

Media Units 3 & 4

Chapter 3 — Narratives in context: representations, views and values

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Chapter 3 Narratives in context: representations, views and values — 3A Contexts of production

Theory

No media narrative is made in a vacuum. Every narrative is created by particular people, at a particular time, in a particular place, working inside particular industries — and all of those particulars leave their mark on what gets made and how it is built. This subtopic is about that mark. Its key knowledge is **the relationship between media narratives and the contexts in which they were produced**: how the conditions surrounding a production shape the narrative, and how a finished narrative may in turn comment on the world it came from.

What a “context of production” is. A **context of production** is the set of conditions — the time, the place, the society and the industry — in which a media narrative is made. It is not the world *inside* the story; it is the world *around the makers* as they make it. The study design examines this context through a frame of **factors: social, cultural, economic, political and historical**, and — added by the Area of Study — **institutional**. These factors are a lens for pinning a context to a specific **time, place and group** — the same precision 3B will demand when you come to judge the views and values a narrative engages. “The film was made in a certain context” says nothing; “the film was made in Australia in 2017, in a social and political context of national truth-telling about frontier history” can be analysed.

The six context factors. Each factor is one way of asking *what was going on around the makers?* The factors overlap — a single condition can often be read through more than one — but each has a distinct centre of gravity. Learn the definition of each, and, more importantly, learn to attach each to a **production consequence**: the specific thing the makers did because of it.

Factor	What it names	A production-influence example
Social	the fabric of everyday life — relationships, attitudes, behaviours and the issues current in a community at the time	A society growing more open about mental health leads a broadcaster to back a drama that treats depression candidly rather than avoiding it
Cultural	a group’s shared traditions, beliefs, languages, tastes and sense of identity	Makers from a cultural community shape casting, language and story so the narrative reflects that community from the inside
Economic	the financial conditions of the production — budgets, funding models, market pressures and commercial risk	A modest budget forces a small cast and a single location; a platform that earns from subscriptions rather than ticket sales can commission a film it does not need to fill cinemas
Political	the climate of power, government, law and public debate around the production	A national reckoning with a policy or law shapes a maker’s decision to dramatise it, and whose perspective they centre
Historical	the specific events and period conditions at the moment of production (an anniversary, an inquiry, a crisis)	A public inquiry’s findings, fresh in the national memory, prompt a film that revisits the events the inquiry examined
Institutional	the industries and organisations media is made through — studios, broadcasters, streaming platforms, funding bodies and regulators	A public broadcaster’s charter, or a funding body’s priorities, decides which stories are commissioned and who is trusted to make them

The study design’s core list is **social, cultural, economic, political and/or historical**; the Area of Study adds **institutional**, and it is worth treating carefully because it is the factor students most often miss. Two cautions on the

frame. First, the factors **overlap**: a streaming platform backing a film is at once an *institutional* fact (the organisation) and an *economic* one (its funding model), and that is fine — name the one your evidence supports most clearly, or name both. Second, the factors are a **lens, not a set of boxes** to sort a narrative into; their job is to help you pin a context precisely and then explain how it shaped the work.

Institutional context — keep it concrete and factual. The institutional factor is powerful because it is where abstract “context” becomes a hard, checkable fact: *who* paid for, commissioned or distributed the work. In Australia this includes public funding bodies such as **Screen Australia**, public broadcasters such as the **ABC** and **SBS**, and — increasingly — global streaming platforms. Each carries its own pressures: a public broadcaster is funded chiefly by government appropriation and works to a **charter** — a legislated remit to serve Australian audiences and reflect the community — rather than to the ratings a commercial network must deliver to its advertisers; a funding body has stated priorities about the kinds of stories and makers it will support; a streaming platform is funded by subscribers rather than box office. Keep the detail exact when you name a broadcaster: the **ABC** carries no advertising at all, while **SBS** is also charter-driven and mainly government-funded but is permitted under the *Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991* to sell a limited amount of advertising and sponsorship, and earns part of its revenue that way. When you use the institutional factor, stay at the level of **public record** — that a body *funded* or *commissioned* a work, or that a platform *produced* or *distributed* it, is a documented fact you can rely on, and it is worth checking *which* of those a given institution actually did. Do **not** invent budget figures, contract terms or internal decisions; “made on a modest independent budget” (where that is documented) is analysable, an invented dollar amount is not.

Explicit and implicit presence of context. A production context can be present in a narrative in two ways. When the context is **explicit**, the narrative openly and directly engages with it — it names the issue, dramatises the event, or foregrounds the debate, so the connection is on the surface. When the context is **implicit**, the context is present indirectly — embedded in the choices, assumptions and framing of the narrative without ever being named, so the audience infers it. A drama in which characters argue about a new law engages its **political** context *explicitly*; a comedy whose casual, matter-of-fact assumptions about family quietly reveal the values of its production era engages its **social** context *implicitly*. Most narratives do both at once. The study design puts it this way: a narrative may **implicitly or explicitly comment on, reflect on, develop, reject or ignore** the dominant views and values of its context. (The full method for judging *whether* a narrative reflects or challenges a view or value — and the rule that such verdicts attach to the production context — belongs to the next subtopic, 3B; here your task is to explain how the context **shaped the production**, and to recognise whether that engagement is explicit or implicit.)

The causal chain — the signature skill. The single discipline this subtopic is built on is **causal linkage**: every claim about a context must be tied to a **construction consequence**. It is never enough to state a context and describe a narrative side by side and hope the marker connects them. You must make the connection yourself, in one move:

Because [a named factor was present in the production context], **the makers** [made a specific construction choice], **so** [the narrative carries a particular meaning or effect].

Fill that template and the context is *integrated*; leave it unfilled and the context is **bolted on** — a separate paragraph of background facts that never touches the analysis. Bolted-on context is the most penalised weakness in this part of the course: the 2024 examiners’ report asked for “clear and causal connections between the context and the narrative”, and for those connections to be “integrated into the analysis ... rather than being treated as a separate part of the response”. Compare the two:

- **Bolted on:** “The film was made in 2017. Australia was thinking about reconciliation. The film is about an Aboriginal stockman.” — three true facts, no link. Nothing here shows the context *doing* anything to the narrative.
- **Integrated:** “*Because* the 2017 production context supported Indigenous-led truth-telling, *the makers* told the frontier story from an Aboriginal point of view and stripped it of a conventional heroic score, *so* the audience confronts the history without a soundtrack telling them how to feel.”

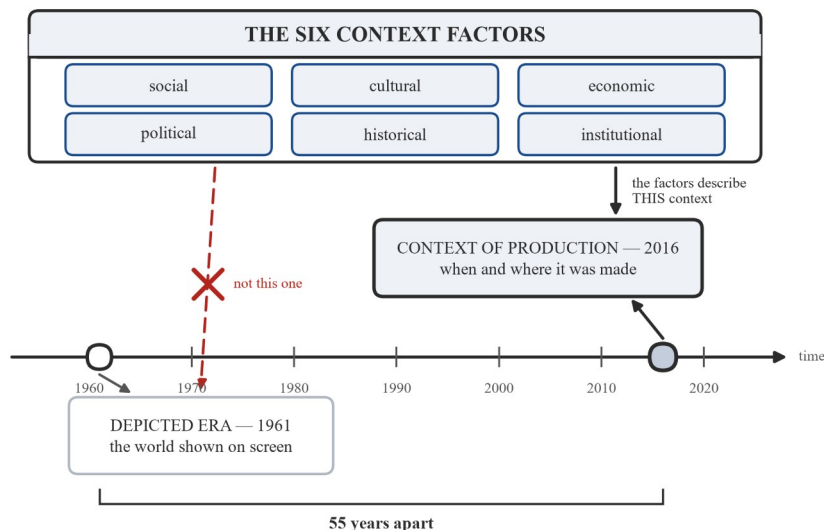
The linking words — *because, so, this leads the makers to, as a result, which means* — are not decoration; they are the analysis. Model them in every answer.

Production context is not the depicted era. A narrative’s **context of production** is the time and place in which it was **made**; the **depicted era** (or setting) is the time and place the story is **set in**. These are frequently different, and confusing them is a classic error. *Hidden Figures* (2016) is *set* in 1961 but was *produced* in 2016; the six factors

describe its **2016** production context, not the 1961 world on screen. This matters for two reasons. First, the production context explains *why the story was chosen and how it was built now* — a story available for decades can be made this year, and made this way, because of present conditions. Second, when a narrative comments on views and values, that engagement belongs to the **production context, not the depicted era**: a 2016 film set in 1961 speaks to 2016. (This is the same rule 3B teaches for reflect-or-challenge verdicts; here, simply keep the two contexts apart, and always locate your factors in the era of *production*.) The figure below puts both dates on one scale — fifty-five years apart — and shows the six factors attaching to the production year and not to the depicted one.

Which context do the factors describe? The one the narrative was **MADE** in

A narrative made in 2016 and set in 1961 speaks to 2016: locate every factor in the era of production.



The analysis method. For any context-of-production question, work these four steps in order:

1. **Pin the production context** — name *when* and *where* the narrative was made, and (if the story is set elsewhere) distinguish this from the depicted era.
2. **Name the specific factor** at work — a named condition (social, cultural, economic, political, historical or institutional), not “the times”.
3. **Identify the construction consequence** — the specific choice the makers made because of that factor (a code choice, a form or platform choice, a casting, language or funding choice), at a named point where you can.
4. **Link them causally** — join factor to consequence with *because ... the makers ... so ...*, and say whether the narrative engages the context explicitly or implicitly.

