problem and its solution and the situation resets, so the audience can join anywhere; **serialised** — one story runs across episodes and is left open between them, so the audience must return. *Marker's note:* many series are hybrids — a self-contained case each week inside a season-long arc — and saying so is a strength, not a hedge.

Q3. (a) The ranked order in which stories are placed in a bulletin, from the **lead story** down. (b) The **inverted pyramid** places the most important information first and descends through detail, so a sub-editor can cut the item from the bottom and it still makes sense — a structure designed around the newsroom's deadline and fixed space. (c) Any one with its purpose: the **cold open** plays the strongest moment first, because a listener scrolling a feed decides within seconds; **chapters** break a long conversation into digestible parts; the closing **tease** carries the listener into the next episode.

Q4. (a) The accumulated body of stories, traditions, shared experience and ways of telling that a culture carries over time; makers inherit these shapes and work with, against or around them. (b) Two of: the **yarn**; **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander storytelling traditions**; **landscape** as an active presence; **migration** and multicultural experience; **suburbia** and the everyday; the **battler and larrikin**; **public ritual** and the calendar. (c) The **yarn**, for instance, produces a digressive structure that circles back to where it started, with long turns of speech and chapters joined by association rather than argument. *Marker's note:* the mark is for the **shape**, not the subject. “Stories about the bush” is not a structure; “the journey out and the failure to return” is.

Q5. (a) An organisation that commissions, funds, makes, schedules, publishes or distributes media. (b) and (c) Three, each with its structural consequence. A **commercial free-to-air network**, licensed under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth), earns its revenue from advertising, so its programs are built in **acts** with a hook before each sold break. The **Australian Broadcasting Corporation**, established by the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* (Cth), is prohibited by s 31 of that Act from broadcasting advertisements on its domestic services, so its dramas can run as a single **uninterrupted arc** with turning points placed by the story. A **screen funding agency** — **Screen Australia** (*Screen Australia Act 2008* (Cth)) or **VicScreen** — grants development money against a written treatment or script, so the structure is **fixed on paper before production begins**. *Marker's note:* an institution is not a media form. “Television” is a form; a network, a public broadcaster or a streaming service is an institution.

Q6. (i) **Institution** — an advertising-funded commercial free-to-air network; the hook holds the audience across a sold break. (ii) **Cultural history** — the dual timeline carried by stories of two homes and of a past that will not stay buried; *The Dry* (2020) intercuts a present-day investigation with a past summer. (iii) **Institution** — a children's broadcaster and its commissioning arm: the ABC's children's service, which commissions *Bluey* (from 2018) into a tightly defined slot, so the episode length is set and a complete problem and resolution must fit inside roughly seven minutes. (iv) **Cultural history** — landscape as an active presence, producing the **withheld resolution**, as in *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975). (v) **Institution** — a newsroom working to deadline in fixed space, producing the **inverted pyramid**. *Marker's note:* several have a second source in the background; the question asks for the **main** one, so commit to one and name it precisely.

Q7. “Identify” — *one fact each*. A **fictional** structural feature: a **cliffhanger**, an episode ending that leaves a question open so the audience must return. A **non-fictional** structural feature: the **inverted pyramid**, the most important information placed first so the item can be cut from the bottom.

Q8. “Outline” — *the key point, briefly*. The structure is **constructed** because the events could have been arranged in any number of orders and someone chose this one: a documentary maker could have opened at the end, a newsroom could have led with the third story. Because the order is a decision, it carries meaning and can be analysed.

Q9. “Outline” — *the key features, briefly*. A bulletin is organised as a **running order**: stories ranked by news value, with the **lead story** first, so the most significant item reaches an audience that may not stay to the end — in a metropolitan bulletin that lead is commonly a local or state story. Related items are then grouped together so the

bulletin does not jump between subjects, and the fixed segments, **sport and weather**, sit near the end, often before a light closing item. Each item is written as an **inverted pyramid** so it can be trimmed to the bulletin's fixed duration. *Marker's note*: three marks want the **order and the reason for it**, not a list of what a news program contains.

Q10. "Describe" — an account of the feature. A broadcaster prohibited from carrying advertising on its domestic television services has **no breaks to write towards**, so an episode runs as a single **uninterrupted arc** — a "one-hour" drama can carry close to 57 minutes of continuous story rather than roughly 44 minutes cut into four acts. The consequence is that **turning points sit where the story needs them**: a quiet, slow reversal can be allowed to be quiet, because it does not have to double as a hook holding the audience across an advertisement. This is the ABC's position on its domestic services under the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* (Cth), s 31. *Marker's note*: the answer must reach the **structural** consequence; "there are no ads" is a fact about the institution, not a feature of the narrative.

Q11. "Explain" — a how/why chain from delivery model to shape. Every element of the *Saltpan Stream* brief pushes the structure the same way. With **no advertising breaks** there are no act-outs to build towards, so the internal shape of an episode is set by the story rather than by a break pattern. Because **autoplay starts the next episode after four seconds**, the hook moves to the very end: each episode closes on an unresolved beat aimed **into the next episode**, not into a break. Because length is **flexible between 38 and 52 minutes**, an episode runs as long as its material warrants — a quiet penultimate episode short, the finale long — which a fixed broadcast slot makes impossible. And because the season is **released together with optional recaps**, plot carries forward without restatement, so the season is written as one long narrative in eight parts rather than as eight programs. *Marker's note*: four marks reward the chain from **delivery model** → **structural consequence**, at least three times over; listing the brief's features without saying what each does to the shape is a summary, not an explanation.

Q12. "Explain" — show it as shape, not subject. The tradition supplies a complete narrative **shape**, which is why it recurs: an unremarkable protagonist in an ordinary setting; an early **inciting incident** in which a large body — a developer, a department, a company — squeezes them; a middle of **escalating refusals**, each raising the stakes and each fought at a higher level; and a **resolution won on principle rather than on power**, in which the protagonist prevails without becoming powerful. *The Castle* (1997) follows it exactly, moving a family's fight against the compulsory acquisition of their home up through the courts to a resolution that turns on a principle rather than on resources. The tradition is not merely what the narrative is about — it dictates where the turning points fall and what kind of ending is available. *Marker's note*: the trap is to retell a plot. Name the structural stages — squeeze, escalation, principled resolution — and the plot becomes evidence rather than filler.

Q13. "Describe" — an account, with the effect. An **anthology** structure gives each episode a new, self-contained story with new central characters, making the **place** rather than a protagonist the through-line. *Redfern Now* (2012–2015) is structured this way: each episode tells a complete story about a different household in the same Sydney suburb, and the suburb is what carries across. This does two things for the audience. It changes the subject of the series — the viewer reads the **place and the community** as what is being portrayed, rather than following one person's arc. And it removes the burden of representativeness from any one household: with many stories, no single one stands for everybody. *Marker's note*: the effect is the mark; defining an anthology without it stops at half the question.

Q14. "Explain" — the mechanism, developed with an example. Place can act as the **organising principle** of a narrative — deciding the order of the parts — in place of plot causality. Where landscape organises structure, the narrative is commonly built as a **journey out and a return**: each location is a chapter, and progress is measured in distance rather than cause and effect. The sharper version is the narrative that goes **into** the landscape and does not come back, producing the **withheld resolution**: because the land is treated as something that does not answer to human explanation, the story refuses to supply an answer. *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) is the standing example — the disappearance at the centre is never explained, and the structure closes without restoring order, so the audience leaves holding the question and the absence of an answer becomes the meaning of the film. *Marker's note*: five marks need the **structural mechanism** (place ordering the parts; resolution withheld), not a description of scenery. Avoid saying a film "has no ending" — it has an ending; what it withholds is a resolution.

Q15. "Discuss" — weigh both and reach a position. The two running orders cover the same day and place the same events in almost exactly opposite orders, and each order is produced by the institution behind it. **Mirrindale Community Radio** is volunteer-made, accountable to its members and under no commercial imperative, and its structure reflects that: it opens with station identification and the fundraiser acquittal — an obligation to the people

who paid for the station — gives the hospital auxiliary president a full **twelve-minute interview** rather than a grab, and places the flood-levee decision **last, as talkback**, so the audience participates in the biggest story rather than being told it. **The Mirrindale Advocate** works to a deadline, in fixed page space, for a reader who may stop at any paragraph, and its structure inverts: the levee decision **leads page one** with a standfirst and a **nut graf** in paragraph two, the auxiliary is cut to six paragraphs on page five, and the fundraiser survives as two paragraphs on page eleven. Neither order is more accurate than the other — **the running order is a structural decision made by the institution**, the station structured to serve members and participation, the paper structured to serve reach and retention. *Marker's note*: the discuss mark is for reaching that position; listing what each outlet ran, untied to the institution, sits at half marks.

Q16. "Explain" — *a developed chain from process to structure*. A screen funding agency such as **Screen Australia**, established under the *Screen Australia Act 2008* (Cth), or **VicScreen**, Victoria's screen agency, does not fund a finished idea — it funds **development**, and development money is granted against written documents: a treatment, an outline, a step outline, a script. The consequence is that the acts, the episode count, the position of the turning points and the ending are decided and **assessed on paper before a frame is shot**. Three things follow. The structure is locked early, and changing it later usually means returning to the agency, so the shape approved at development tends to survive into the finished product. Funding programs come in defined shapes — a feature, a six-part series, a short-form online series in ten-minute parts — so makers write the story **into the shape the round asks for**, and a story that would naturally run four episodes is built as six. And because assessors read structure on the page, the documents reward legible structure: clear acts, identifiable turning points, a summarisable ending. The agency never dictates a shape, but its process makes some shapes far easier to fund than others. *Marker's note*: six marks want the **mechanism** — money follows documents, documents fix structure. Whether the story got funded at all belongs to 7B.

Q17. "Explain" — *contrast the engagement, then name the institutions*. A **serialised** structure runs one story across episodes and leaves it open between them, so engagement is built on the **unanswered question**: the audience must return, and each episode ends by opening a gap rather than closing one. An **episodic** structure gives each episode a complete problem and resolution and resets the situation, so engagement is built on **reliable satisfaction and zero entry cost** — a viewer can join at any episode, in any order, and still get a whole story. The institutional fit follows from the delivery model. **Subscription streaming services** favour serialisation: the season is released at once and autoplay starts the next episode within seconds, so an unresolved ending converts directly into continued viewing; advertising-funded **commercial free-to-air** networks use the same logic in their nightly serials. **Episodic** structures suit broadcasters filling a weekly slot, where an audience is assembled fresh each week, and above all **children's broadcasters**: the ABC's children's service commissions *Bluey* (from 2018) in roughly seven-minute units, short, self-contained and repeatable enough to match both the audience and the slot.

Q18. Command term — *analyse*: break the structure into its parts and show how each arises from its source, with evidence at specific points. *Model response* (8 marks). *Studied narrative*: Four Corners (ABC, television, non-fictional).

Four Corners is an Australian non-fictional television program, broadcast by the ABC since 1961, and its structure is unusual in Australian current affairs: **one issue investigated for the full program**, rather than a magazine of four or five short items. Two structural features carry it, and each has a source.

The first is the **single-topic long form** itself, which arises from the **institution**. The ABC is established by the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* (Cth) and is prohibited by s 31 of that Act from broadcasting advertisements on its domestic services. A program that does not have to sell breaks does not have to deliver a hook every eleven minutes, or keep changing subject to hold a restless audience. The institution therefore permits a shape — sustained attention on one story — that an advertising-funded schedule makes commercially difficult.

The second is the **order of the investigation**: a reporter's set-up establishing the question, then evidence in blocks — documents and records, and the accounts of those affected — and then, late, the **turn** at which a central figure is put to the claims. That the turn is held until the evidence has accumulated arises from a **cultural history**: the Australian tradition of scrutiny, of authority being made to answer; the structure enacts the tradition rather than merely describing it. The program then closes on a statement to camera naming what remains unanswered instead of declaring a verdict — a shape owed to both sources at once. The effect is to make the audience an assessor rather than a spectator: evidence arrives before the confrontation and the ending withholds the verdict, so the viewer is placed in the position of reaching their own — available only because the institution does not need the program interrupted.

Marker's note: an 8-mark analyse needs **specific structural features**, each traced to a **named source** with the mechanism stated (“no advertising, therefore no act-outs, therefore sustained single topic”). The common failures are describing content instead of shape, and naming an institution without saying what it did to the structure.

Q19. Command term — analyse: deconstruct both structures, trace each to its sources, and show what the change of form does. *Model response (10 marks).* *Studied narratives:* *The Arrival (2006, graphic novel — the print form, fictional)* and *Go Back to Where You Came From (SBS, 2011, television — the moving image form, non-fictional).*

The Arrival — print, fictional. Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival*, published in 2006 by Lothian Books, is an Australian migration narrative told entirely without words: no dialogue, no captions, and signage in an invented script the reader cannot decode. Its defining structural feature is the **embedded story**. Part-way through the book, each stranger the newcomer meets is given a run of panels in which their own leaving is told inside his, and the narrative then returns to him. That shape arises from a **cultural history** — migration and multicultural experience, which is never one person’s story but many arrivals laid over one another; the structure carries that plurality by refusing to let a single journey be the only one on the page. The feature is located most precisely in the **closing sequence**, where the daughter, now settled, points the way for a newcomer standing in the street with a suitcase: the book ends by repeating its own opening situation with the roles reversed, so the shape is a circle rather than a climb, and the arrival is shown happening again to somebody else.

It also arises from an **institution**: the book’s publisher. A printed book is manufactured to a **fixed extent** — pages are printed in sections, so the page count is settled before the artwork is finished — its unit of delivery is the **double-page spread**, and its only reveal mechanism is a **page turn the reader controls**. The newcomer’s first sight of the new city is therefore placed on a spread that has to be turned into, and the story has to land on the last spread, because a book has no break to write towards and no next episode to hold anything for.

Go Back to Where You Came From — moving image, non-fictional. The SBS series, broadcast in 2011 in three episodes stripped across three nights, follows six Australians holding opposing views on asylum seekers as they retrace the route refugees take to Australia — **in reverse**, beginning in Australia and travelling towards the places people leave. The inversion *is* the structure, and its located point is the **close of the first episode**, where the group leaves the country: the moment at which the inherited arrival story would end is where this one starts moving.

The shape arises from the same **cultural history** as *The Arrival*, and refuses it. Australia’s migration story is habitually told as an **arrival** — departure, voyage, landfall, a life made — and because the audience already knows that shape, running it backwards removes the destination as the reward and makes each episode close further from resolution rather than nearer to it. It also arises from an **institution**. SBS is established under the *Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991* (Cth) with a multilingual and multicultural Charter, and s 45 of that Act limits its television advertising and sponsorship to no more than five minutes in any hour. A program whose subject is Australia’s multicultural composition sits inside that broadcaster’s remit rather than against it, and with only a few minutes of advertising to place, an episode can be built as long continuous legs of a journey — so its turning points fall at geographic transitions rather than at the intervals a fully advertising-funded hour would impose.

What the change of form does. Both narratives inherit the same cultural history, which leaves the **form** as the variable doing the work. The television series controls **time**: the maker sets the pace, the audience cannot go back, and the schedule cuts the journey into three nights, so the structure has to hand the audience an unfinished journey at the end of each one. The graphic novel controls **space**: the reader sets the pace, may turn back, and can hold one page for as long as they like, so the structure needs no hook at all and puts its weight instead on the page turn and on a closing image that answers the opening one. The series is built to be **interrupted and resumed**; the book is built to be **reread**. And each institution fixes a different boundary: the broadcaster’s schedule and advertising cap decide where the series may pause, while the publisher’s fixed extent decides where the book must stop.

Marker's note: ten marks require **two narratives in two genuinely different media forms** — work from the study design’s families (moving image, still image, audio, print, digital, convergent), and note that a film and a television drama both sit in moving image. Each narrative needs a structural feature located at a specific point, each traced to a source with the mechanism stated, and an explicit comparison at the end. Choosing two narratives that inherit from the **same** cultural history is a legitimate strategy: it isolates the form as the thing producing the difference. The commonest failures at this tariff are choosing two narratives in the same form, and writing two separate analyses with no comparison at the end.

Chapter 6 Australian stories: structure, codes and style — 6B Codes and conventions that engage audiences and communicate meaning

Theory

In 6A you looked at the **shape** of Australian stories and where those structures come from. This subtopic asks a different question about the same narratives: not *what shape is it*, but *what is doing the work*. When an Australian narrative holds an audience and gets an idea across, something concrete produces that effect — a camera position, a performance, a cut, a colour, a page layout, a familiar way of opening an episode. Those things are **media codes** and **media conventions**, and the study design asks you to analyse them for two purposes at once: how they **engage audiences** and how they **communicate meaning**. Keep the Area of Study's frame in view: the narratives studied here must be by **Australian media creators and producers** with **primarily Australian content**, across **two or more media forms**.

The toolkit, recapped. Chapter 1 built the taxonomy; this is the working summary you need before analysing.

A **media code** is a technical or symbolic tool used to construct meaning in media forms and products. The study design's list is **open**, not a closed set — it names **camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics**, and **paper stock** for print. *Acting* belongs on that list as squarely as camera does, and it is the code students most often forget.

A **media convention** is a rule or generally accepted way of constructing meaning or organising media products. Conventions come in three families:

- **conventions of media forms and products** — the rules and common practices for constructing and organising a form or product (a current affairs program opens with a reporter's introduction; a podcast carries a theme sting and a host welcome; a newspaper front page runs a masthead, a dominant headline and a byline);
- **genre conventions** — the rules that define genres, which are subject to debate and change, and which reveal cultural assumptions about media products, their audiences and industry practices;
- **narrative conventions** — common narrative structures, such as **character, character arcs** and **three-act structures**.

The quick test: a **code** is a tool you can *point at* (this shot, that colour, this performance); a **convention** is an expectation you can *name* (this is how products of this kind are normally organised). Confusing them is the commonest error here — “the three-act structure is a media code” is wrong; it is a narrative convention.

Why they work: shared understanding. The study design is precise about the mechanism. Audience readings of meaning are **mediated through a shared understanding** of the codes and conventions used to construct narratives. A low angle reads as dominance only because creator and audience both read it that way; a theme sting signals “the episode is starting” only because listeners have heard hundreds of them. Codes and conventions are a **shared repertoire**, so analysis must always ask *shared with whom* — and for Australian stories part of that repertoire is **cultural**. A Hills hoist in the frame, a Queenslander's wide verandah, the flat vowels of a broad Australian accent: these carry dense associations for an audience that shares them and thinner ones for an audience that does not. An Australian narrative can therefore engage a local audience through **recognition** in a way it cannot engage an audience abroad, while still communicating a meaning both read.

The two jobs are not the same job. This is the distinction the dot point turns on. **Engagement** is defined in the study design as how audiences are **affected emotionally and cognitively** by a media product, and how those ways of engaging combine to form complex meanings and experiences. Engagement is the *pull* — attention, feeling, thinking. **Meaning** is what the audience is invited to *understand*: the information, character judgement, attitude or idea the moment puts across. Usually a single code does both, but not always, and the gap is where good analysis lives. A sudden loud sound cue engages powerfully while communicating almost nothing; a supered caption giving a date and place communicates precisely while engaging hardly at all. When the thing that grips you is also the thing that tells you something, that is the moment worth writing about.

Set the two jobs on two axes and you get four quadrants, and choosing one is a decision you have to make about every instance you write about. The figure below is a **classification, not a measurement** — the axes carry bands rather than a scale — but the quadrant an instance lands in tells you what kind of claim you can make about it. Anything in the top-right earns the most, because there the same choice is doing both jobs at once.



Five ways codes and conventions engage. Naming the mechanism is what lifts an answer above “it engages the audience”.

Mechanism	What it does	Typical tools
Attention	Makes the audience look or listen here rather than elsewhere	Visual composition, lighting, a cut, a sound cue, a dominant headline
Emotion	Produces feeling — warmth, dread, grief, delight	Acting, music, colour, camera proximity
Curiosity and anticipation	Makes the audience want the next moment	Withheld information, editing pace, an act turning point, a cliffhanger
Identification and recognition	Makes the audience feel the narrative is about people or a place like them	Acting, mise en scene, accent and vernacular, familiar settings
Participation	Makes the audience do something — click, choose, share, reply	Digital form conventions, interactive elements, direct address

The analysis chain. Every 6B answer, short or extended, runs four steps in this order.

1. **Name the code or convention precisely** — not “the visuals”, but *camera, editing, mise en scene, the convention of the reporter piece-to-camera*.
2. **Point to the specific moment** — a named scene, shot, sound cue, panel, page or episode opening. A general claim with no instance is the single most penalised habit in media analysis.
3. **State how it engages** — which mechanism, and on whom.
4. **State what it communicates** — the idea, information, judgement or attitude the audience takes away.

Weak: “The lighting creates a mood which engages the audience.” *Strong:* “In the kitchen scene the **lighting** is a single warm source that leaves the corners dark; the pocket of light draws the eye to the family at the table (**attention**) while the surrounding darkness communicates how small and exposed their hold on the house has become (**meaning**).”

Which codes carry the load, form by form. Because the Area of Study requires two or more media forms, you must shift your toolkit when the form changes.

Media form	Codes doing most of the work	A typical engage-and-mean pairing
Moving image	Camera, editing, acting, mise en scene, lighting, sound	A slow push-in during a performance holds attention and communicates a dawning realisation
Still image	Visual composition, lighting, colour, camera	An off-centre subject with empty space around them draws the eye and communicates isolation
Audio	Sound (voice, music, effects, silence), editing	A held silence after an evasive answer creates unease and communicates that the answer was inadequate
Print	Typography, visual composition, colour, text and graphics, paper stock	A headline set far larger than everything else commands attention and communicates that this story outranks the rest
Digital	The above, plus interface text and graphics and interactive conventions	An autoplay countdown holds engagement and communicates that the narrative is built to be consumed in a block

Conventions engage through fluency. Codes mostly engage by *effect*; conventions mostly engage by *fit*. An audience that recognises a convention knows at once what kind of product this is, how to consume it and what to expect — and that recognition is engagement doing quiet work. Conventions also communicate **status**: a piece-to-camera signals journalistic authority, a direct-address host signals intimacy, glossy stock signals a magazine meant to be kept. The three families differ.

- **Form and product conventions** communicate what kind of product this is and how seriously to take it. *Four Corners* (ABC, 1961–), Australia’s longest-running investigative current affairs program, uses reporter presence, sit-down interviews and archival material — conventions that communicate institutional authority before any content lands.
- **Genre conventions** engage by setting expectations a narrative can satisfy or unsettle. Australian crime and thriller narratives have developed a recognisable inflection in which the outback or a small country town replaces the city as the site of menace: *Mystery Road* (Ivan Sen, 2013) places the conventions of the detective story and the Western in a rural Queensland town, so a landscape usually filmed as beautiful is made to read as isolating and unsafe.
- **Narrative conventions** engage by producing investment and payoff. A **character** the audience is aligned with converts curiosity into concern; a **character arc** promises change and makes the audience wait for it; a **three-act structure** places turning points where attention would otherwise sag. In 6A you analysed where such structures come from; here the question is what they *do* to an audience.

Codes work in clusters. The study design says the ways of engaging **combine** to form complex meanings and experiences, and this is where full marks live. At any moment worth analysing, several codes pull the same way — the camera holds on a face while the acting stays deliberately flat while the sound drops out. Three codes at *one* moment is worth far more than three codes at three unrelated moments, so plan an extended response by choosing the **moment** first and the codes second.

Withholding a convention is itself a technique. Because conventions are shared expectations, an audience notices their absence. *Australian Story* (ABC, 1996–) removed the convention the rest of factual television relies on: there is no reporter narrating the subject’s life — the people involved tell it themselves, straight to camera. The break means something only *because* the convention exists, so you cannot analyse a subverted convention without first naming the convention subverted.

What weak analysis looks like. Four habits cost marks: **listing codes with no moment** (“the film uses camera, lighting and sound”); **describing without meaning**; treating “**engages the audience**” as a full stop instead of naming the mechanism and the audience; and **over-claiming**, especially asserting what a creator was privately thinking. Codes support readings, not mind-reading.

Looking ahead: this same chain becomes, in Units 3 and 4, the tool for arguing what a narrative’s construction suggests about the values of its context.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Analyse how acting and sound are used to engage audiences and communicate meaning in an Australian fictional narrative. Refer to *The Castle* (1997). (6 marks)

This is an “analyse” — break the moment into its codes and show how they work **together**.