Applied to a one-line hypothetical: (1) a drama made for an Australian public broadcaster in the 2010s; (2) the **institutional** factor — the broadcaster’s charter remit and government funding, which leave it far less exposed to ratings pressure than a commercial network; (3) the makers hand a personal, low-key story to a first-time creator; (4) *because* the broadcaster is charter-driven rather than ratings-driven, *the makers* backed an untested voice and an intimate style, *so* the narrative engages its social context with a candour a commercial network might have avoided. Keep the factor and the construction developed together, every context claim tied to a choice.

Contemporary example — *Legendary Entertainment, August 2024*

Legendary Entertainment is a United States film and television studio; *Monarch* season two was its fourth production to film in Queensland, after three *Monsterverse* features. On 14 August 2024, Screen Queensland announced that season two of the Apple TV+ series *Monarch: Legacy of Monsters* had begun production in the state, secured through the Queensland Government’s Production Attraction Strategy. Screen Queensland called it the largest television series filmed in Queensland, and said the production was expected to generate more than \$115 million for the state economy and to employ around 1,000 local cast and crew.

This is a **context of production** doing its work before a single shot is composed, and two factors overlap exactly as the table above warns. The **economic** factor is the incentive itself: a government payment lowers what the season costs to make, and a studio financed by a global subscription platform rather than by ticket sales is free to build it wherever that cost sits lowest. The **institutional** factor is the state screen agency that administered the strategy, whose remit is

to attract production to Queensland — an organisation, not a creative decision, put the work here. *Because* that incentive and that agency existed, *the studio* built an American-created narrative in Queensland with around 1,000 Queensland cast and crew, *so* the season was physically made by an Australian workforce although its story is not set in Australia. The engagement is **implicit**: this context shaped *where and by whom* the narrative was built, not what it says.

Source: Screen Queensland, *Screen Queensland secures the state’s largest-ever television series*, 14 August 2024 — <https://screenqueensland.com.au/sq-news/screen-queensland-secures-the-states-largest-ever-television-series/>. Accurate as at July 2026.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Explain the relationship between the context in which *Sweet Country* (2017) was produced and how the narrative was constructed. (6 marks)

This is the shape of the 6-mark “explain the relationship between context and production” question (sample exam Q4). The table builds the response one move at a time; watch the causal links do the work.

Working	Comment
<i>Sweet Country</i> (Warwick Thornton, 2017) was produced in Australia in the mid-2010s — a context to be kept separate from the 1920s Northern Territory frontier the film depicts.	Step 1. Pin the production context (Australia, 2017) and mark it off from the depicted era (the 1920s), so the factors are located in the right time.
Two factors are at work. Socially and politically, 2017 Australia was engaged in public truth-telling about frontier violence and reconciliation; institutionally, the film was an Indigenous-led production made with support from the national funding body, Screen Australia.	Step 2. Name specific factors — social/political <i>and</i> institutional — as concrete conditions, not “the times”. The funding-body fact is public record.
Because that context supported Indigenous-led storytelling, the makers constructed the frontier Western from an Aboriginal point of view, centring the stockman Sam Kelly rather than the usual white lawman.	Step 3–4. A construction consequence (point of view / centring) tied to the factor with because — the context is <i>doing</i> something to the build.
Because the makers wanted the audience to sit with the history rather than be steered through it, the film was constructed with no non-diegetic musical score, using only the sounds of the land, so the violence lands without a soundtrack cueing the “correct” emotion.	A second, code-level consequence (sound : the documented absence of a score) linked causally, with the audience effect stated — this is the depth 6 marks reward.
In this way the 2017 context and the construction are developed together: the film’s engagement with frontier history belongs to its production context, not to the 1920s it portrays.	The examiner rewards integration . Note the closing reminder that the commentary attaches to the production context , not the depicted era.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Explain how the institutional and economic context shaped the production of *Roma* (2018). (5 marks)

This example isolates the **institutional** and **economic** factors — the pair students most often blur — and shows how to name the specific *mechanism* rather than just the company, and how to keep the institution that **made** a narrative separate from the one that later **released** it.

Working	Comment
<i>Roma</i> (Alfonso Cuarón, 2018) was shot in Mexico in 2016–17 outside the major-studio system, produced by	Name the institutional fact precisely — who actually financed and produced it. Public record, and it is the

Working	Comment
Cuarón's own company Esperanto Filmoj with Pimienta Films and the American independent Participant Media, a company whose stated remit is socially driven film.	<i>financier</i> who shapes construction.
The economic mechanism matters: independent backing of this kind does not have to recover its money from a wide cinema audience in an opening weekend, so it can carry a film a mass-market studio would judge commercially unviable.	Name the specific economic mechanism (independent finance vs box-office recoupment) — not just “they had money”. This is the analysable factor.
Because the makers were not building for a mass cinema market, they constructed <i>Roma</i> as a black-and-white, Spanish- and Mixtec-language, slow and deeply personal film, cast around a lead with no previous acting experience — choices a mass-market studio might have rejected.	The construction consequences (colour, language, pace, casting) each flow from the factor via because ; the film is built the way the economics allow.
A second institutional fact shaped how audiences met it: with the film complete, Netflix acquired the worldwide distribution rights in 2018 and released it primarily through streaming, with only a limited cinema run, so most audiences first read it at home and a subtitled, black-and-white art film reached a global audience it could not have reached on cinema screens alone.	Extend the chain to distribution — but note the order of events. The platform shaped the film's reach , not its construction; it arrived after the choices above were made.
<i>Takeaway</i> : name the institution that actually made the decision you are analysing — the financier for construction choices, the distributor for release and reach — and give the mechanism, not simply the company.	The mark is lost when a student writes “Netflix made it so it's on streaming” without the mechanism, or credits the distributor with choices made before it was involved.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Explain how the context in which *Hidden Figures* (2016) was produced — as distinct from the era it depicts — shaped the narrative. (4 marks)

The production context of *Hidden Figures* (Theodore Melfi, 2016) is the United States in 2016, a moment of intense public debate about the under-representation of Black Americans and of women in film and in recorded history. The story it tells is set in 1961; the two must not be confused. Because the 2016 context placed a high value on recovering overlooked contributions, the makers **selected** the true story of the NASA mathematicians Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan and Mary Jackson and constructed them as the central, capable protagonists — a story that had been documentable for decades but was made now, and made this way, because of its production context. The 1961 setting is the depicted era; the 2016 conditions are the context of production, and it is those conditions that explain why the film was greenlit and whose perspective it centres. *Takeaway*: the production context is *when and where a narrative is made* — never the era it is *set in* — and it is the production context that explains why a story is told now.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Analyse how two or more context factors influenced the production of *Please Like Me* (2013). (7 marks)

Please Like Me (created by Josh Thomas, 2013) was produced for the Australian public broadcaster the ABC in the early-to-mid 2010s, and two factors in that context shaped the production directly. The first is **institutional**. The ABC operates to a public-service charter rather than to advertising ratings, which gives it room to back distinctive, non-commercial local content; because of this remit, the broadcaster commissioned an intimate, single-creator comedy from a young first-time showrunner who created, wrote and starred in it — a risk a ratings-driven commercial network would have been far less likely to take. The construction follows from the factor: the series is built on a small scale, with an unforced, naturalistic style and its own creator — a stand-up comedian, not an established television actor — in the lead, rather than the glossy, broad construction of mainstream network comedy.

The second factor is **social**. The 2010s in Australia were a period of increasingly open public conversation about mental health and about same-sex relationships; because the makers were working in that context, they constructed storylines that treat depression and a young man's same-sex relationships candidly and without sensation. Here the narrative engages its social context both **explicitly** — with storylines that directly dramatise mental illness — and **implicitly**, since the show's casual, matter-of-fact framing of its gay protagonist's ordinary life embeds a value of acceptance without ever announcing it. Analysed together, the institutional and social factors pull the same way: the ABC's remit made the risk possible, and the social context made it worth taking, so *Please Like Me* is constructed as a small, honest comedy that could reflect its moment. *Takeaway*: a strong "analyse" names each factor, ties each to a specific production or construction consequence, and keeps them integrated rather than listed.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. The study design examines a context of production through six factors. (a) Define what is meant by a "context of production". (b) Name the six context factors. (c) For any two of the factors, give one example of how that factor could influence a production.

Q2. A production context can be present in a narrative explicitly or implicitly. (a) Define the *explicit* presence of a context. (b) Define the *implicit* presence of a context. (c) Classify each of the following as explicit or implicit: (i) characters openly debate a new law on screen; (ii) a comedy's casual assumptions about family quietly reveal the values of its era.

Q3. Context claims must be linked causally, not bolted on. (a) Explain what it means to say a context is "bolted on" to a response. (b) Rewrite the following so the context is integrated causally: "The film was made in 2016. People were worried about privacy. The film has a surveillance plot." (c) Complete the linking template for an example of your choice: "Because ____, the makers ____, so ____."

Q4. The institutional factor is where "context" becomes a checkable fact. (a) Define the *institutional* context of production. (b) Name two Australian bodies that fund or commission screen narratives. (c) Explain how a funding body's or broadcaster's involvement can shape a production, keeping to public-record facts.

Q5. The context of production is not the depicted era. (a) State the difference between the context of production and the depicted era. (b) A film released in 2019 tells a story set in 1975. Name its production context and its depicted era. (c) Explain why a claim about the views and values a narrative engages attaches to the production context, not the depicted era.

Q6. Read the six described influences on a production below.