Working	Comment
<i>The Castle</i> (Rob Sitch, 1997) is an Australian comedy film — a narrative in the moving-image form — about the Kerrigan family’s fight to keep their suburban home when it is compulsorily acquired for airport expansion.	Product, form and situation in one sentence. No plot summary beyond what the analysis needs.
Sound is organised around the voice-over narration of the youngest son, Dale, whose flat, admiring delivery describes the family’s ordinary possessions and routines as though they were remarkable achievements.	Name the code and the specific instance — not “the film has narration”.
That narration engages through recognition and warmth: the audience hears an unguarded, uncritical voice and is invited to like the family before judging them. It communicates that the household’s value lies not in what the house is worth but in what it means to those in it.	Steps 3 and 4, kept separate and labelled. Mechanism and meaning are distinct claims.
Working with it, the acting is deliberately earnest rather than knowing — the performances play the family’s enthusiasm for modest things completely straight, with no wink to the audience. So the comedy engages through affection rather than mockery, and communicates that the family’s attachment deserves to be taken seriously.	Second code, with the specific choice named (played straight), not “the acting is good”.
The pairing does what neither could alone: the voice-over supplies the affection, the straight-faced acting the credibility, and together they build an audience that will side with the Kerrigans against a process presented as impersonal.	Close on the combined effect. The higher marks sit here.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Explain how the conventions of the podcast form are used to engage an audience in the opening described below. (5 marks)

Stimulus. *Low Water* is an eight-part Australian non-fiction podcast produced by the fictional studio Tinsed Lane Audio about a river town’s fight over water allocations. Episode 1 opens with eleven seconds of location sound — running water, a pump motor, magpies — before any voice. A farmer’s single unexplained sentence is heard, then cut off mid-word. A short musical sting plays. The host then says her name, the name of the series and what the episode will cover, before returning to the farmer’s interview in full.

Working	Comment
The opening uses standard conventions of the podcast form : a cold open, a theme sting, and a host introduction naming the presenter, the series and the episode's subject.	Name conventions <i>as</i> conventions — this is a form-and-product question, not a codes question.
These engage through fluency : a listener who has heard other podcasts recognises the structure at once, knows the series proper is about to begin, and settles into a familiar way of listening.	The engagement mechanism for conventions is recognition and fit. Say so explicitly.
The cold open engages through curiosity — cutting the farmer off mid-word withholds the rest of his sentence, so the listener carries an unanswered question through the sting and the introduction.	Second mechanism, tied to the specific choice (cut mid-word), not to cold opens in general.
The eleven seconds of location sound before any voice does two things: it holds attention in the absence of speech, and it communicates that the dispute concerns a real, physical place with water actually running through it.	A code inside a conventions answer — legitimate, provided it is labelled correctly.
The host introduction communicates the product's status : naming herself and the series signals an authored, researched account rather than an overheard conversation, which is what a non-fiction narrative needs its audience to accept early.	Conventions communicate status. This is the point students most often miss.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Analyse how **mise en scene** and **colour** engage audiences and communicate meaning in an Australian animated narrative. Refer to *Bluey* (2018–). (6 marks)

Bluey (Joe Brumm, Ludo Studio, 2018–) is an Australian animated television series — a narrative in the moving-image form — built from roughly seven-minute episodes following a family of blue heelers in Brisbane. Its **mise en scene** is specific rather than generic: the family lives in a Queenslander with a wide verandah and a raised, sloping backyard, and the surrounding world is recognisably suburban Brisbane rather than an unplaced cartoon town. For an Australian audience this engages through **recognition**, and it communicates that the extraordinary play the series depicts happens in a completely ordinary place — the show's central proposition. The **colour** palette works alongside it: flat, saturated and warm, with a strong contrast between bright interiors and the green of the yard. Colour engages through **emotion**, holding the youngest viewers' attention and keeping the tone light even in episodes dealing with disappointment, and it communicates safety — a world in which nothing genuinely bad will happen, which is what licenses the series to take small childhood setbacks seriously. Read together, the two codes let the series be simultaneously local and reassuring: an adult recognises the house, a child reads the safety, and the same frame carries both. *Takeaway*: when a narrative addresses two audiences at once, look for the codes that engage each of them differently while communicating the same idea.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Analyse how a print narrative uses codes to engage audiences and communicate meaning. Refer to *The Rabbits* (1998). (6 marks)

The Rabbits (John Marsden and Shaun Tan, 1998) is an Australian picture book — a narrative in the print form — that tells, as allegory, the story of colonisers arriving in a country and remaking it. Its most active code is **colour**: early pages are built from warm ochres, reds and earth tones, and as the narrative proceeds the palette cools into greys, metallics and hard industrial blues. That shift engages through **emotion**, producing a slow sense of loss with no statement of it, and communicates the transformation of the land far more efficiently than the sparse text does. **Visual composition** reinforces it — early spreads are open and irregular, while later spreads crowd the page with repeated geometric forms and rigid grids, so the eye is given no rest; attention is held by discomfort, and the composition communicates the replacement of variety with uniformity. The **typography** works by restraint: text is set small and

plain against very large images, so the pictures carry the argument while the words merely mark time, communicating that what has happened exceeds what the narrator can adequately describe. Because this is the **print** form, the audience also controls the pace: the page turn is the only editing device available, and the book uses it to make each escalation a deliberate act by the reader. *Takeaway:* in print, analyse colour, composition and typography as a system, and remember that the page turn does the work a cut does in film.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Define each of the following terms as they are used in VCE Media: (2 marks) (a) media code; (b) media convention.

Q2. Media codes are technical and symbolic tools used to construct meaning. (3 marks) (a) Name four media codes from the study design's list. (b) Classify each of the following as a media code or not a media code: (i) acting; (ii) a three-act structure; (iii) paper stock; (iv) a podcast theme sting. (c) State why the list of media codes is described as open rather than closed.

Q3. Media conventions fall into three families. (4 marks) (a) Name the three families of media conventions. (b) Classify each of the following into one family: (i) a newspaper masthead and standfirst; (ii) a character arc; (iii) the expectation that a detective narrative ends in a resolution.

Q4. Codes and conventions do two jobs: they engage audiences and they communicate meaning. (4 marks) (a) State the study design's definition of audience engagement. (b) Explain the difference between engaging an audience and communicating meaning. (c) Give one example of a moment that engages strongly but communicates very little, and one that communicates precisely but engages very little.

Q5. The analysis chain for this subtopic is: name the code or convention, point to the specific moment, state how it engages, state what it communicates. For an Australian narrative you have studied this year: (5 marks) (a) Name one code the narrative uses and the specific moment at which it is used. (b) State how that code engages the audience, naming the mechanism. (c) State what the code communicates at that moment.

Q6. Codes rarely work alone. (6 marks) (a) For an Australian narrative you have studied this year, identify one moment at which at least three codes work together. (b) Name each of the three codes and what each contributes at that moment. (c) Explain what the combination achieves that any one code could not achieve alone.

Unscaffolded

Q7. Outline what is meant by the claim that audience readings of meaning are mediated through a shared understanding of media codes and conventions. (2 marks)

Q8. Describe how sound can be used in an audio narrative to engage an audience and communicate meaning. Use a specific example in your response. (3 marks)

Q9. (*Stimulus.*) Read the description of a documentary opening below.

Stimulus. *Nine Feet of Rain* is a feature documentary produced by the fictional company Kurrajong Flat Pictures about a flooded regional town. It opens with a static wide shot of a silent, empty main street, held for twenty seconds with no music. A single cut then takes the audience to a close shot of a woman's hands sorting through damaged photographs. She does not speak. Only after this does the first interview begin.

Describe how the editing and camera in this opening engage the audience. (3 marks)

Q10. Explain the difference between a media code and a media convention. Use one Australian example of each in your response. (4 marks)

Q11. (*Stimulus.*) Read the description of a print product below.

Stimulus. A quarterly zine published by the fictional imprint Boundary Creek Press tells the non-fiction story of a closed regional railway line. It is printed on rough, uncoated recycled paper. The body text is set

in a plain typewriter-style face with visible ink bleed. Headings are hand-lettered. Photographs are reproduced coarsely, at low contrast, with wide white margins.

Explain how the codes used in this zine engage its audience and communicate meaning. (4 marks)

Q12. Explain how narrative conventions — character, character arcs and three-act structures — are used to engage audiences. (4 marks)

Q13. Discuss whether engaging an audience and communicating meaning are the same thing. Refer to specific examples in your response. (5 marks)

Q14. (*Stimulus.*) Read the production brief below.

Stimulus. Yarnline, a fictional Australian streaming service, commissions a six-part drama set in a coastal town where a body is found on the first morning of the tourist season. The brief specifies: a detective returning to their home town; a small cast of suspects who all know one another; a revelation at the end of every episode; and wide landscape photography throughout.

Discuss how the genre conventions named in this brief are intended to engage audiences. (5 marks)

Q15. Analyse how the conventions of a non-fictional media form are used to engage audiences and communicate meaning. Refer to an Australian non-fictional narrative you have studied this year or know well. (6 marks)

Q16. (*Stimulus.*) A student wrote the response below.

Stimulus. “In the film the lighting is used, which creates a mood and engages the audience. The three-act structure is a media code that makes the film Australian. The camera makes the audience feel exactly what the director was thinking when he wrote the script.”

Explain three ways this response fails as an analysis of codes and conventions, and rewrite the first sentence so that it would earn marks. (6 marks)

Q17. Explain how the *absence* of an expected convention can engage an audience and communicate meaning. Refer to a specific media product in your response. (7 marks)

Q18. Analyse how codes and conventions are used to engage audiences in **two different media forms**. Refer to two Australian narratives you have studied this year, one in each form. (8 marks)

Q19. (*Extended response.*) Analyse how media codes and conventions are used to engage audiences and communicate meaning in an Australian narrative you have studied this year. (10 marks)

Your response should:

- identify the media form of the narrative
- analyse at least two media codes and at least one media convention
- refer to specific moments in the narrative
- address both engagement and meaning, and distinguish between them

Australian narrative: _____

Answers

Q1. (a) A technical or symbolic tool used to construct meaning in media forms and products (camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, paper stock). (b) A rule or generally accepted way of constructing meaning or organising media products.

Q2. (a) Any four of: camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, paper stock. (b) (i) code; (ii) not a code — a narrative convention; (iii) code; (iv) not a code — a form/product convention. (c) The study design says codes “may include” those listed, so a valid code outside the list is not wrong.

Q3. (a) Conventions of media forms and products; genre conventions; narrative conventions. (b) (i) form/product; (ii) narrative; (iii) genre.

Q4. (a) How audiences are affected emotionally and cognitively by a media product, and how these ways of engaging combine to form complex meanings and experiences. (b) Engagement is the pull — attention, feeling, thinking; meaning is what the audience is invited to understand. (c) Engages but means little: a sudden loud sound cue. Means but barely engages: a supered date-and-place caption.

Q5. (a)–(c) Any studied Australian narrative: a named code plus a specific moment; a named engagement mechanism (attention / emotion / curiosity / recognition / participation); a stated meaning.

Q6. (a)–(c) One moment, three codes named with their individual contributions, then the combined effect — what the cluster achieves that no single code could.

Q7. Outline (2). Codes and conventions communicate only because creator and audience share an understanding of them; the meaning is not in the code itself but in the repertoire both hold, so an audience without that repertoire reads the moment differently or not at all.

Q8. Describe (3). One named use of sound (voice, music, effect or silence) at a specific moment; the engagement mechanism; the meaning communicated.

Q9. Describe (3). The twenty-second held static wide engages by making the audience wait and search the frame; the single hard cut to the hands narrows attention abruptly; withholding speech sustains curiosity. Meaning: the town’s emptiness and the private scale of the damage.

Q10. Explain (4). Code = a tool that constructs meaning, pointed at inside the product; convention = an accepted rule or practice for organising products of that kind; one Australian example of each, with the distinction made explicit.

Q11. Explain (4). Paper stock (rough, uncoated, recycled), typography (typewriter face, ink bleed, hand lettering), visual composition (wide margins) and the coarse low-contrast photographs; engagement through recognition and attention; meaning — a modest, independent, personal account of a place left behind.