- (i) The team received development funding from a national screen agency.
- (ii) The story was made during widespread public debate about a proposed new privacy law.
- (iii) A small budget meant the whole narrative was shot in one location.
- (iv) The makers cast performers who spoke the community's language so the dialogue was authentic.
- (v) The film was made in the year following a major public inquiry into the events it revisits.
- (vi) The narrative was released straight to a global subscription platform rather than to cinemas.
- (a) Classify each influence as social, cultural, economic, political, historical or institutional.
- (b) Explain why a single influence can sometimes be classified under more than one factor.
- (c) Choose one influence and describe one construction consequence it could have.

Un scaffolded

Q7. Using an example, describe how one context factor can influence the production of a media narrative. (3 marks)

Q8. Explain how the economic context of production can shape the way a media narrative is constructed. (4 marks)

Q9. Explain how the institutional context — funding bodies, broadcasters or platforms — can influence what a media narrative becomes. In your response, refer to at least one Australian example. (4 marks)

Q10. (*Stimulus.*) Four influences on a production are described below.

Stimulus.

- (i) The narrative was commissioned to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the events it portrays.
- (ii) The writers were responding to a marked change in how openly people in their community had begun to talk about mental health.
- (iii) Community elders decided which parts of the traditional story could be shown, and the narrative was shaped to respect that decision.
- (iv) The finance covered a fifteen-day shoot only, so scenes were written to play out in long, unbroken takes.

Identify the context factor that each influence best represents. (2 marks)

Q11. Explain the difference between the explicit and the implicit presence of a production context in a media narrative. Illustrate each with an example. (4 marks)

Q12. (*Stimulus.*) A student wrote the response below to the question “Explain the relationship between the context in which a media narrative was produced and how it was constructed.”

Stimulus. “The series was made in 2019. There was a lot in the news about the environment then. The series is set in the 1970s and is about a fishing town. That is the context of the series.”

Discuss two ways this response could be improved. (4 marks)

Q13. Discuss how the production context of a media narrative you have studied this year — as distinct from the era it depicts — shaped the way it was constructed. (5 marks)

Q14. (*Stimulus.*) Read the commissioning scenario below.

Stimulus. A national public broadcaster with a charter to reflect the country’s cultural diversity commissions a six-part drama from a first-time writer. It asks for a story set in a regional community and made largely by creatives from that community. The broadcaster carries no advertising and does not rely on ratings for its funding.

Describe how this institutional context would shape the resulting production. (4 marks)

Q15. Explain the relationship between the context in which a media narrative you have studied this year was produced and how it was constructed. (6 marks)

Q16. Discuss how the historical and/or political context can influence the production of a media narrative. Refer to an example. (5 marks)

Q17. Discuss how the social and/or cultural context of production shaped a media narrative you have studied this year, and whether the narrative engages that context explicitly or implicitly. (6 marks)

Q18. Analyse how the context in which a media narrative you have studied this year was produced shaped its construction. In your response, refer to at least two context factors. (8 marks)

Media narrative: _____

Q19. In August 2024, season two of the series *Monarch: Legacy of Monsters* — made by the United States studio Legendary Entertainment for a global subscription platform — began production in Queensland, secured under a state government incentive administered by Screen Queensland. Analyse how this illustrates the influence of the economic and institutional context on the production of a media narrative. (5 marks)

Answers

Q1. (a) The set of conditions — time, place, society and industry — in which a narrative is made (the world around the makers, not inside the story). (b) Social, cultural, economic, political, historical, institutional. (c) Any two, each with a plausible production influence (see solution). **Q2.** (a) The context is openly, directly engaged — the narrative names the issue or dramatises the event. (b) The context is present indirectly, embedded in choices and assumptions without being named. (c) (i) explicit; (ii) implicit. **Q3.** (a) The context is stated as separate background facts with no causal link to how the narrative was built. (b) A version joining context to a construction choice with *because ... so ...* (see solution). (c) Any completed template with a real factor, a construction choice and an effect. **Q4.** (a) The industries and organisations a narrative is made through — studios, broadcasters, platforms, funding bodies, regulators. (b) Any two of: Screen Australia, the ABC, SBS (also state/territory screen agencies). (c) A body's charter, remit or funding priorities shape which stories are commissioned and who makes them — kept to public-record facts (that it funded/commissioned/distributed the work), no invented figures. **Q5.** (a) Production context = when/where it was made; depicted era = when/where the story is set. (b) Production context = 2019; depicted era = 1975. (c) Because the narrative was built by makers working in the production context, its commentary on views and values reflects that context, not the era it portrays. **Q6.** (a) (i) institutional; (ii) political; (iii) economic; (iv) cultural; (v) historical; (vi) institutional (also economic). (b) The factors overlap — one condition can be, e.g., both institutional and economic. (c) Any influence with a sensible construction consequence. **Q7. Describe (3).** One factor named; a clear example; a stated production consequence. Must say what the factor *does* to the production, not just name it. **Q8. Explain (4).** A how/why chain: a named economic condition (budget, funding model, market pressure) → a construction choice → the effect. Not just “they had little money”. **Q9. Explain (4).** A named body/broadcaster/platform (at least one Australian) → its remit or model → a construction or commissioning consequence. Public-record facts only. **Q10. Identify (2).** (i) historical; (ii) social; (iii) cultural; (iv) economic. **Q11. Explain (4).** Explicit = context openly engaged/named; implicit = context embedded without being named; one example of each, each tied to a construction choice. **Q12. Discuss (4).** Two of: the context is bolted on (facts listed, no causal link to construction); no specific factor named; no construction consequence; the depicted past is confused with the production context. **Q13. Discuss (5).** Own narrative; production context distinguished from depicted era; a specific factor; a construction consequence linked causally. **Q14. Describe (4).** Because the broadcaster is charter-driven and ad-free, it can back an untested writer, a regional setting and community creatives — an account of how the institutional context shapes casting, setting and creative risk. **Q15. Explain (6).** Own narrative; production context pinned; at least one factor tied to a construction consequence with causal linking; explicit/implicit noted where apt. **Q16. Discuss (5).** A named historical and/or political condition of the production context → a construction choice → effect, with an example; depicted history distinguished from production context. **Q17. Discuss (6).** Own narrative; a social and/or cultural factor tied to construction; a clear judgement on whether the engagement is explicit or implicit, with reasons. **Q18.** See Fully-worked solutions for a full model plus a Marker's note. At least two factors, each tied causally to a construction choice at a named point. **Q19. Analyse (5).** The **economic** factor (a state incentive lowering what the season costs, and a studio financed by a subscription platform rather than box office) and the **institutional** factor (the state screen agency and its remit to attract production), each tied causally to a production consequence — where the season was shot and who made it. Best answers note that the context decided location and workforce rather than story, so the engagement is implicit. Public-record facts only.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) A **context of production** is the set of conditions — the **time, place, society and industry** — in which a media narrative is made; it is the world *around the makers*, not the world inside the story. (b) The six factors are **social, cultural, economic, political, historical** and **institutional**. (c) Any two, for example: **economic** — a small budget forces a single location and a short cast list; **institutional** — a public broadcaster's charter to serve national audiences leads it to commission a local story a commercial network would not fund. *Marker's note:* part (c) must say what the factor *does* to the production; naming the factor alone is not an influence.

Q2. (a) A context is present **explicitly** when the narrative **openly and directly engages** with it — naming the issue, dramatising the event or foregrounding the debate, so the connection is on the surface. (b) A context is present **implicitly** when it is present **indirectly** — embedded in the choices, assumptions and framing of the narrative without being named, so the audience infers it. (c) (i) **explicit** (the context is named and debated on screen); (ii) **implicit** (the

values are embedded in assumptions, never stated). *Common errors*: treating “implicit” as “not really there” — an implicit context is fully present, just unstated.

Q3. (a) A context is **bolted on** when it is written as a block of separate background facts — “the film was made in year X; society believed Y” — with **no causal link** to how the narrative was actually built; the marker is left to make the connection, and the context does no analytical work. (b) An integrated version, for example: “**Because** privacy fears were running high in 2016, the makers built the narrative around constant surveillance and framed the protagonist through watching screens, so the audience feels the loss of privacy the context worried about.**” (c) **Any correct completion, e.g.** “Because** a public broadcaster is funded by government appropriation under a public-service charter rather than by advertising ratings, **the makers** could hand the series to a first-time creator, **so** the narrative keeps an intimate, uncommercial style.” *Marker’s note*: the words *because ... so ...* are the analysis; without them the answer reverts to bolted-on facts.

Q4. (a) The **institutional** context is the set of **industries and organisations a narrative is made through** — studios, broadcasters, streaming platforms, funding bodies and regulators. (b) Any two Australian examples, for example **Screen Australia** (the national funding body), the **ABC** and **SBS** (public broadcasters); state and territory screen agencies are also acceptable. (c) “*Explain*” wants a *how/why* account. A body’s **charter, remit or funding priorities** decide **which stories are commissioned and who is trusted to make them**: the **ABC**, publicly funded and carrying no advertising, works to a public-service charter rather than to ratings, so it can back distinctive or risky local work; **SBS** works to a charter to reflect Australia’s multicultural society — it is mainly government-funded, though its own Act also lets it sell a limited amount of advertising — so it commissions stories for communities a commercial network under-serves; a funding body’s stated priorities steer support toward particular kinds of makers and stories. All of this stays at the level of **public record** — that a body funded, commissioned or distributed a work — with **no invented budget figures**. *Common errors*: inventing dollar amounts or internal decisions; these cannot be verified and are not creditable.

Q5. (a) The **context of production** is **when and where the narrative was made**; the **depicted era** is **when and where the story is set**. (b) Production context = **2019**; depicted era = **1975**. (c) A narrative is built by **makers working in the production context**, so the views and values it comments on reflect **that** context — the beliefs and conditions around the makers as they made it — not the era it portrays. A 2019 film set in 1975 speaks to 2019. *Marker’s note*: locate every context factor in the era of **production**; a common slip is to analyse “the 1970s” when the film was made in 2019.

Q6. (a) (i) **institutional**; (ii) **political**; (iii) **economic**; (iv) **cultural**; (v) **historical**; (vi) **institutional** (also reasonably **economic**, given the funding model). (b) The factors **overlap**, so one condition can sit under more than one: a subscription platform’s release decision is *institutional* (the organisation) and *economic* (its funding model) at once; the point of the frame is to pin the context precisely, not to force a single label. (c) Any influence with a sensible consequence, e.g. (iii) a single-location shoot could push the makers toward a tense, contained narrative built on dialogue and performance rather than spectacle. *Marker’s note*: accept any defensible classification for an overlapping item as long as it is justified.

Q7. “*Describe*” asks for an account of the features. The **social** context — the everyday attitudes and issues current in a community — can shape a production directly. *For example*, in a society becoming more openly concerned with urban poverty, a maker might build a narrative around the lives of people in a poor neighbourhood and cast performers from those communities to make it feel authentic, as *City of God* (Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, 2002) did by casting largely non-professional actors from the communities it portrays. Because the social reality was the subject, the makers constructed the film with a raw, energetic, street-level style, so the audience reads the neighbourhood as real rather than staged. *Marker’s note*: three marks need the factor named, an example, and a **stated construction consequence** — not just “the film is about poverty”.

Q8. “*Explain*” asks for a *how/why* chain. The **economic** context shapes construction because a narrative can only be built with the resources available to it. Take a **modest independent budget**: a low-budget film such as *Moonlight* (Barry Jenkins, 2016) cannot afford large casts, many locations or spectacle, so the makers construct the narrative on an **intimate scale** — a small cast, a tight three-part structure and a handful of restrained locations. Because the budget forced that focus, the film is built around close performance and quiet, character-driven moments rather than event, so the audience reads it as personal and interior. The economic condition (the modest budget) produces the construction choice (intimate scale) which produces the meaning (intimacy). *Marker’s note*: four marks need the chain completed

to the audience's reading; stopping at "they didn't have much money" is the common error. Keep to documented facts (a "modest independent budget"), not invented figures.

Q9. "Explain" asks for a how/why chain. The **institutional** context — who funds, commissions or distributes a work — shapes what it becomes because each institution carries its own remit and pressures. Take an Australian example: *Redfern Now* (2012) was commissioned by the ABC and developed with **Screen Australia's** Indigenous Department. Because the ABC works to a public-service charter rather than to advertising ratings, and because a dedicated funding stream existed to support Indigenous storytellers, the series could be **written, directed and produced by Indigenous Australians** — a degree of creative control a ratings-driven commercial network would have been unlikely to offer. The institutional context therefore shaped the construction at its root: the stories are told from an Indigenous perspective and grounded in community experience, so the narratives carry an authenticity that flows directly from *who was funded to make them*. *Marker's note:* stay at public-record level (that the ABC commissioned it, that Screen Australia's Indigenous Department supported it); do not invent budget or contract detail. *Common errors:* naming a body without saying what its remit *did* to the production.

Q10. "Identify" asks for the correct label only. (i) **historical** (an anniversary — a specific period condition at the moment of production); (ii) **social** (a shift in the attitudes and everyday conversation of a community); (iii) **cultural** (a group's own traditions and authority over its story); (iv) **economic** (what the finance would stretch to). *Marker's note:* this is a recognition item — two marks reward the four correct classifications; no explanation is required.

Q11. "Explain" asks for the distinction, with how/why. A production context is present **explicitly** when the narrative **openly engages** with it — for example an issue-driven drama in which characters directly debate a new law names its **political** context on the surface, so the audience sees the connection at once. A context is present **implicitly** when it is **embedded without being named** — for example a domestic comedy whose everyday, unquestioned assumptions about who does the housework quietly reveal the **social** values of its era, which the audience infers rather than is told. Both are fully present; the difference is only whether the narrative announces the context or embeds it. Because implicit engagement works through assumptions and framing, it is often where a narrative's deepest values sit. *Marker's note:* four marks need a clear definition of each **and** an example of each tied to a construction choice; defining without illustrating is the common shortfall.

Q12. "Discuss" asks you to develop each improvement. First, the context is bolted on. The response lists three separate facts — the year, the environmental news coverage, the subject of the series — but never links any of them to **how the narrative was constructed**. The student should connect the context to a specific construction choice with causal language: for example, "*because* the 2019 production context was preoccupied with environmental loss, *the makers* structured the series around a fishery collapsing across a single season and shot the town in long, emptying wide shots, *so* the audience reads the 1970s story as a warning about the present." **Second, the response confuses the depicted past with the production context, and names no specific factor.** "Set in the 1970s" describes the **depicted era**; the analysable **production context** is 2019, and the student should name a **specific factor** (the social and political concern with the environment in 2019; the institutional remit of the broadcaster that commissioned it) and give a construction consequence for it. *Common errors:* this stimulus contains the two live traps at once — **bolted-on facts** and **depicted era mistaken for the production context**.

Q13. "Discuss" asks you to develop the point with evidence and reach a position. Model response (studied narrative: *The King's Speech*, 2010): *The King's Speech* (Tom Hooper, 2010) is **set** in Britain in the 1930s but was **produced** in 2010 — the two must be kept apart. The relevant **institutional** factor is that the film was developed with support from the UK Film Council, a public funding body, in a context that valued prestige British historical drama for both local and international audiences. Because that context supported a polished, character-focused period film, the makers constructed the narrative around the intimate relationship between the king and his speech therapist rather than around large historical spectacle, building it through close performance, confined interiors and a restrained style. The views the film engages — about duty, class and personal struggle — belong to its **2010** production context and the way 2010 audiences valued that story, **not** to the 1930s it depicts; the 1930s is the setting, the 2010 conditions are the context of production. *Marker's note:* the mark is the **distinction** — name the production context, keep it separate from the depicted era, and tie a factor to a construction choice; retelling the 1930s plot is the trap.

Q14. "Describe" asks for an account of how the institutional context works here. Because the commissioning body is a **public broadcaster** working to a **charter** to reflect the country's cultural diversity, and because it carries **no advertising** and does not depend on ratings, the institutional context would shape the production in several linked ways. The broadcaster can afford to back a **first-time writer** rather than a proven commercial name, because it is not

chasing guaranteed ratings; it can set the story in a **regional community** and insist it be **made largely by creatives from that community**, because reflecting diversity is its remit rather than a commercial risk; and it can allow a distinctive, less mainstream style for the same reason. The institutional context therefore shapes casting, setting and creative risk together: the resulting drama is built from the inside of its community and is free to be less conventional than a commercial network's output would be. *Marker's note*: four marks reward an account that traces the charter/funding model through to concrete production consequences (who is cast, where it is set, what risks are taken), not a general "public broadcasters are good".

Q15. "Explain" asks for a how/why chain across the whole relationship. *Model response (studied narrative: Total Control, 2019):* *Total Control* (2019) was produced for the Australian public broadcaster the **ABC**, in a political context of growing public attention to the under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in national politics. Two factors shaped its construction. Institutionally, because the ABC works to a public-service charter rather than to advertising ratings, it could commission a politically pointed drama and centre it on an Aboriginal woman recruited into federal politics, played by Deborah Mailman — a lead a commercial network chasing the broadest audience might have avoided. Politically, because the production context foregrounded questions of Indigenous representation and power, the makers constructed the narrative around that experience, building the protagonist as a figure who must navigate a system not built for her, so the audience reads the story as a comment on real questions of representation in its 2019 context. The relationship runs one way throughout: the institutional and political conditions made the story possible and gave it its shape. *Marker's note*: six marks need the production context pinned and at least one factor tied causally to a **construction** choice (the centring of the protagonist, the casting), not a summary of the plot. Keep claims to public record.

Q16. "Discuss" asks you to develop the point with evidence and reach a position. The **historical** and **political** context of a production can shape both what a maker chooses to tell and how they tell it. Take *Persepolis* (Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud, 2007), produced in France in a post-9/11 Western political climate in which public understanding of Iran was often flattened and hostile. Because the maker — an Iranian émigré — wanted to complicate that understanding for a Western audience, she constructed the film as a **personal, first-person account** of growing up through the 1979 Iranian Revolution and its aftermath, and chose **stark, largely black-and-white hand-drawn animation** rather than live action, so the history is filtered through one intimate, human perspective the audience can identify with. Note the distinction: the **depicted history** is the Revolution of 1979 onward, but the **production context** is 2007 France, and it is the 2007 political climate that explains why the story was told, and told this way, then. *Marker's note*: five marks reward a named historical/political condition of the **production** context tied to a construction choice; the common error is to analyse the depicted history (the Revolution) as though it were the context of production.

Q17. "Discuss" asks you to develop the point and reach a judgement — here, on explicit vs implicit. *Model response (studied narrative: The Family Law, 2016):* *The Family Law* (2016) was produced for **SBS**, whose charter is to reflect Australia's cultural diversity, in a social and cultural context of an increasingly multicultural Australia. Because SBS's remit is to represent communities under-served by mainstream television, the makers could centre a **Chinese-Australian family** and construct their world in ordinary, un-exoticised detail. The narrative engages its cultural context **both explicitly and implicitly**: explicitly, in that the specifically Chinese-Australian family experience is the open subject of the show; and implicitly, in that its casual, matter-of-fact framing of that family as completely ordinary and completely Australian embeds a value — that such families are unremarkable and belong — without ever announcing it. On balance the implicit engagement carries the most weight, because the show's quiet normality does more to reflect its multicultural context than any explicit statement could. *Marker's note*: six marks need the social/cultural factor tied to construction **and** a reasoned judgement about explicit vs implicit — not just a mention of both. Keep to public-record facts about the production.