Q12. Explain (4). Character produces alignment and converts curiosity into concern; a character arc promises change and makes the audience wait for the payoff; a three-act structure places turning points where attention would otherwise fall away.

Q13. Discuss (5). No — related but distinct; most codes do both, but they come apart in either direction; examples both ways; reach a position (the strongest moments are those where the same code does both jobs at once).

Q14. Discuss (5). The returning detective, the closed suspect pool, the episodic revelation and the landscape photography are crime/mystery genre conventions inflected for an Australian setting; they engage through identification, participation, anticipation and recognition; note the risk that conventions used without variation become predictable.

Q15. Analyse (6). Name the form; name at least two of its conventions and the points at which they operate; the engagement mechanism (fluency, authority, intimacy, curiosity); what the conventions communicate about the product’s status and content.

Q16. Explain (6). Three of: no specific moment named; “engages the audience” asserted with no mechanism and no meaning; the three-act structure is a narrative *convention*, not a code, and does not confer national identity; the claim

to know the director's private thoughts over-reaches. Plus a rewritten first sentence naming a moment, a mechanism and a meaning.

Q17. Explain (7). The convention normally present must be named first; its absence is noticeable only because the expectation is shared; the absence engages through surprise and then through a changed relationship with the audience; it communicates something the convention's presence would have prevented.

Q18. Analyse (8). Two narratives in two different forms; for each, the codes and conventions that carry the load in that form, at specific moments, with engagement and meaning both addressed; plus a comparison of *how the forms differ* in the tools available.

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

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) A **media code** is a **technical or symbolic tool used to construct meaning** in media forms and products — camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, and paper stock for print. **(b)** A **media convention** is a **rule or generally accepted way of constructing meaning or organising media products**, such as opening a current affairs program with a reporter's introduction. *Marker's note:* one mark each — a code is a tool, a convention is an accepted practice.

Q2. (a) Any four of: **camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, paper stock.** **(b) (i) code** — acting is on the list and is the code most often forgotten; **(ii) not a code** — a three-act structure is a **narrative convention**; **(iii) code** — paper stock is explicitly listed for print; **(iv) not a code** — a theme sting is a **convention of the podcast form.** **(c)** The study design says codes “**may include**” the tools it lists, which makes the list **open**: other technical or symbolic tools that construct meaning also qualify. *Common errors:* treating the study design's list as closed and marking a valid code outside it wrong.

Q3. (a) Conventions of media forms and products; genre conventions; narrative conventions. **(b) (i) form and product** — the masthead and standfirst are the accepted way of organising a newspaper page; **(ii) narrative** — a character arc is one of the common narrative structures the study design names; **(iii) genre** — the expectation of resolution is one of the rules defining the detective genre. *Marker's note:* one mark for naming the three families, then one mark for each correct classification — the three items are one per family, so a student who has (a) right has the vocabulary to earn all of (b).

Q4. (a) Audience **engagement** is *how audiences are affected emotionally and cognitively by a media product, and how these ways of engaging combine to form complex meanings and experiences.* **(b) Engagement** is the **pull** the product exerts — whether the audience looks, feels, wonders or keeps going. **Communicating meaning** is what the audience is invited to **understand**. They usually travel together, because the same code often grips and tells at once, but they are separate claims and a strong analysis states each. **(c)** A **sudden loud sound cue** engages powerfully while communicating almost nothing; a **supered caption** giving a date and location communicates precisely while engaging hardly at all. *Common errors:* using “engages the audience” as if it were a meaning.

Q5. (a)–(c) Model response (studied narrative: *The Castle*, 1997): **(a)** The code is **acting**, at the moment the family sits at the kitchen table admiring an ordinary meal and an ordinary household object as though each were a genuine achievement. **(b)** It engages through **recognition**: the performances are played entirely straight, with no irony directed at the characters, so the audience recognises a familiar kind of household and is invited to feel warmth towards it rather than superiority over it. **(c)** It communicates that the family's contentment is real and self-sufficient — which is the claim the rest of the narrative depends on when that contentment is threatened. *Marker's note:* five marks need all three steps *and* a genuinely specific moment. “Throughout the film” is not a moment.

Q6. (a)–(c) Model response (studied narrative: *Bluey*, 2018–): **(a)** The moment is the end of an episode in which a game the children have been playing in the backyard finally has to stop. **(b) Mise en scene** places it in the raised, sloping Brisbane backyard the series has established; **colour** keeps the palette warm and saturated even as the game ends, holding the tone light; and **sound** drops the score back to a thin, slower line under the dialogue. **(c)** Together they let the series acknowledge a small disappointment without making it frightening: the sound gives the moment weight, the colour guarantees the child audience that nothing is really wrong, and the familiar setting means an adult

recognises the exact domestic situation depicted. No single code could carry both audiences — the sound alone would read as sad, the colour alone as dismissive. *Common errors*: naming three codes at three different moments; the marks are for the **cluster** at **one** moment.

Q7. Codes and conventions do not carry meaning on their own — they carry meaning because **creators and audiences share an understanding of how they work**. A low angle reads as dominance, and a theme sting reads as “the episode is starting”, only because both parties hold that repertoire. It follows that the same code may be read differently, or not at all, by an audience that does not share it. *Marker’s note*: two marks — the shared repertoire, and the consequence that readings depend on it.

Q8. “Describe” asks for an account of how the code works. **Sound** in an audio narrative carries the whole load that image and sound share in film, so silence and location audio become analytical rather than incidental. For example, in an interview-led non-fiction podcast an editor may hold **three or four seconds of silence** after an interviewee finishes an evasive answer instead of cutting to the next question. The silence **engages** through discomfort and curiosity — the listener leans in, waiting for someone to fill the gap — and it **communicates** that the answer was inadequate, without the host having to say so. *Common errors*: “the music sets the mood” supplies neither the moment, the mechanism, nor the meaning.

Q9. The **camera** holds a **static wide shot** of the empty main street for **twenty seconds** with no music. Because nothing moves and nothing is explained, the audience is made to search the frame for detail, and the unusual length converts ordinary attention into unease — the shot engages precisely by refusing to give the audience anything to do. The **editing** then makes a single hard cut to a **close shot of the woman’s hands** sorting damaged photographs; the abruptness and the extreme change of scale narrow attention from a whole town to one pair of hands in a single move. Withholding speech across both shots sustains **curiosity**, so the first interview lands on an audience already asking questions. *Marker’s note*: the marks are for the *duration*, the *stillness* and the *single cut* — not “the opening is slow”.

Q10. A **media code** is a **technical or symbolic tool** used to construct meaning — something you can point at inside the product. A **media convention** is a **rule or generally accepted way** of constructing meaning or organising products of that kind — an expectation the audience brings to the product. The difference is one of level: the code is in the artefact, the convention is in the shared agreement about how artefacts of this type behave. In *Bluey* (2018–), the warm, saturated **colour palette** is a **code** — a tool used in the frame, describable shot by shot. The series’ **roughly seven-minute episode length** is a **convention** of children’s television programming: not a tool inside any one frame, but an accepted way of organising the product, which shapes how the narrative must be structured and how the audience consumes it. *Common errors*: if you cannot point at it in a single frame, page or sound, it is probably a convention.

Q11. The zine’s codes work as a system, and the least obvious is the most important. The **paper stock** is rough, uncoated and recycled, so the object feels handmade rather than manufactured; because paper stock is encountered physically before a word is read, it engages through **recognition** and communicates that this is an independent, non-commercial account. The **typography** reinforces it: a plain typewriter-style face with visible ink bleed and hand-lettered headings reads as personal and unpolished, communicating that a person rather than an institution is speaking. The **photographs**, reproduced coarsely and at low contrast, look like documents rather than illustrations, communicating age and neglect. The **visual composition**’s wide white margins slow the reader and hold attention on each small image, communicating that these fragments are worth dwelling on. *Marker’s note*: four marks reward naming **paper stock** — it is a code in the study design’s own list, and print questions are where it earns its place.

Q12. **Narrative conventions** engage by managing the audience’s investment across time. **Character** creates **alignment**: once the audience is positioned with a particular figure, general curiosity about events becomes specific concern about a person, which is a far stronger hold. A **character arc** engages through **anticipation**: the convention promises this person will be different by the end, so the audience keeps watching to collect the change, and the promise is what makes the payoff feel earned rather than arbitrary. A **three-act structure** engages through **placement**: it puts turning points where attention would otherwise sag, so the narrative renews itself just as interest in the current situation is exhausted. In each case the convention works because it is **shared**. *Common errors*: describing what each convention *is* (6A’s question) instead of what it *does to the audience* (this one).

Q13. “Discuss” asks you to weigh the question and reach a position. They are closely related but **not** the same: **engagement** is how audiences are affected **emotionally and cognitively**, while **meaning** is what they are invited to **understand**. Most of the time a code does both — in *The Castle* (1997), the deliberately unironic **acting** engages

through warmth and simultaneously communicates that the family's attachment to their house is serious rather than ridiculous. But the two come apart in both directions: a **jump scare** produces intense engagement and communicates virtually nothing, while a **supered caption** stating a date and location communicates precisely and produces almost no pull. The distinction matters because a product can be gripping and say nothing, or say a great deal and lose its audience. My position is that these are separate achievements which the strongest moments combine — the sequences worth analysing are those in which the very thing that holds the audience is also the thing that tells them something. *Marker's note:* five marks reward a clear position **and** examples running both ways.

Q14. Every element of the brief is a recognised **genre convention** of crime and mystery narrative, included for a specific engagement effect. The **detective returning to their home town** engages through **identification**: it gives the investigator a personal stake, so the audience follows a character with something to lose rather than a procedural functionary. The **small cast of suspects who all know one another** is the classic closed-circle convention, engaging through **participation** — because the field is finite, the audience can plausibly solve the mystery themselves, and an audience that is guessing is invested. The **revelation at the end of every episode** is a serial convention engaging through **curiosity and anticipation**, engineered for a streaming release where the next episode is one click away. The **wide landscape photography** engages through **recognition** and unease: it inflects the genre for an Australian setting in which the isolating coastline or country town replaces the city as the site of menace — the inflection *Mystery Road* (Ivan Sen, 2013) works in. Taken together the brief is a well-assembled engagement machine. Its risk is the other half of the study design's point about genre — that the rules defining genres are **subject to debate and change**. Conventions deployed without variation become predictable, and an audience fluent enough to recognise the closed-circle structure is fluent enough to find it stale. *Common errors:* listing the conventions without naming an engagement mechanism for each.

Q15. *Model response (studied narrative: Four Corners, ABC, 1961–):* *Four Corners* is an Australian investigative current affairs program — a non-fictional narrative in the moving-image form — and its engagement begins with **conventions of the form** rather than with any individual code. The **reporter's introduction to camera** establishes at the outset that a named journalist is accountable for what follows; it engages through **attention**, since a person addressing the audience directly is harder to ignore than a voice over footage, and communicates the program's **status** as a researched investigation rather than a summary of the day's events. The **sit-down interview**, framed consistently and held long enough for subjects to be uncomfortable, engages through **curiosity** — the audience watches for the hesitation as much as the answer — and communicates that the account has been tested rather than merely collected. The convention of **archival material cut against present-day interview** engages by inviting the audience to make the comparison themselves, and communicates that the situation has a history and is therefore not an accident. The long single-topic **duration** is itself a convention: holding one story for a full episode communicates that the subject merits sustained attention, in contrast to the short-item conventions of the nightly news. Together these conventions construct authority before any specific claim is made — which is what a non-fictional narrative needs, since its audience must accept the account as true before it can be moved by it. *Marker's note:* six marks require **conventions**, named as conventions, at identifiable points; an answer that only discusses camera and editing has answered a different question.

Q16. **First, the response names a code but no moment.** “In the film the lighting is used” identifies **lighting** without saying *where* — which scene, which shot, what the lighting actually does. An analysis with no specific instance cannot be tested against the product, and this is the most heavily penalised habit in media analysis. **Second, “engages the audience” is asserted, not explained.** The phrase names no mechanism — is attention drawn, is emotion produced, is curiosity created? — and no audience; nor is any **meaning** stated, since “creates a mood” describes an effect without saying what the audience is invited to understand. **Third, the response misclassifies a convention as a code and then over-claims.** A **three-act structure** is a **narrative convention**, not a media code, and no structural choice “makes a film Australian” — national character comes from content, creators and cultural specificity, not from an internationally used structure. The final sentence over-claims differently: a code can support a **reading**, but it cannot give an audience access to what a director was privately thinking.