Q18. *Command term — analyse*: break the production context into its factors and show how they worked together to shape the construction, with specific evidence.

Media narrative: *Ten Canoes* (2006)

Model response (studied narrative: Ten Canoes, 2006):

Ten Canoes (Rolf de Heer and Peter Djigirr, 2006) was produced in Australia in the mid-2000s, and two context factors shaped its construction so completely that the film could not have been built any other way.

The first is **cultural**. The film was made in close collaboration with the Ramingining community in Arnhem Land, following the community's own cultural protocols. Because the makers worked from inside that cultural context rather than observing it from outside, they constructed the narrative with its **dialogue entirely in Aboriginal language** (languages of the Yolŋu Matha group), cast **community members** in the roles, and built the storytelling on the community's **own oral tradition**, with David Gulpilil's English narration framing the tale for the audience as a story being told. Each of these is a direct construction consequence of the cultural factor: the language, the casting and the story structure all flow from making the film *with* the community rather than *about* it, so the audience experiences the narrative on the community's own terms.

The second is **institutional**. The production was supported through public-record channels including SBS Independent and the Adelaide Film Festival, in an institutional and social context of the 2000s that increasingly valued Indigenous-led storytelling. Because that institutional support existed for a film with no stars, its dialogue wholly in language and an unconventional structure — a film a purely commercial studio would have been very unlikely to fund — the makers were free to construct it as a slow, immersive work faithful to its source rather than reshaping it for a mainstream market.

Analysed together, the two factors reinforce each other: the cultural context supplied the language, cast and structure, and the institutional context made it possible to build the film that way at all. The narrative's engagement with the value of Indigenous self-representation belongs to its **2006** production context, and it is present both explicitly, in a story whose dialogue is wholly in language and which is told from the community's perspective, and implicitly, in the very fact of a community authoring its own screen story. *Ten Canoes* is therefore constructed the way it is because of precisely who made it, how, and with whose support.

Marker's note: an 8-mark “analyse” needs at least **two factors**, each tied by **because ... so ...** to a specific **construction** choice (language, casting, structure, funding), the production context kept distinct from any depicted time, and public-record facts only — no invented budget or contract detail. *Common errors:* listing factors without linking them to construction; retelling the story; and treating the pre-contact world the film portrays as the “context of production” rather than 2006 Australia.

Q19. Command term — analyse: break the context into its factors and show what each one did to the production. On 14 August 2024, Screen Queensland announced that season two of *Monarch: Legacy of Monsters*, made by the United States studio Legendary Entertainment for Apple TV+, had begun production in Queensland, secured through the Queensland Government's Production Attraction Strategy; the announcement put the value to the state economy at more than \$115 million and the local workforce at around 1,000 cast and crew. The **economic** factor is the incentive itself: a government payment reduces what the season costs to make, and a studio recovering its money from a global subscription platform rather than from a cinema opening is free to build the season wherever that cost sits lowest. Because the incentive lowered the cost, the studio built the season in Queensland rather than elsewhere. The **institutional** factor overlaps with it, as the factors regularly do: the strategy was administered by a **state screen agency** whose remit is to attract production to Queensland, so an organisation and its funding priorities — not a story decision — settled where the work would be made. Because that agency and that incentive existed, the studio staffed an American-created narrative with around 1,000 Queensland cast and crew, so the season was physically built by an Australian workforce although its story is not set in Australia. The engagement is **implicit**: the context shaped *where and by whom* the narrative was made rather than what it says on screen. *Marker's note:* five marks need **both** factors named and each tied causally to a **production consequence** (the location, the workforce); describing the incentive without saying what it *did* to the production is the common shortfall. Keep to public-record facts — the announced figures — and invent no budget or contract detail.

Chapter 3 Narratives in context: representations, views and values — 3B

Representations, views and values

Theory

Every media narrative shows us people, places, groups, ideas and events. It never shows them exactly as they are in reality; it shows a version that has been **made** by a media creator through a series of choices. That made version is a **representation**: a constructed re-presentation of a person, place, group, idea or event in a media product. The word is worth reading slowly — a representation *re-presents* something, presenting it a second time, in a shaped and selective form. This subtopic is about how representations are built, and about what they can tell us about the beliefs and standards of the society that produced them.

A representation is not a theme. This is the single most common and most costly confusion in this part of the course, and examiners flag it every year. A **theme** is a general idea or topic that a narrative explores — courage, loss, ambition, belonging. A **representation** is the constructed portrayal of something specific that you can point to and analyse: *the representation of teenage girls, the representation of a rural town, the representation of a mentor*. A theme is what a story is *about*; a representation is a *thing that is built* out of media codes and can be examined for how it is built. If you are asked to analyse a representation and you write about a theme, you never get to the actual task — the construction — so you cannot score well. When you name a representation, it should almost always take the form “the representation of [a specific person / group / place / idea]”.

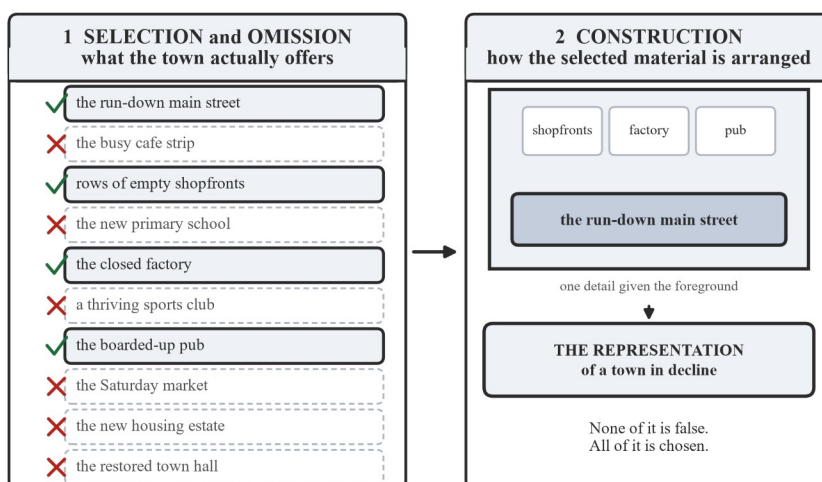
How representations are constructed. No media product can show everything, so a media creator is always choosing. Three construction processes underlie every representation:

- **Selection** — choosing what to include: which people, which moments, which details.
- **Omission** — choosing what to leave out. What is left out shapes the impression as much as what is shown; a portrait of a town built only from its run-down streets, with its thriving areas omitted, constructs a very particular version of that town.
- **Construction** — how the selected material is then assembled, framed and emphasised: what is foregrounded and given weight, and how elements are arranged and combined so that, together, they carry meaning.

The figure below runs all three processes on one subject. Of the ten details this town actually offers, four are selected and six omitted; the four that survive are then arranged with one of them given the foreground. Nothing in the resulting representation is false — and all of it is chosen.

A representation is what was selected, what was left out, and how the rest was arranged

Omission cannot be seen in a finished product — so here the material that was available is drawn beside the material that was used.



4 of 10 available details are selected and 6 omitted; change the selection, the omission or the arrangement and the representation changes with it.

These processes are carried out through **media codes** — the **technical and symbolic tools used to construct meaning in media forms and products** (in other words, the systems of signs a media form uses to make meaning) —

and through **conventions** (the accepted ways of using a form, including narrative conventions such as character and setting). Codes are the tools you point to as evidence. A construction claim in an exam should always be anchored to a **code-level choice**: never “the film shows the family as close” but “the warm voice-over narration and the crowded, lived-in mise en scene construct the family as close”. The study design’s list of media codes is **open** — it names *camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics* and *paper stock*, and any of these is valid evidence, so no SD-listed code is ever “wrong”. The table below sets out the main code families and how each builds a representation.

Code family	Elements (examples)	How it constructs a representation
Camera	shot size, angle, movement, focus, framing	A low angle can construct a figure as powerful; a distant wide shot can construct a person as small or isolated
Acting	gesture, facial expression, body language, casting, performance style	A stiff posture and controlled expression can construct a character as repressed; casting an imposing performer constructs authority; performance builds people and their relationships
Mise en scene	setting, props, costume, make-up, staging, colour	Costume and setting place a subject in a class, era or role; a shaved head and functional clothing construct a warrior rather than a decorative figure
Editing	shot selection, order, pace, juxtaposition, transitions	Cutting between two images invites the audience to link them; a fast montage constructs energy or urgency
Lighting	high key, low key, direction, colour, contrast	Shadow falling across half a face constructs a hidden or menacing side; warm light constructs safety
Sound	dialogue, music, sound effects, silence, voice-over	Music cues an emotional reading; a voice-over frames how we see a character; near-silence constructs isolation
Written and graphic codes	typography, layout, composition, written language, colour	In print, a heavy slab typeface and a cramped, cluttered layout construct a subject as chaotic; fine lettering and generous white space construct restraint and prestige

Views and values. A **view** is a belief or opinion a society or group holds about the way the world is or should be. A **value** is a principle or standard that a society or group regards as important or worthwhile — fairness, family, freedom, individual achievement. Together, the phrase **views and values** names the beliefs and the standards shared within a group at a particular time and place. Media products carry views and values because the choices that build their representations are never neutral: to construct a family home as precious, or a tyrant as monstrous, is to take a position.