Rewritten first sentence: “In the scene at the kitchen table, the **lighting** is a single warm overhead source that leaves the edges of the room in shadow; the pool of light draws the eye to the family grouped together (**attention**) and communicates that the household's warmth is contained entirely within the house they are about to lose (**meaning**).” *Common errors:* saying the response is “not detailed enough” without naming which failure applies — the marks are for diagnosis.

Q17. An absence can only be noticed if an expectation exists, so the analysis must begin with the convention normally present. In Australian factual television, the standard **convention of the form** is that a **reporter narrates** — a journalist introduces the subject, links the sequences and tells the audience what the material means. *Australian Story* (ABC, 1996–) removes it: there is no reporter narrating the subject’s life, and the people involved tell the story themselves, directly to camera.

The **absence engages** in two stages. Initially it engages through **mild surprise** — a viewer fluent in the conventions of factual television registers that something expected has not arrived, and that registration is itself a moment of attention. Thereafter it engages through **intimacy**: with no journalist standing between audience and subject, the audience is placed in the position of being spoken to directly, which converts the detached attention of news viewing into something closer to being confided in.

The absence also **communicates** something the convention’s presence would have prevented. A reporter’s narration inevitably frames a subject’s account as *reported* — filtered, summarised and adjudicated by a third party. Removing it communicates that this is the subject’s **own** account, on their own terms, and transfers authority from the institution to the person speaking. The removal is meaningful **because the convention is shared**: an audience with no expectation of reporter narration would notice nothing and read nothing. *Marker’s note*: seven marks need the convention named **first**, the absence identified, the engagement mechanism, the meaning, **and** the dependency between them. An answer that says only “it feels more personal” has one of the five.

Q18. *Model response (studied narratives: Mystery Road, 2013, moving image; The Rabbits, 1998, print):*

In the **moving-image** form, *Mystery Road* (Ivan Sen, 2013) engages through codes that act on the audience **in time and outside its control**. The **camera** frames the rural Queensland town in very wide, static compositions that leave the detective small in a large landscape; this engages through **unease** rather than the admiration such scenery usually invites, and communicates that isolation, not beauty, is the town’s defining quality. **Sound** works by subtraction — the sparse score and long stretches of ambient noise engage through **anticipation**, because an audience trained on denser soundtracks reads emptiness as something about to happen. The **genre convention** of the detective narrative supplies the engine: the promise of an investigation that will resolve engages through **curiosity**, and its slow satisfaction communicates that answers here are harder to reach than the convention usually implies.

In the **print** form, *The Rabbits* (John Marsden and Shaun Tan, 1998) has none of those instruments. There is no sound and no editing, and the **page turn** is the only device the book has for controlling when new information arrives — which means the reader, not the creator, decides when it arrives. The **convention** of the double-page spread engages by giving each escalation a fixed frame the reader must physically act to leave behind, and the cooling of the **colour** palette across those spreads communicates the transformation of the land as an accumulation rather than an event.

The comparison is the point. Moving image engages **continuously and involuntarily** — sound and editing act on the audience whether they cooperate or not — and its conventions are about controlling *time*, so *Mystery Road* can withhold a fact until a moment of its own choosing. Print engages **cumulatively and voluntarily**: *The Rabbits* can order its escalations but cannot time them, so it compensates by loading each spread with meaning the reader will dwell on for as long as they choose. One form times the audience; the other is timed by it. *Marker’s note*: eight marks require a genuine **comparison of the forms** — what one can do that the other cannot — not two separate analyses placed side by side.

Q19. *Command term — analyse*: deconstruct the narrative into its codes and conventions and show **how they work together** to engage the audience and communicate meaning, with specific evidence at named moments, keeping engagement and meaning distinct.

Australian narrative: *Muriel’s Wedding* (1994)

Model response (studied narrative: Muriel’s Wedding, 1994):

Muriel’s Wedding (P.J. Hogan, 1994) is an Australian fictional narrative in the **moving-image** form, following Muriel Heslop from the coastal town of Porpoise Spit to Sydney as she pursues an idea of the wedding she believes will transform her life. Its codes and conventions are unusually legible because the film sets a bright, comic surface against material that is not comic at all — and that tension is where both its engagement and its meaning are produced.

Sound is the film's most active code, specifically its use of ABBA's music. The songs are not background: they are attached to Muriel's fantasy life and enter the soundtrack at the moments when she is imagining a future rather than living in the present. This engages through **emotion and recognition** — the music is instantly familiar, buoyant and pleasurable, and it carries the audience along with Muriel's optimism rather than positioning them above it. What it **communicates** is more pointed than what it feels like: because the songs are borrowed rather than her own, they signal that Muriel's ambitions are assembled from other people's material. The audience enjoys the fantasy and is simultaneously told that it is one.

Mise en scene works in the same double register. Porpoise Spit is staged in hard sunlight, poolside pastels and resort brightness, and the bridal-shop and wedding-dress imagery that recurs throughout is white, ornamental and immaculate. The visual field engages through **attention** — these are pleasurable, high-colour frames — while communicating the shallowness of the world Muriel is trying to enter: everything is surface, arranged for display, and the dress is presented as a costume rather than a commitment. **Acting** turns this from satire into something with stakes: Toni Collette plays Muriel without protective irony, so the humiliations are played as genuinely humiliating and the hopefulness as genuine hope, and the audience is engaged through **identification** rather than invited to laugh down at her. That choice communicates that Muriel's fantasy, however absurd its object, comes from a real and unmet need for a life of her own.

The **conventions** are handled just as deliberately. The film sets up the **genre conventions** of romantic comedy — the makeover, the pursuit of a wedding, the friendship subplot, the promise that the wedding will be the resolution — and engages the audience through the **anticipation** those conventions create. It then declines to deliver the expected payoff: the wedding, when it arrives, resolves nothing, and the narrative's real conclusion is Muriel's decision to leave both the marriage and Porpoise Spit behind. Because genre conventions are **shared expectations**, the refusal is legible — the audience notices the missing ending and reads it as an argument that the wedding was never the thing worth wanting. The **narrative convention** of the **character arc** carries this: the change the audience was promised does arrive, but it is a change in what Muriel wants rather than the acquisition of what she originally wanted.

Analysed together, the codes and conventions form a single system. The music, the pastel mise en scene and the romantic-comedy structure all pull in the same direction to engage the audience in Muriel's fantasy, and the sincerity of the acting keeps that engagement affectionate rather than mocking. The meaning is then produced by the gap between the pleasure of that surface and what the narrative does with it: the same devices that made the fantasy attractive are used to demonstrate its emptiness. The audience is not told the wedding is a false goal — they are made to want it, and then shown what wanting it costs.

Band descriptors (out of 10):

- **High (8–10):** at least two codes and one convention analysed precisely and classified correctly; evidence anchored to **specific moments**; engagement and meaning **distinguished** throughout, with the mechanism named; codes shown working **together** rather than listed; the media form identified and its affordances used; accurate, fluent media language.
- **Mid (5–7):** codes and conventions correctly identified and mostly correctly classified; engagement and meaning both present but sometimes merged, or “engages the audience” left unexplained in places; evidence partly general; codes largely treated one at a time.
- **Low (1–4):** codes listed or described with little or no evidence; conventions confused with codes; engagement asserted rather than explained; the response **retells** the narrative rather than analysing its construction; meaning not stated.

Common errors: **retelling the narrative** instead of analysing its codes; naming codes with no specific moment attached; using “engages the audience” as a conclusion rather than naming the mechanism; classifying a **three-act structure**, a **character arc** or a **genre expectation** as a media code; analysing three codes at three unrelated moments instead of one cluster at one moment; addressing engagement but never stating what is communicated; forgetting to identify the **media form**.

Chapter 6 Australian stories: structure, codes and style — 6C The style of Australian media creators and producers

Theory

Two makers, one story, two narratives

Hand the same Australian material — a drought, a court case, a family leaving a farm — to two media creators and you do not get two versions of one narrative. You get two narratives. One opens on a still landscape held for twenty seconds before anyone speaks; the other opens on a presenter telling you what the story means. Neither has changed the facts; both have changed the narrative. What separates them is **style**.

The study design puts it plainly: media creators and producers “develop an individual style through the use and crafting of narrative and structures that engage different audiences and their interests”. This subtopic is about the **influence** of that style — what a maker’s style does to the way an Australian fictional or non-fictional narrative is built.

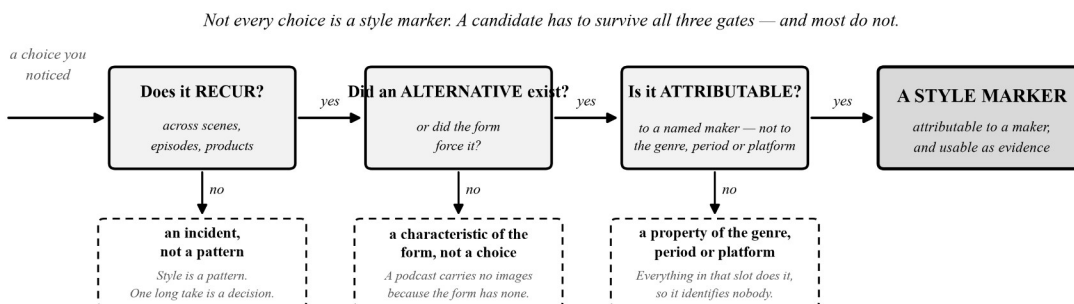
Defining style

Style is the recognisable pattern of choices a media creator or producer makes repeatedly when crafting narrative and structure and when selecting and combining media codes and conventions. Style is not the subject of a narrative; it is the treatment of the subject — what is left when you take the story away.

Not every choice is a style marker. A **style marker** passes a three-part test:

1. **It recurs.** One long take is a decision; long takes in every scene of every film a director has made is a style marker. Style is a pattern, not an incident.
2. **An alternative existed.** If the form forced the choice, it is not style. An audio-only podcast carries no images because the form has none to carry. A podcast that uses no music at all, in a field where comparable programs score their interviews, is a style marker.
3. **It is attributable.** The choice traces to a maker — a director, writer, showrunner, photographer, host or production company — rather than to the genre, period or platform.

Read those three as **gates**, not as three things to mention. A candidate has to survive all three, and most do not — the figure below names what a candidate turns out to be when it is stopped at each one, and walks two candidates from the same podcast through the test. One passes; the other is stopped at gate two, because the form left the maker no alternative.



Two candidates, from the same podcast:

"It uses no music at all, where comparable programs score their interviews."

recurs across every episode · an alternative plainly existed · traces to this host-producer → passes all three, and is a **STYLE MARKER**

"It carries no images."

recurs across every episode · but the audio form has no images to carry → stopped at gate two. A characteristic of the form, not style.

Style against its neighbours

Students lose marks using “style” as a loose word for “the way it looks”. Keep these apart:

Term	What it is	Test question
Media code	A technical or symbolic tool used to construct meaning — camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, paper stock	What tool is being used?
Convention	A rule or generally accepted way of constructing meaning or organising a media product, understood by makers and audiences alike	What does the audience already expect?
Genre	A grouping of narratives sharing content, codes and conventions	What kind of narrative is this?
Structure	The order and shape of events as presented — acts, segments, episodes, running order	In what order does the audience receive it?
Style	The maker's repeated, chosen pattern within and across all of the above	Who made this, and how can I tell?

Conventions belong to everyone; style belongs to somebody. A creator can do exactly three things with any convention — **adopt** it, **adapt** it or **refuse** it — and which they habitually do is their style.

Creators and producers: the study design names both

A **media creator** is the person whose creative decisions shape the narrative: a director, screenwriter, showrunner, photographer, podcast host-producer, games designer or journalist. Their style shows in the narrative itself — framing, pacing, structure, point of view, tone. A **producer** in the individual sense assembles finance, crew, schedule and scope and decides what gets made at all; their style shows in which stories are chosen, at what scale, with what resources. A **producer** in the institutional sense is a production company or broadcaster, and its **house style** is a set of production rules applied to everything it makes — duration, running order, whether a reporter appears on camera, scripting level, titles, paper stock. A newcomer inherits the rules, so the style survives the individual.