Pin the context — always specific. Views and values are not universal; they change with **time, place and social group**. The single most important discipline in this subtopic is to name the **specific context** rather than writing “society”. “Society has always admired brave people” is empty; “middle-class Australians in the late 1990s valued home ownership as a marker of a good life” can be analysed. A specific context has three parts: **when** (a period), **where** (a place or nation) and **who** (a social group). These three are read through the study design’s **context factors** — **social, cultural, economic, political and historical** (and, at times, **institutional**). One line each: the *social* factor is the fabric of everyday life and relationships; the *cultural* factor is a group’s shared traditions, beliefs and tastes; the

economic factor is the financial conditions of the time; the *political* factor is the climate of power and government; the *historical* factor is the events that shaped the moment; and the *institutional* factor is the industries, laws and organisations at work. Naming the factor sharpens a context: “the *cultural* value that an ordinary family home is precious, held by middle-class Australians in the late 1990s” is more analysable than a bare date and place. Within a context, some views and values are **dominant** — widely accepted or taken for granted by most people — while others are **emerging**, or are contested by particular groups working against the dominant view. Knowing where a view sits matters: a **challenge** verdict is always measured against what is dominant, and a **reflect** verdict is far sharper when you say whether the value being reinforced was dominant in that context or still gaining ground.

Reflect or challenge (and the fuller verb set). The key knowledge asks how representations “reflect or challenge” views and values. These are the two ends of a range:

- To **reflect** a view or value means the representation is built in a way that agrees with, reinforces or takes for granted a view or value **held in its context** — it presents that value as normal, natural or admirable. Most often the value reflected is the **dominant** one, but a narrative can also reflect a value that is only **emerging** in that context; saying which you mean is what makes the verdict precise.
- To **challenge** a view or value means the representation is built to question, resist or work against a **dominant** view or value of its context — it invites the audience to see it differently. A challenge verdict is always measured against what is dominant, so name the dominant view before you judge.

The study design lists a fuller set of verbs: a product may **comment on, reflect on, develop, reject or ignore** the dominant views and values of its context. “Reject” is a stronger form of challenge; “develop” extends a value; “ignore” leaves it untouched. Choosing the most precise verb — and justifying it — is a mark of a sophisticated response. A single narrative may reflect one value while challenging another, and a single representation can do both at once.

A genre convention is not a view or value. Every one of these verbs must attach to a belief or standard held by people in a context, never to a habit of storytelling. “The action hero is male” and “the two leads must end up together” are **conventions of a form**; the view or value underneath them is a belief about the world — that command and capability belong to men, or that a woman’s story is completed by romance. Name the belief, and use the convention as evidence that the belief was widely held. A response that rejects only a convention has not yet answered a views-and-values question.

Balance — the representation AND the view or value. Examiners repeatedly penalise responses that develop only one half of the task: a rich description of a representation with the view or value bolted on in the last sentence, or a discussion of values that never anchors to how a representation is built. A strong answer develops **both** together and links them **causally** — the value is visible *through* how the representation is constructed (“because the narration treats the modest house with pride, the representation reflects the value that an ordinary home is precious”).

The analysis method. For every representations-and-values question, work through four steps in order:

1. **Name the representation** (of a specific person, group, place or idea) and pin the **specific context** (time, place, social group).
2. Give **code-level construction evidence at a named moment** — a specific code choice at a specific frame, scene or sequence, described in your own words.
3. State the **specific view or value** at stake, located in that context.
4. Give a **reflect / challenge verdict**, linked causally to the evidence, using precise language.

Applied to a one-line hypothetical: (1) the representation of a hard-working migrant family in a narrative produced in a society that commonly viewed migrants with suspicion; (2) constructed by selecting the family as the admirable central heroes and emphasising their generosity in a key scene; (3) the dominant view that migrants are a threat; (4) because the family is built as the heroes, the representation works against that view — it **challenges** the dominant view of its context. Keep the representation and the view developed side by side, and every construction claim tied to a code.

Contemporary example — No Coincidence Media, October 2024

No Coincidence Media is an independent Australian First Nations screen production company; with Causeway Films it co-produced the feature *The Moogai*, written and directed by Jon Bell. The film won the **GIO Audience Award for Best Australian Feature** at the 71st Sydney Film Festival, announced on 16 June 2024, and opened in Australian cinemas on **31 October 2024**. It is a psychological horror in which a young Aboriginal mother becomes convinced a malevolent spirit is trying to take her baby. In a May 2024 interview, Bell described that spirit as an allegory for the forced removal of Aboriginal children, and said he used horror’s conventions — shock and unsettling sound — to carry that history.

Here the construction choice sits at the level of **form**. The **representation** of an Aboriginal mother fighting to keep her children is built through a **narrative convention** — the antagonist is a child-stealing spirit — and through **sound codes** chosen to frighten. The **selection** of horror rather than historical drama is itself the argument: the history reaches the audience as fear rather than as explanation. Read against the **specific context** of production — Australia in 2024, a **historical** and **social** context in the years after the 2008 national apology to the Stolen Generations — the representation **reflects** the dominant value that those removals were a wrong still being lived with, while **challenging** the protectionist view of the removal era that taking children was benevolent. Form and values are inseparable here.

Source: Causeway Films, *The Moogai*, accessed July 2026 — <https://causewayfilms.com.au/films/the-moogai/>; production companies and genre per Screen Australia, Screen Guide — *Moogai, The*, accessed July 2026 — <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/screen-guide/moogai-the-38262/>; award per Sydney Film Festival, “The winners of the 71st Sydney Film Festival”, 16 June 2024 — <https://www.sff.org.au/blog/the-winners-of-the-71st-sydney-film-festival/>; Jon Bell’s account per Senses of Cinema, Gary M. Kramer, “An Interview with Jon Bell”, issue 109, May 2024 — <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2024/interviews/an-interview-with-jon-bell/>. Accurate as at July 2026.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Discuss how the construction of one representation in a media narrative reflects one view or value held in the society in which it was produced. Refer to *The Castle* (1997). (5 marks)

This is the shape of the 5-mark Section A representation question. The table builds the response one sentence at a time.

Working	Comment
The representation I will discuss is the representation of the working-class Australian family, constructed in <i>The Castle</i> (Rob Sitch, 1997), a narrative produced in mid-to-late-1990s suburban Australia.	Step 1. Open by naming the representation and pinning the specific context — time, place and group — not “society”.
The Kerrigan family is constructed largely through the warm, affectionate voice-over narration of the youngest son, Dale, and through the cluttered, lived-in mise en scene of the modest family home.	Step 2. Anchor the construction to specific codes (sound: voice-over; mise en scene), not “the director shows the family”.
This construction reflects a value strongly held in 1990s Australia: that home ownership — often called the “great Australian dream” — and family togetherness are central to a good life.	Step 3. State one specific view or value and locate it in the context; keep it precise.
Because Dale’s narration treats the ordinary house with obvious pride, and the family scenes emphasise the Kerrigans’ closeness, the representation invites the audience to share the belief that an everyday family home is something precious — thereby reflecting, rather than questioning, a dominant value of the time.	Step 4. Use causal language (“because”, “thereby”) so the representation and the value are developed together and the verdict (reflect) is explicit.
In this way the representation of the family and the value of home and togetherness are developed in equal	The examiner rewards balance — the representation AND the view or value both developed, neither an

Working	Comment
measure: we read the value through the way the family is built.	afterthought.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Discuss how the construction of one representation in *The Sapphires* (2012) challenges a view or value of a specific context. (4 marks)

This example isolates the **challenge** verb, the discipline of pinning a specific context, and the rule that a views-and-values verdict attaches to the production (or reception) society — not the era depicted.

Working	Comment
The representation is that of young Aboriginal women, constructed in <i>The Sapphires</i> (Wayne Blair, 2012) — a narrative set in 1968 and produced for Australian audiences in 2012.	Name the representation and both relevant contexts; “a specific context” means time, place and social group.
The narrative selects four Yorta Yorta women as its central, talented protagonists and, through performance and staging, constructs them as a skilled, funny and determined soul group who travel to Vietnam to perform for troops.	Name the construction processes at work (selection , and construction — how the selected material is assembled and framed); this is <i>how</i> the representation is built, the evidence the marks reward.
This challenges a dominant view of the 1960s that marginalised Aboriginal Australians and denied them a central, empowered place in public life.	Name the specific view being challenged and locate it in the context; “challenge” means the product works against the dominant view.
By making these women the confident, central heroes rather than background figures, the construction works against — challenges — the marginalising views widely held about Aboriginal Australians in the 1960s the film depicts.	State clearly <i>which era’s views</i> are being challenged: here, the marginalising views of the depicted 1960s. The verdict about what the film <i>reflects</i> comes next — and attaches to the production context.
At the same time, because it was produced in 2012 , the film reflects the dominant reconciliation-era values of its own production context — a public readiness to celebrate the dignity and achievements of Aboriginal Australians.	A views-and-values verdict attaches to the production (or reception) society, not the era depicted : this film <i>challenges</i> 1960s views while <i>reflecting</i> 2012 production-context values. Keep the two apart.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Describe how one representation is constructed in *The Dressmaker* (2015). (3 marks)

In *The Dressmaker* (Jocelyn Moorhouse, 2015), the representation of Tilly Dunnage as a sophisticated outsider is constructed chiefly through the code of costume. Tilly returns to the drab country town of Dungatar dressed in structured, glamorous couture, a striking contrast with the plain, conformist clothing of the townspeople around her. This selection of costume — elegant tailoring set against a dull rural backdrop — positions Tilly as worldly and set apart, while the town is constructed as narrow and old-fashioned. *Takeaway*: to describe a representation, name the code (here, costume), the specific choice (couture against drab dress) and what it constructs.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Analyse how the construction of one representation in *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015) reflects or challenges views and values of the context in which it was produced. (7 marks)

In *Mad Max: Fury Road* (George Miller, 2015), the representation of Furiosa is constructed to challenge a dominant gendered view of the Western societies of the mid-2010s in which the film was made: that strength, command and heroic capability belong to men, and that women are there to be looked at. Furiosa is built primarily through mise en scene and camera. Her costume and make-up — a shaved head, a mechanical prosthetic arm and black grease smeared across her forehead — are functional rather than decorative, and the camera frames her in the same wide action shots as the male characters as she drives the War Rig. Through this selection of costume and framing, the construction

positions Furiosa as a capable warrior and an equal, not as a figure to be looked at. Because mainstream action films of the period had routinely constructed female characters as decorative or secondary — the genre convention being the evidence that the underlying belief was widely held — this representation works against — challenges — that dominant view.

At the same time, the narrative reflects an emerging value of the 2010s: a growing public concern with women's autonomy and with the control of bodies and resources. The women Furiosa helps to free are constructed, through staging and dialogue, as people escaping enforced ownership, and the story emphasises their pursuit of self-determination. Here the representation reflects, rather than challenges, a value that was gaining ground in the production context — a reflect verdict may attach to an emerging value, so long as you name it as emerging rather than dominant. Taken together, the two moments show the film challenging an entrenched view about who can be heroic while reflecting a rising social value — the representation and the values are developed side by side. *Takeaway:* a strong “analyse” answer anchors each claim to a specific code, names the exact view or value and its context — not merely a genre convention — and is explicit about whether the construction reflects or challenges it.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Define each of the following terms: (a) representation; (b) view; (c) value.

Q2. Representations are built using construction processes and media codes. (a) Name the three construction processes by which a representation is shaped. (b) Name two families of media codes. (c) Explain how one named media code can be used to construct a representation, using a brief example.

Q3. When analysing views and values, the context must be specific. (a) Define the term “views and values”. (b) Rewrite the phrase “this reflects the values of society” so that it names a specific context. (c) Explain why naming a specific context, rather than “society”, matters in an exam response.

Q4. A media narrative may reflect or challenge a view or value. (a) Explain what it means to say a representation “reflects” a view or value. (b) Explain what it means to say a representation “challenges” a view or value. (c) A narrative constructs an elderly woman as sharp, capable and central to the action, in a society where older people were commonly viewed as frail and no longer useful. State whether this reflects or challenges the dominant view, and justify your answer.

Q5. Students often confuse a theme with a representation. (a) State the difference between a theme and a representation. (b) Classify each of the following as a theme or a representation: (i) courage; (ii) the representation of teenage girls; (iii) loyalty; (iv) the representation of rural towns. (c) Explain why offering a theme when a representation is required is a costly error in an exam.

Q6. A reliable method for this outcome is: name the representation → give code-level construction evidence at a named moment → state the specific view or value → give a reflect/challenge verdict. (a) List, in order, the four steps of this method. (b) For a media narrative you have studied this year, complete the first two steps. (c) Complete the last two steps for the same representation.

Un scaffolded

Q7. Using an example, describe how the processes of selection and omission work together to construct a representation of a group. (3 marks)

Q8. (*Stimulus.*) Read the description of a planned scene below.

Stimulus. In a scene from a planned short film, a teenage boy sits alone at the far edge of a wide, empty schoolyard. The camera holds him in a distant wide shot; the yard is lit in cold, blue-grey light; the only sound is a faint, echoing bell. Around the edges of the frame, other students are turned away from him.

Describe how two media codes in the scene described construct a particular representation of the boy. (4 marks)

Q9. Explain how sound codes can be used to construct a representation of a place or a mood in a media narrative. (4 marks)

Q10. Describe how editing or lighting can be used to emphasise a particular aspect of a representation. (3 marks)

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

Stimulus. A print poster for a streaming drama shows a woman in a business suit photographed from a low angle, so that she towers over a city skyline. Her name appears in tall, sharp capital letters. The colour palette is steel-grey and deep red. The tagline, in small type at the base, reads: one city, one rule.

Explain how the written and graphic codes described construct a representation of the woman. (4 marks)

Q12. Discuss how the construction of one representation in a media narrative you have studied this year challenges a view or value of the context in which it was produced. (4 marks)

Q13. Media products may reflect, challenge, comment on, develop, reject or ignore the views and values of their context. Discuss, with reference to a media narrative you have studied this year, how the construction of one representation does one of these to a view or value of a specific context. (5 marks)

Q14. (*Stimulus.*) A student wrote the response below to the question “Discuss how the construction of one representation reflects or challenges a view or value of a specific context.”

Stimulus. “The film explores the theme of courage. It tells us what everyone believes, because being brave has been looked up to in every place and every age. The main character is very brave, so the film matches what people generally think.”

Discuss two ways this response could be improved. (4 marks)

Q15. Discuss how one construction choice in a media narrative can reflect a **dominant** view of a named context, and how a differently positioned audience might contest that reading. (4 marks)

Q16. Discuss why a media representation is best understood as a “construction” rather than a neutral reflection of reality. In your response, refer to the processes of selection, omission and construction. (4 marks)

Q17. Analyse how the construction of representations in a media narrative you have studied this year reflects or challenges the views and values of a specific context. In your response, refer to at least two representations and to specific media codes. (8 marks)

Q18. (*Extended response — Section B style.*) Analyse the construction of representations in a media narrative you have studied this year, and how these representations reflect or challenge views and values prevalent in the context in which the narrative was produced. (15 marks)

Your response must analyse:

- the construction of at least two representations in the narrative
- how each reflects or challenges the views and values of the context in which the narrative was produced

Media narrative: _____

Q19. The feature *The Moogai*, written and directed by Jon Bell and co-produced by the Australian First Nations company No Coincidence Media with Causeway Films, opened in Australian cinemas on 31 October 2024. It is a psychological horror whose antagonist is a spirit that steals children; in a May 2024 interview Bell described that spirit as an allegory for the forced removal of Aboriginal children. Analyse how building this representation through the conventions of horror reflects or challenges views and values of the context in which the narrative was produced. (5 marks)

Answers

Q1. (a) A constructed re-presentation of a person, place, group, idea or event in a media product, made through choices rather than copied from reality. (b) A belief or opinion about how the world is or should be. (c) A principle or standard a group regards as important (e.g. fairness, family). **Q2.** (a) Selection, omission and construction. (b) Any two SD codes — e.g. camera and acting (also mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, paper stock); the SD list is open, so any valid code is creditable. (c) A code named, the specific choice, and what it constructs, with an example (e.g. a low angle constructs power). **Q3.** (a) The beliefs (views) and the principles/standards (values) held by a group at a particular time and place. (b) A version naming time + place + group, e.g. “this reflects the values of middle-class Australians in the late 1990s”. (c) Views and values change with time, place and group; “society” is too general to analyse and examiners reward a specific context. **Q4.** (a) Reflect = built to agree with / reinforce / take for granted a view or value held in its context — usually the dominant one, but an emerging value counts if named as emerging. (b) Challenge = built to question / resist / work against a dominant view or value. (c) Challenges; constructing the elderly woman as sharp and capable works against the dominant view that older people are frail and no longer useful. **Q5.** (a) A theme is a general idea/topic a story explores; a representation is the constructed portrayal of a specific person/group/place/idea that can be analysed for how it is built. (b) (i) theme; (ii) representation; (iii) theme; (iv) representation. (c) The task asks about the construction of representations; a theme leaves you unable to analyse construction or link to views/values, so the answer misses the question. **Q6.** (a) 1 name the representation (+ specific context); 2 code-level evidence at a named moment; 3 the specific view/value; 4 reflect/challenge verdict with causal link. (b)–(c) Any studied narrative, correctly working the four steps (see solution for a model). **Q7. Describe (3).** Selection = what is included; omission = what is left out; together they shape the impression of a **group**; one clear example that states what the two processes construct. (*both processes + group example + what it constructs*) **Q8. Describe (4).** Two codes (e.g. camera/framing + lighting, with composition) each given an account of what it constructs (isolation / exclusion of the boy). Must say what the codes construct, not just name them. **Q9. Explain (4).** A named sound choice (music / dialogue / effects / silence / voice-over) → its effect → the meaning the audience takes: a full how/why chain, not just a labelled code. **Q10. Describe (3).** Editing (shot choice/order/pace/juxtaposition) or lighting (key/direction/colour) named → an account of the specific aspect of the representation it emphasises. **Q11. Explain (4).** Multiple written/graphic codes (low-angle composition, typography, colour, tagline) each linked to constructing the woman as powerful/controlling. Four marks need several codes, each with an effect. **Q12. Discuss (4).** Own studied narrative; one representation named + specific context; code-level construction; a specific view or value it **challenges**, argued causally; balanced. (*challenge verdict*) **Q13. Discuss (5).** Own studied narrative; the most precise verb chosen and justified; representation + view/value developed together with code evidence and specific context. The verb must attach to a **view or value**, not to a genre convention. **Q14. Discuss (4).** Two of: it offers a theme (courage) not a representation; it writes in universals (“everyone”, “every place and every age”) instead of a specific context; it gives no code-level evidence; it never states a specific view/value. **Q15. Discuss (4).** One named construction choice → the **dominant** view of a named context it reflects (with the factor and time/place/group); then how a differently positioned audience might read against, or contest, that reading. Reward the SD language applied, not a taxonomy defined. **Q16. Discuss (4).** Representations result from selection, omission and construction; no product shows everything; so a representation always carries a point of view and is never neutral — which is why we analyse how it is built. **Q17. Analyse (8).** Own studied narrative; at least two representations, each with specific code evidence and a reflect/challenge verdict; specific context; the two developed as a pair. **Q18.** See Fully-worked solutions for a full model plus high/mid/low band descriptors and common errors. **Q19. Analyse (5).** The representation named (the Aboriginal mother, or her family, threatened with the loss of her children); code-level construction evidence, here the **narrative convention** of the child-stealing spirit plus **sound codes**; the **specific context** of production named as Australia in 2024 (a *historical* and *social* context), not the removal era depicted; a specific view or value; and an explicit **reflect/challenge** verdict linked causally. Reward treating the choice of the horror form itself as a construction choice.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) A **representation** is a **constructed re-presentation of a person, place, group, idea or event** in a media product. It is made through choices (selection, omission and construction) and media codes, so it is never a neutral copy of reality. (b) A **view** is a **belief or opinion** a person, group or society holds about the way the world is or should be. (c) A **value** is a **principle or standard** that a group regards as important or worthwhile — for example fairness, family, freedom or individual achievement.