Australian institutional styles are public and consistent enough to study. The ABC's *Australian Story* is built without an on-camera reporter, the account carried by the people in the story themselves — a rule that shapes every episode before a single interview is filmed. *Four Corners* commits a full long-form program to one topic a week, forcing a slower, evidence-stacked structure a three-minute bulletin item could never carry. Working Dog Productions built a run of Australian comedies — *The Castle* (1997), *The Dish* (2000), *Utopia* (2014–) — on ensemble performance, deadpan delivery and plainly shot suburban or workplace settings, so the joke sits in the behaviour rather than in the camera.

Where style shows up: five sites

1. **Story selection and point of view.** Whose story is it, and from where are we watching? A creator who habitually tells stories from the position of the person being written about has made a choice that decides who gets a close-up, who narrates, and who is only seen from outside.
2. **Narrative structure and pacing.** Act shape; where turning points sit; episode duration; whether the ending resolves. *Bluey*, created by Joe Brumm and produced by Brisbane's Ludo Studio, runs roughly seven-minute episodes resolving one domestic problem — a rule that shapes every story the show can tell.
3. **The patterned use of media codes.** Not “the lighting was good”, but which code is used the same way repeatedly: shot duration and camera movement; continuous score or worked silence; naturalistic versus heightened acting; in print, a masthead's typography, visual composition and paper stock.
4. **Treatment of the audience.** How much is explained and how much withheld; direct address or none; whether the audience is trusted to infer meaning from behaviour or told what to think.
5. **Working method.** How a maker works leaves marks in the product. Warwick Thornton (*Kaytetye*) shot *Samson and Delilah* (2009) himself as well as writing and directing it, and the film runs with very little

dialogue — method and style are the same decision. Ivan Sen (Gamilaraay) is credited across writing, directing, cinematography, editing and music on *Mystery Road* (2013) and *Goldstone* (2016); when one person holds those roles, the consistency of framing, cutting and score is not coincidence.

Style in non-fictional narratives

The dot point names “fictional **and** non-fictional narratives”, and non-fiction is where students assume style disappears. It does not. The maker cannot invent the facts; every other decision is still theirs — **selection** (which facts, interviewees and grabs); **order** (the running order of a bulletin, what is held back); **voice** (reporter-led and scripted; **observational**, the camera present but unacknowledged; **participatory**, the maker audibly in the room; or **subject-narrated**, with no reporter at all); **sound and image treatment** (score under an interview or not, re-enactment, framing, how long a silence runs); and **print treatment** (headline register, image size and crop, column placement, paper stock).

Each is a construction decision that changes what the audience takes the events to mean. That is why non-fiction style carries an ethical edge fiction does not: a music cue under an interview, or an answer trimmed at the comma, makes a claim about truth. Contrast two Australian non-fiction styles. *Conversations* (ABC) runs long single-guest interviews with the interviewer audible and little else in the mix, building engagement through duration and disclosure; a commercial nightly bulletin item on the same guest would run ninety seconds, scripted in the third person and cut to a pre-written line. Same person, same facts, two narratives — produced by two house styles.

Australian tendencies — and creators who refuse them

Some tendencies recur often enough that audiences recognise them: landscape treated as an active presence rather than a backdrop; dry, deadpan humour; suburban and vernacular settings; understatement in performance; ensembles rather than single heroes; endings that decline to tidy themselves. Treat these as **observable tendencies that individual creators use, adapt or refuse** — never as a national essence. The analytical payoff is in the refusals. Baz Luhrmann’s *Strictly Ballroom* (1992) is Australian and suburban but constructed with heightened performance, saturated colour and rapid cutting — the opposite of understatement, and the reason it looks like nothing around it. Leah Purcell (Goa-Gunggari-Wakka Wakka Murri) took a canonical piece of Australian bush storytelling and rebuilt it as *The Drover’s Wife: The Legend of Molly Johnson* (2021) as writer, director and lead — the same landscape tradition, a different position inside it. Style is most visible where a creator declines the expected move.

Analysing the influence of style: the four-move style chain

The key skill is to analyse the construction of narratives through the style of media creators and producers. A style answer that scores does four things, in order.

1. **Name** the recurring choice precisely, in media language. Not “great camera work” — “sustained wide shots held past comfort, with no camera movement”.
2. **Evidence** it at a specific moment, then show it **recurs** with a second instance. One instance is an example; two is a style.
3. **Construction** — say what the choice does to how the narrative is built: what it puts in, leaves out, slows, foregrounds or refuses to explain.
4. **Influence** — the effect on audience engagement and reading, closed with the **counterfactual test**: what would a different style have produced from the same material?

The counterfactual is the strongest move available here, because the influence of a style is only visible against the alternative not chosen. Every high-scoring answer contains a sentence shaped like: *had the same events been constructed by a maker whose style is X, the audience would instead have...*

Attribute honestly

Production is collaborative. A film’s look belongs to a director *and* a cinematographer, designer, editor and colourist; a front page belongs to a chief sub-editor as much as to the reporter named on it. Attribute to an individual only where credit or pattern supports it — a director who also shoots and edits, a host who also produces, a showrunner who writes every episode. Otherwise attribute to the **production**. That is not hedging; it is accurate, and markers reward it.

The media language this subtopic expects. style · style marker · media creator · producer · house style · attribution · treatment · point of view · pacing · adopt / adapt / refuse · counterfactual · observational · participatory · reporter-led · subject-narrated · ensemble · understatement. Use these terms; they are what marks a style answer as media analysis rather than opinion.

What weak style analysis looks like. Six habits cost marks: retelling the plot and calling it style analysis; naming a code without showing that it recurs; treating “style” and “genre” as synonyms; claiming a choice for a director when the credit sits elsewhere; assuming non-fiction has no style; and describing the style without ever saying what it *did* to the construction. The last is the most expensive, because the dot point is about **influence** — so the answer must end at effect.

Looking ahead: in Units 3 and 4 this same reading of a maker’s style becomes the basis of a formally assessed research portfolio and of your own production intent.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Question. *Marlin Street* is a fictional Australian drama series. Across its three seasons the director never cuts away from a character receiving bad news; the shot is held, in a static wide, until the character leaves the frame themselves. Describe this style marker and its influence on the construction of the series. (4 marks)

Working	Comment
The style marker is a sustained static wide shot held on a character at the moment of bad news, with the cut withheld until the character exits the frame.	Move 1 — name it precisely. Two codes are named (camera framing; editing/shot duration) and the rule is stated. Avoid “she uses long shots”; state the rule and when it applies.
It recurs at every equivalent moment across three seasons, making it a style marker rather than a single directorial decision: an alternative — cutting to a reaction close-up — plainly existed.	Move 2 — evidence recurrence. The three-part test in action. A mark is routinely lost here.
Because the cut is withheld, the series cannot use a reaction close-up to tell the audience how to feel, and cannot compress the moment in the edit. Scenes are built longer, performance carries information editing would elsewhere carry, and the surrounding room stays in shot.	Move 3 — construction. The marks-bearing sentence: what the choice does to how the narrative is built, named through scene length, acting and mise en scene.
The audience reads distress from behaviour at a distance rather than being directed to it, so engagement is built through observation and emotional resolution is withheld. Constructed by a maker whose style favours rapid intercutting and close-ups, the same scenes would have told the audience the meaning immediately and the discomfort would disappear.	Move 4 — influence, closed with the counterfactual. This is what separates a 4 from a 2.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Question. *Fence Line* is a photo essay published in a fictional quarterly, **Halbrook Press**. The publisher’s house style is fixed: every essay runs full-bleed on uncoated stock, images are never cropped from their shooting ratio, captions carry only a place name and a date, and no headline appears until the final page. Explain how this producer’s house style influences the construction of the essay. (5 marks)

Working	Comment
The style here belongs to the producer, not an individual creator: Halbrook Press applies the same four rules to every essay it publishes, so they are in force before the photographer is commissioned.	Establish whose style it is. A question about a publisher’s rules is a question about house style — say so.

Working	Comment
Uncoated stock and full-bleed layout are decisions in the print codes of paper stock and visual composition. Uncoated paper lowers contrast and mutes colour; a full-bleed image has no margin to sit inside, so each photograph is met as an environment rather than an object on a page.	Name the codes, then the physical consequence. Paper stock is a study-design media code and is routinely forgotten in print answers.
Refusing to crop means the sequence must be built from frames that already work at the moment of shooting, so selection and omission happen at the shoot and in the edit-down, not in layout. Structure is driven by which frames exist, not by which shapes the page wants.	Construction — the strongest paragraph. It traces a production rule forward into the process by which the narrative is assembled.
Withholding the headline until the final page removes the text-and-graphics frame that normally tells a reader what a photo essay is about, so meaning is built provisionally, image by image, before the publisher's framing arrives.	Second construction consequence, naming text and graphics as the withheld code.
The influence is a slow, inferential reading in which the audience does interpretive work a captioned, cropped, headline-first layout would have done for them. A masthead leading with a headline and a tight crop would produce a faster, more directed read of identical photographs.	Influence plus counterfactual, built from a real alternative house style.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Question. Explain how the style of a non-fictional Australian media producer influences audience engagement with the narratives it constructs. Refer to one non-fictional narrative you have studied. (6 marks)

Model response — studied narrative: Australian Story (ABC).

Australian Story is built on a producer's house rule rather than an individual signature: the program is made without an on-camera reporter, and the account is carried by the people in the story speaking in their own words. The rule has held across the program's entire run, which makes it a style marker rather than an episode-level decision — and an alternative was plainly available, since almost every other current-affairs strand on Australian television builds its items around a reporter's scripted narration.

The influence on construction is immediate. With no reporter to summarise, the program cannot compress background into a scripted line; it must obtain the same information as testimony, which means longer interviews, more of them, and a structure assembled from overlapping first-person accounts rather than from a reporter's spine. Contradictions cannot be resolved by an authoritative voice, so they are left standing or sequenced so the audience registers the disagreement, and archival and observational footage must carry transitions that narration would otherwise handle.

For the audience the effect is a shift in who is trusted. Engagement is built on proximity to the participants rather than on a journalist's credibility, and the audience is positioned as someone being confided in rather than briefed. Interpretive work transfers with it: because no one states the program's conclusion, the audience must weigh the accounts and reach it. Constructed by a producer whose house style is reporter-led, the same material would have arrived pre-interpreted, at a fraction of the length, with participants reduced to grabs supporting a thesis they did not set.

Takeaway: in non-fiction, one house rule about who is allowed to speak can determine the entire construction of the narrative.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Question. Analyse the influence of the creator's style on the construction of one Australian fictional narrative you have studied. (8 marks)

Warwick Thornton's style on *Samson and Delilah* is inseparable from his working method: he wrote and directed the film and also shot it. Three linked style markers follow, each recurring from the opening sequence to the close.

The first is the near-absence of dialogue. The two central characters exchange very little speech across the film, and scenes a conventionally constructed drama would build around an explanatory conversation are instead built around repeated daily action. The influence is structural: with dialogue unavailable as a delivery mechanism, exposition is carried by repetition and by small changes within a repeated routine, so the narrative becomes a series of near-identical days in which the audience must notice what has altered. Motivation is never stated, only shown.

The second is duration. Shots and scenes are held well past the point at which a mainstream continuity edit would cut, and the camera frequently stays static while action leaves or enters the frame. Meaning is forced into performance and mise en scene — what is in the frame, what the setting supplies, how long a silence lasts — and the passage of time becomes part of the story rather than something the edit hides.

The third is the treatment of sound. Non-diegetic scoring is used sparingly, and much of the film runs on location ambience and on music existing inside the world of the story. With no score available to signal how a moment should be read, the audience is denied the usual emotional cueing and must read behaviour instead.

Together these markers construct a narrative that withholds guidance. Engagement is built through observation and accumulated attention rather than plot momentum, and the reading of the characters is arrived at rather than supplied. The counterfactual makes the influence measurable: constructed by a creator whose style favours expository dialogue, continuous score and faster cutting, the same events would have produced a narrative that explained its characters, directed sympathies scene by scene, and ran considerably shorter — a different narrative from identical material.

Takeaway: name the markers, trace each into construction, and prove the influence with the narrative that was not made.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. (2 marks) (a) Define the term **style** as it applies to a media creator. (1 mark) (b) State one feature that distinguishes a style marker from a media convention. (1 mark)

Q2. (3 marks) (a) State one style decision usually controlled by a media creator. (1 mark) (b) State one style decision usually controlled by a producer or production company. (1 mark) (c) Explain why a production company can be said to have a style of its own. (1 mark)

Q3. (4 marks) A fictional Australian director's three feature films each contain the choices below. Classify each as (i) narrative craft, (ii) the patterned use of a media code, or (iii) treatment of the audience — and where it is a media code, name the code. (a) Every film opens on its final scene, then returns to the beginning. (1 mark) (b) No character is ever framed alone; another person is always partly in shot. (1 mark) (c) Key plot information is delivered off screen and never restated. (1 mark) (d) Dialogue is recorded on location with ambient noise left in the mix. (1 mark)

Q4. (4 marks) A fictional current-affairs program made by **Ardenmere Broadcasting** works to three house rules: every item runs exactly four minutes; no item may use a music bed; and the reporter never appears on camera before the first interviewee has spoken. (a) Identify two style markers in this house style. (2 marks) (b) Outline the effect of each on the construction of an item. (2 marks)

Q5. (5 marks) *The Quarry Road* is a fictional Australian documentary. Its director films every interview outdoors at the interviewee's workplace, in a single unbroken take, and never cuts away to illustrative footage. (a) Name the recurring choice as a style marker. (1 mark) (b) Describe how the choice shapes the construction of the documentary. (2 marks) (c) Outline the likely effect on the audience, and state what a different style would have produced. (2 marks)

Q6. (6 marks) A regional town's last dairy is closing. Two Australian creators are commissioned to make a narrative about it. (a) Outline how a creator whose style is observational, with no narration, would construct the narrative. (3 marks) (b) Outline how a creator whose style is presenter-led and satirical would construct it. (3 marks)

Un scaffolded

Q7. Identify two elements of a media narrative in which a creator's style can be seen. (2 marks)

Q8. Outline the difference between a style marker and a genre convention. (3 marks)

Q9. Outline how a production company's house style can influence the construction of a narrative before production begins. (3 marks)

Q10. Describe how a podcast creator's style is expressed in an audio narrative. Refer to at least three audio choices in your response. (4 marks)

Q11. Use the stimulus below to answer this question.

Stimulus. Production rules issued to the crew of the fictional feature *Tallow Bay* by its director at **Tinlark Pictures**: — All scenes are shot in story order. — The camera is never handheld and never moves within a shot. — Every actor is cast from the town in which the film is set; none has acted before. — No scene may be covered from more than two angles.

Describe two ways these rules would shape the construction of the finished film. (4 marks)

Q12. Explain how a non-fictional producer's decision to build a narrative from **dramatised re-enactment**, rather than from archival material and testimony alone, influences its construction. (5 marks)

Q13. Use the stimulus below to answer this question.

Stimulus. The same story — a council vote to close a suburban swimming pool — as it appears in two fictional Australian outlets.

The Ferrisvale Post (weekly print masthead). Front page, above the fold. A 60-point headline in a heavy serif; one wide photograph of the empty pool at dawn, no people in frame; a 900-word report opening with the council's stated financial reasoning and quoting the mayor in the second paragraph; residents quoted from the fifth paragraph on.

Kelpwire (online-only outlet). A 24-word headline written as a question; a vertical video autoplaying at the top of the page showing a resident crying at the meeting; 300 words broken into eight one-sentence paragraphs; the council's reasoning last, under a subheading reading "What the council says".

Explain how each outlet's house style has shaped the construction of the same story. (5 marks)

Q14. Discuss the view that a style can belong to an individual creator when media production is collaborative. (6 marks)

Q15. Explain how the influence of style differs between fictional and non-fictional narratives. Refer to one narrative of each type in your response. (6 marks)

Q16. Analyse how the style of the creator or producer influenced the construction of one Australian narrative you have studied in a media form other than film. (6 marks)

Q17. Use the stimulus below to answer this question.

Stimulus. **Ardenmere Broadcasting** issues one brief to two production companies: "*A 45-minute narrative about the 1974 flooding of an inland Australian town, for an audience aged 16–25.*"

Treatment A — Tinlark Pictures. Fiction. One family, one night. Real time. No score. Shot entirely inside the house as the water rises. Ends before the water recedes.

Treatment B — Wrenfield Audio. Non-fiction podcast in three parts. Built from archival radio tape and present-day interviews with eleven survivors. The host is audible throughout, asking questions and correcting the record on air. Each part ends on an unresolved contradiction between two accounts.

Analyse how the two creators' styles would produce two different narratives from the same brief. (8 marks)

Q18. Analyse the influence of the style of the media creators or producers on the construction of **two** Australian narratives you have studied, in two different media forms — one fictional and one non-fictional. *(8 marks)*

Q19. “An Australian story is shaped more by the style of the creator who tells it than by the events it recounts.” Discuss this statement, referring to at least two Australian narratives in two or more media forms. *(10 marks)*

Answers

Q1. (a) The recognisable pattern of choices a creator repeatedly makes in crafting narrative and structure and in using media codes and conventions. (b) A style marker is chosen and attributable to a maker; a convention is a shared expectation available to everyone.

Q2. (a) Any creator-level decision — shot duration, point of view, structure, tone. (b) Any producer-level decision — duration/format, whether a reporter appears, budget scale, paper stock, what is commissioned. (c) A company applies the same rules to everything it makes, so the pattern outlasts any individual.

Q3. (a) narrative craft (structure); (b) media code — camera (framing / visual composition); (c) treatment of the audience; (d) media code — sound.

Q4. (a) Any two of: four-minute duration; no music bed; withholding the reporter. (b) Duration forces selection and omission at scripting; no music bed removes emotional cueing, so meaning must come from the interview; delaying the reporter makes the interviewee the entry point, not the journalist's framing.

Q5. (a) A single unbroken take of each interview, on location at the workplace, no cutaways. (b) No B-roll to hide edits, so answers run whole, hesitations included; the workplace supplies mise en scene; structure is built from complete interview blocks. (c) The speaker reads as unedited and is judged on delivery and setting; tight cutting with cutaways would give a shorter, more directed narrative with the shaping hidden.

Q6. (a) Long observational takes; no narration; camera unacknowledged; structure from routine; meaning inferred from behaviour; no stated conclusion. (b) Presenter driving the narrative; scripted links; grabs cut for comic or critical effect; ironic juxtaposition; a stated position by the close.

Q7. Any two of: structure/pacing; point of view and story selection; the patterned use of a named media code; treatment of the audience; the working method visible in the product.

Q8. A genre convention is a shared expectation audiences bring to a whole category; a style marker is one maker's repeated, attributable choice. Style shows in how a creator adopts, adapts or refuses the convention.

Q9. House style fixes duration, format, whether a reporter appears, scripting level and visual/print treatment at commissioning, so structure, length and point of view are partly set before content exists.

Q10. Three audio choices, each linked to a construction effect: scripted versus conversational delivery; score or none; ambience and silence; interview framing; duration and serialisation; host audible or not.

Q11. Any two, developed: story order lets performance accumulate and blocks reordering in the edit; a locked-off camera forces meaning into mise en scene and performance; untrained local actors give naturalistic, uneven delivery tied to place; two-angle coverage forces longer takes and slower pacing.

Q12. Re-enactment supplies images the record does not hold, so casting, framing, lighting, performance and sound become the maker's choices; scenes can be built to a designed shape and pacing is set by the maker rather than by what was recorded. Refusing it forces structure onto interview, archive and observational material, so gaps in the record stay visible. Either way the decision carries a truth claim.

Q13. *The Ferrisvale Post* — heavy serif, wide unpeopled photograph, institution-first paragraph order construct a civic/financial matter with residents secondary. *Kelpwire* — question headline, autoplay video of an emotional moment, very short paragraphs, council reasoning last, construct personal loss. Same facts; house style has changed the subject.

Q14. Must reach a position. For: attributable patterns where credits or repetition support them. Against: look, sound and cut are made by cinematographers, designers, editors and sub-editors; house style may override the individual. Resolution: attribute to the individual where pattern and credit support it, otherwise to the production.

Q15. Fiction — style shapes invented material, so influence is total. Non-fiction — facts are fixed but selection, order, voice, framing and sound treatment remain chosen, so style determines what the events are taken to mean and carries a truth claim. One named example of each.

Q16. A non-film form. Name at least two style markers, evidence recurrence, trace each into construction, state the audience effect. Credit for correct attribution (creator versus producer).

Q17. Contrast form; time frame; the maker's presence; sound; resolution; audience positioning. Must conclude that identical commissioned events produce two different narratives.

Q18. One fictional and one non-fictional narrative in two forms. For each: style markers, recurrence, construction, audience influence. Must compare how the *type* of influence differs.

Q19. Must take and sustain a position. Support: the counterfactual. Qualification: events set limits, and institutional constraints also shape construction. Two narratives, two or more forms, specific evidence.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) Style is the recognisable pattern of choices a media creator or producer makes repeatedly when crafting narrative and structure and when selecting and combining media codes and conventions — the treatment rather than the subject. (b) A style marker is a chosen, recurring and attributable decision belonging to a particular maker; a convention is a shared expectation available to every maker in the form or genre. *Marker's note:* “the way it looks” earns nothing; the definition must contain *recurring* and *chosen*.

Q2. (a) A creator controls decisions such as shot duration, point of view, narrative structure and tone. (b) A producer or company controls item duration and format, whether a reporter appears on camera, the scale of resourcing, paper stock, and which stories are commissioned at all. (c) A company has a style because it applies the same production rules to every product it makes; those rules outlast any individual employee, so the pattern is attributable to the institution.

Q3. (a) Narrative craft — a structural rule about the order in which events are presented. (b) Media code: camera — a rule about framing and visual composition. (c) Treatment of the audience — information is withheld and the audience must infer. (d) Media code: sound — a rule about recording and mix. *Marker's note:* (b) and (d) require the code to be named, not just the effect described.

Q4. (a) The fixed four-minute duration, and the prohibition on a music bed. (Also creditable: withholding the reporter until after the first interviewee.) (b) A fixed duration forces heavy selection and omission at scripting — four minutes carries perhaps three voices and one line of background, so complexity is cut before shooting and every item arrives at the same shape regardless of the story's size. Banning a music bed removes the usual device for signalling how a moment should be read, so emotional weight must be carried by the interview itself and by location ambience; items are built around finding a grab that works unassisted.

Q5. (a) The style marker is a single unbroken take of each interview, filmed outdoors at the interviewee's own workplace, with no cutaway footage. (b) With no cutaways the director has nowhere to hide an edit, so each answer runs whole — hesitations, corrections and silences included — and the structure is assembled from complete interview blocks rather than fragments woven together; filming at the workplace also means *mise en scene* supplies context that narration would otherwise deliver. (c) The audience reads each speaker as unedited and therefore credible, judging from delivery and setting rather than from the maker's shaping. Constructed with tight intercutting and illustrative cutaways, the same interviews would produce a shorter, faster narrative in which the director's argument, not the speaker, sets the pace.

Q6. (a) The observational creator would place the camera in the dairy and let it run, building the narrative from routine — the last milking, the yard hosed, the gate closed — with no narration and no interview to explain what is happening. Meaning would be carried by *mise en scene* and behaviour, structure would follow chronology rather than argument, and the narrative would end without a stated conclusion. (b) The presenter-led satirist would put a presenter on camera as the narrative's driver, script the links, and cut interviews to their most revealing or absurd lines. Construction would rely on juxtaposition — a corporate statement cut against the empty yard — and the narrative would reach a stated position by the close, with the audience aligned to the presenter rather than the participants. *Marker's note:* both parts must describe construction, not tone. “It would be sad” is not an outline.

Q7. Any two: the narrative's structure and pacing; the point of view from which the story is told; the patterned use of a named media code, such as shot duration or the use of silence; the treatment of the audience, such as direct address or withheld information.

Q8. A genre convention is a shared, expected way of constructing a whole category of narratives — audiences bring the expectation with them and any maker in that genre can use it. A style marker is one maker's repeated and attributable choice. The two meet at the point of decision: faced with a convention, a creator can adopt it, adapt it or refuse it, and which of those they habitually do is their style.

Q9. A production company's house style fixes production rules before any content exists — duration and format, whether a reporter appears on camera, how heavily material is scripted, the visual or print treatment. Because those rules are set at commissioning, they determine in advance how long the narrative can be, how many voices it can hold, whose point of view organises it, and what shape its structure must take.

Q10. Model response (4 marks). A podcast creator's style appears first in host delivery — whether the host reads a tightly written script or works conversationally from questions, which determines whether the narrative is built from prepared argument or from what the guest actually says. It appears second in sound treatment: a creator who scores under interviews builds tension in the mix and directs the listener's response, while one who works with location ambience and lets silences run forces the listener to read the pause itself. It appears third in structure and duration — a serialised investigation ending each episode unresolved constructs the narrative around withheld information, whereas a single long unedited interview builds engagement through accumulation. A fourth marker is whether the maker is audible at all: a host who narrates their own reporting constructs a narrative about the search, not only the subject.

Q11. Model response (4 marks). Shooting in story order means performances accumulate in the same sequence the audience will experience, so character change is built into the shoot rather than assembled afterwards, and the editor cannot reorder emotional development — which pushes the narrative towards a linear structure. Locking the camera off removes camera movement as an emotional device, so meaning must be carried by mise en scene, by what enters and leaves a static frame, and by shot duration, and scenes will run longer than in a conventionally covered film. (Also creditable: untrained local actors produce naturalistic, uneven delivery and root the film in its setting; two-angle coverage forces the narrative to be built from sustained takes.)

Q12. Model response (5 marks). Re-enactment is a producer-level decision about where a non-fictional narrative's images are going to come from, and it reaches into every stage of construction. A producer who reconstructs events is no longer confined to what a camera happened to record: the unrecorded hour can be cast, blocked, lit and scored, so scenes are built to a designed shape — an approach, a hesitation, a door opening — that testimony alone could only describe. Structure follows, because reconstructed material can be cut to the rhythm of drama and intercut with interview so that a witness's sentence is completed by an image, and the narrative acquires a continuous chronological spine the surviving record does not contain. A producer who refuses re-enactment must build the same events from archive, interview, stills and observational footage, so the gaps in the record stay inside the narrative: pacing is governed by what exists, absence has to be acknowledged rather than filled, and sequences are assembled around the strongest available material rather than around the strongest available scene. The influence on the audience follows from the construction. Reconstruction delivers a vivid, resolved account and asks the audience to accept a staged image as a report of fact; refusal delivers a slower, more provisional account in which the audience can see the narrative being assembled and can tell evidence from inference. Because non-fiction carries a truth claim, this is a construction decision with an ethical dimension — the more closely a re-enactment resembles documentary footage, the more work the narrative must do to signal that it is not. *Marker's note:* the marks are in the construction consequences, not in a verdict on whether re-enactment is legitimate.

Q13. Model response (5 marks). *The Ferrisvale Post* constructs the closure as a civic and financial matter. The heavy serif at 60 point and above-the-fold placement are typographic and visual-composition choices signalling institutional seriousness; the wide photograph of an empty pool with no people removes human presence from the image entirely; and the paragraph order — council reasoning first, mayor second, residents from the fifth — builds the story on the institution's account, with residents functioning as reaction. *Kelpwire* constructs the same vote as personal loss. A question headline invites the reader into a position rather than stating one; an autoplaying vertical video of a resident crying places the most emotional moment before any information; short paragraphs pace the read for a scrolling audience; and demoting the council's reasoning to a subheading at the end reframes the institution as a respondent to a grievance rather than the story's subject. Neither outlet has altered a fact — house style has determined what the story is *about*, and each audience will read a different event.

Q14. Model response (6 marks). The objection is real: media production is collaborative, and much of what audiences call a director's style is materially made by other people. A film's look is built by a cinematographer, production designer, editor and colourist; a front page is shaped as much by a chief sub-editor as by the reporter named on it; a program's format is often set by a broadcaster before a creator is engaged. On that evidence, attributing a whole style to one name is frequently inaccurate.

Attribution is nonetheless defensible in two situations. The first is where credits concentrate the decisions: a filmmaker who writes, directs and shoots their own work — as Ivan Sen has on *Mystery Road* (2013) and *Goldstone* (2016), where he is credited across writing, directing, cinematography, editing and music — holds the choices that produce the pattern. The second is where a pattern persists across changing collaborators: if a series holds the same structural rules through three directors and two editors, the constant is the showrunner.

The position that survives both arguments is that style belongs to whoever is stable across the pattern — often an institution rather than a person, since a house style persists precisely because it outlives the individuals applying it. The practical rule is to attribute to an individual only where credit and repetition support it, and otherwise to the production. That is not a compromise; it is the more accurate claim.

Q15. Model response (6 marks). In fictional narratives style influences everything, because nothing in the material is fixed. The creator invents the events, so structure, world, dialogue, performance register and ending are all stylistic. In *Strictly Ballroom* (1992) Baz Luhrmann's heightened performance, saturated colour and rapid cutting do not decorate an Australian suburban story; they determine what kind of story it is, converting material another creator would have played as understated social realism into something declaratively theatrical.

In non-fictional narratives the events are not the creator's to invent, and that is what makes the influence of style easier to isolate. Selection, order, voice, framing and sound treatment remain chosen, and those choices determine what the fixed events are taken to mean. *Four Corners* commits a full long-form program to a single topic each week, and that producer-level rule alone forces an evidence-stacked structure in which a claim is built, tested and returned to; identical material handled as a two-minute bulletin item would be constructed as an assertion plus a grab.

The difference is not that fiction has style and non-fiction does not. In fiction, style constructs the events themselves; in non-fiction, style constructs their meaning — and because non-fiction carries a truth claim, choices such as scoring an interview or trimming an answer also carry an ethical weight fiction does not.

Q16. Model response — studied narrative: *Bluey* (Ludo Studio). 6 marks. *Bluey*, created by Joe Brumm and produced by Ludo Studio in Brisbane, shows how a production-level style decision governs an entire body of narratives in the television form. The defining marker is duration: almost every episode runs about seven minutes and resolves a single domestic situation. It recurs across the whole run, and an alternative plainly existed, since the conventional children's animation slot runs to about eleven or twenty-two minutes — long enough to carry a subplot or a second situation — and *Bluey* declines it.

The influence on construction is direct. Seven minutes cannot hold a subplot, so each narrative is built on one problem introduced within seconds, complicated once, and resolved; orientation is compressed into the first shot and background is never stated. With no room for exposition, character must be established through play, which pushes meaning into performance and dialogue rather than plot. The episodic structure also means the family cannot undergo permanent change, so the narratives are built around recurrence — the interest lies in variation within a familiar situation rather than in what happens next. A second marker is dual address: situations pitched simultaneously at children and at the adults watching with them, in an unmistakably Australian domestic register, which requires each scene to carry two readings without either being flagged.

The influence is that engagement is built through recognition rather than suspense. A creator whose style favoured serialised half-hours with a season arc would have produced, from the same premise, a narrative driven by consequence and change — and the show's central pleasure, the completed small world revisited, would not exist.

Q17. Model response (8 marks). The brief fixes the events, the duration and the target audience. Everything that differs between the treatments is style, which makes this a clean demonstration of the dot point.

Treatment A's style is defined by containment and refusal. Restricting the narrative to one family, one night and real time removes the ability to cut across the town or to summarise, so the 1974 flood must be constructed entirely from what one household can perceive — sound from outside, water at the door, information arriving late or not at all.

Shooting only inside the house makes *mise en scene* the primary carrier of meaning: the rising water is the plot. Refusing a score removes the standard device for signalling danger, so tension is built from duration and diegetic sound, and ending before the water recedes denies resolution and leaves the audience inside the event.

Treatment B's style is defined by disclosure and by the maker's presence. Building from archival radio tape and eleven present-day interviews means the flood is constructed retrospectively, through testimony, and can move freely across the whole town — the opposite of Treatment A's containment. Keeping the host audible throughout, questioning and correcting the record on air, makes the process of establishing what happened part of the narrative; the audience follows an investigation rather than an experience. Ending each part on an unresolved contradiction constructs the flood as contested memory rather than a single event.

The influence of style is therefore total even though the commission is identical. Treatment A positions its audience inside the night with no more knowledge than the family has, building engagement through immersion and withheld information; Treatment B positions its audience afterwards alongside an investigator, building engagement through accumulating and conflicting evidence. One narrative asks what it was like; the other asks what is true. Neither is available to the other's style.

Q18. Model response — studied narratives: *The Castle* (1997, Working Dog Productions) and *Conversations* (ABC). 8 marks. Working Dog's style on *The Castle* is a producer-level style as much as a directorial one: the company's comedies are built on ensemble performance, deadpan delivery and plain, unshowy coverage of suburban settings. In *The Castle* the film is narrated by a family member whose commentary is sincere and frequently at odds with what the audience can see, and scenes are covered simply so nothing in the camerawork competes with the performances. The influence on construction is that humour must be carried by behaviour and by the gap between the narrator's account and the image, so scenes are built around ordinary domestic action rather than constructed comic set pieces. The audience is positioned to laugh with the family rather than at them, because the style refuses the visual mockery a more emphatic construction would supply.

Conversations (ABC) is non-fictional audio, and its markers are the mirror image: a single guest, an interview running far longer than a broadcast news slot allows, the interviewer audible throughout and working from research rather than from a written script once the interview begins, and almost nothing else in the mix. The narrative therefore cannot be assembled from grabs — it is built in real time out of the order in which the interviewer chooses to ask, so structure follows the guest's life rather than an editorial line. With no score and few actuality inserts, meaning rests on voice and pause, and because the host's prepared introduction hands the account straight to the guest and does not return to summarise it, the listener assembles who this person is across the hour from their own telling.

The comparison shows two kinds of influence. In *The Castle* the style determines what the invented events are — the narrator's misreading of his own circumstances is simultaneously the style and the plot. In *Conversations* the events are given, and the style determines how much of a life the audience receives and in what order, transferring interpretation to the listener. The counterfactual proves both: *The Castle* staged with broad, emphatic comedy would have produced ridicule instead of affection, and the same guest handled by a bulletin producer would have been reduced to ninety scripted seconds.

Q19. Model response (10 marks). The statement is substantially defensible, but it needs qualifying rather than endorsing: style is the strongest single influence on how an Australian story is constructed, though it operates within limits set by the events themselves and by institutions.

The case rests on the counterfactual. Ivan Sen (Gamilaraay) is credited across writing, directing, cinematography, editing and music on *Mystery Road* (2013), and that concentration of roles produces a consistent pattern: wide framing that keeps figures small against country, a sparse score, and long stretches carried by landscape rather than dialogue. The influence on construction is that the investigation at the centre of the film is paced by distance and travel rather than by revelation, so scenes are built around arrival and waiting, and because the score is withheld, tension has to be produced by duration and framing. Constructed by a maker whose style favours tight coverage, continuous score and rapid intercutting, the same crime narrative would have produced a conventionally propulsive thriller. The events would be identical; the narrative would not.

The same test applies in non-fiction and a different form. *Media Watch* (ABC) is built on a producer-level format rule — a short weekly program, one presenter to camera, with the evidence displayed on screen as quoted documents. That rule determines construction before any content exists: each item must be reducible to a document the audience can

read, the argument must be made directly to camera without an intermediary reporter, and the brief duration forces one claim per item rather than an accumulation. Handled instead as a long-form investigative program, the identical material would be constructed as a slow evidentiary build with interviews and observational footage.

Two qualifications keep the position honest. Events set outer limits, particularly in non-fiction, where a creator may choose selection, order, voice and treatment but may not invent what happened; style there determines meaning rather than content. And a creator's style is itself constrained — by commissioning decisions, by duration and format, by available resources. A style that exists only in works nobody funded has influenced nothing.

Weighing these, the statement holds in its strong form for construction and in a qualified form for content. Two makers given the same Australian events will build two different narratives, and the difference between them is style; but style does its work inside a frame it did not set. Style is the decisive influence on *how* an Australian story is told, and a significant but bounded influence on *what* it is able to say. *Marker's note*: a 10-mark discussion must take a position and hold it. Answers that list features of two narratives without arguing the proposition, or that never state what a different style would have produced, cannot reach the top band.