Q2. (a) The three construction processes are **selection**, **omission** and **construction**. (b) Any two SD codes, for example **camera** and **acting** — the study design’s list is **open** (camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, paper stock), so any of these is creditable and none can be marked wrong. (c) “*Explain*” requires a *how/why chain*, not a *definition*. Taking the **camera**: a **low camera angle** placed on a character makes them fill the frame and be looked up at, which constructs them as **powerful or dominant**. The code (the low angle) produces the meaning (power) for the audience — that chain from choice to effect is what makes it a construction. *Marker’s note*: naming a code without saying what it constructs is the most common way to lose the mark here.

Q3. (a) **Views and values** are the **beliefs (views)** and the **principles or standards regarded as important (values)** held by a society or group at a **particular time and place**. (b) A specific version names time, place and group, e.g. “**this reflects the values of middle-class Australians in the late 1990s**”. (c) “*Explain*” asks for the *reason*, not a *restatement*. Views and values are **not universal** — **they change with time, place and social group**. “Society” is too broad to analyse, and examiners reward answers that pin the view or value to a specific **time, place and group**, because only then can you argue that a narrative reflects or challenges it. *Common errors*: writing “society” or “the modern world” instead of a dated, located, grouped context.

Q4. “*Explain*” asks for a *how/why account*. (a) To say a representation **reflects** a view or value means it is **constructed to agree with, reinforce or take for granted** a view or value **held in its context** — it presents that value as normal or admirable. Usually that is the **dominant** value of the context; a narrative can also reflect a value that is only **emerging** there, provided you name it as emerging. (b) To say a representation **challenges** a view or value means it is **constructed to question, resist or work against** a **dominant** view or value — it invites the audience to see it differently. (c) It **challenges** the dominant view. By constructing the elderly woman as **sharp, capable and central**, the product works **against** the dominant view that older people are frail and no longer useful, inviting the audience to reject that view rather than share it. *Marker’s note*: a **challenge** verdict is always measured against the *dominant* view — state which view is dominant before you judge — and a **reflect** verdict should say whether the value it reinforces was dominant or emerging.

Q5. (a) A **theme** is a **general idea or topic** a narrative explores (courage, loss); a **representation** is the **constructed portrayal of a specific person, group, place or idea** that you can point to and analyse for **how it is built**. A theme is what the story is about; a representation is a thing that is constructed. (b) (i) **theme**; (ii) **representation**; (iii) **theme**; (iv) **representation**. (c) “*Explain*” asks *why the error costs marks*. The outcome and the exam ask specifically about the **construction of representations**. If you offer a theme, you never analyse how the representation is built (the codes and the processes of selection, omission and construction) and cannot properly link to views and values, so the response **misses the question** — this is a live examiner complaint. *Common errors*: “the theme of courage” offered where “the representation of a courageous character” is required.

Q6. (a) The four steps: **1** name the representation (and pin the specific context); **2** give **code-level construction evidence at a named moment**; **3** state the **specific view or value**; **4** give a **reflect/challenge verdict** with a causal link. (b)–(c) *Model response (studied narrative: The Castle, 1997)*: **1** The representation of Darryl Kerrigan as the “little Aussie battler”, in a narrative produced for **middle-class Australians in the late 1990s** (a *cultural* context). **2** It is constructed through Darryl’s plain-spoken, good-humoured **dialogue** (sound) and through a **mise en scene** that lovingly frames the modest Kerrigan home against the impersonal offices and institutions of the corporate and government power seeking to acquire it. **3** The specific value: the “**fair go**” — the belief that ordinary people are entitled to stand up to powerful institutions. **4** The representation **reflects** that value, because building Darryl as the sympathetic underdog who fights on invites the audience to share the belief that a fair go is worth defending. *Marker’s note*: the four steps must connect — a common error is to name a representation and then drift into plot retelling with no code-level evidence.

Q7. “*Describe*” asks for an *account of the features*. **Selection** is choosing what to include; **omission** is choosing what to leave out; together they shape how a **group** is represented, because the impression an audience forms depends on both. For example, a news segment about a group of protesters that **selects** a few seconds of a scuffle at the edge of a rally and **omits** the hours of peaceful, orderly assembly constructs the group as **violent and threatening** — what is left out shapes the representation as much as what is shown, so the viewer never sees how peaceful most of the group was. *Marker’s note*: three marks need both processes named, a clear **group** example, and a statement of what the two processes construct.

Q8. “Describe” asks for an account of how each code works. Two codes construct the boy as **isolated and excluded**. First, the **camera**: the distant **wide shot** holds him alone in a large, empty schoolyard, constructing him as small and cut off from those around him. Second, the **lighting**: the **cold, blue-grey** wash gives the yard a bleak, unwelcoming mood that presses in on him and denies any warmth. The **composition** reinforces both — the other students are turned away at the edges of the frame, so the boy is visually walled off inside it. Together these code choices construct a representation of the boy as lonely and shut out. *Common errors*: naming the codes (“there is a wide shot and blue lighting”) without stating what they **construct** — the single biggest examiner complaint; at four marks, give each code its own account.

Q9. “Explain” asks for a full how/why chain — choice, effect, audience meaning. **Sound codes** construct place and mood by cueing how the audience feels and reads a space. Take one worked chain: **slow, minor-key music** laid under a wide shot of an empty street (the choice) darkens the mood and slows the pace of the scene (the effect), so the audience reads the place as menacing and unsafe *before* any threat appears on screen (the meaning taken). The same chain runs through the other sound codes: layered street **sound effects** with overlapping **dialogue** construct a city as busy and overwhelming; near-**silence** constructs isolation or dread; a **voice-over** frames a place warmly or coldly. In every case the specific choice produces an effect, and the effect produces the meaning the audience takes. *Marker’s note*: at four marks, complete the chain to the **audience’s reading** — do not stop at “the music sets the mood”.

Q10. “Describe” asks for an account of how the code works. Take **editing**. Editing emphasises an aspect of a representation through which shots are chosen and how they are ordered and paced: repeatedly **cutting** to a character’s clenched hands foregrounds tension in the representation, a **fast montage** heightens energy or pressure, and **juxtaposing** two shots invites the audience to link them. (**Lighting** works the same way — **low-key lighting** that throws half a face into shadow foregrounds a character’s hidden or menacing side.) In each case the technique **selects and heightens one aspect** of the representation over others. *Marker’s note*: choose one code (editing or lighting), name a specific technique, and state the aspect it emphasises — three marks reward a clear account, not a how/why chain.

Q11. “Explain” asks how each code constructs meaning. The written and graphic codes construct the woman as a **powerful, controlling figure**. The **low-angle** image and her **towering over the city skyline** (composition) construct **dominance**. The **tall, sharp capital letters** of her name (typography) reinforce hardness and strength. The **steel-grey and deep-red** palette (colour) suggests coldness, power and a sense of warning or danger. The **tagline** about “one rule” (written language) positions her as an authority who controls the city. Together these codes construct a representation of the woman as a formidable, authoritarian figure. *Common errors*: describing the poster (“she is above a city, in red and grey”) without explaining what **each** code constructs — four marks need several codes, each tied to an effect.

Q12. “Discuss” asks you to develop the point with evidence and reach a position. *Model response (studied narrative: The Dressmaker, 2015)*: The representation of the country town of **Dungatar challenges** a *cultural* value held by **Australian audiences of the 2010s looking back on the 1950s** — the nostalgic view of the small country town as a wholesome, neighbourly community. Dungatar is constructed through a dusty, muted **mise en scene** and through the **selection** of the townspeople’s gossip, spite and hypocrisy, which the narrative foregrounds again and again. Because the construction builds the town not as warm and neighbourly but as petty, cruel and vindictive, it works **against** — **challenges** — that idealised view of the rural Australian community, inviting the audience to question the nostalgia rather than share it. The representation and the value are developed together: we read the challenge through how the town is built. *Marker’s note*: keep the representation and the value balanced, and make the **challenge** explicit; the common error is to retell the town’s cruelty (plot) and only tack the value on at the end.

Q13. “Discuss” here rewards choosing the most precise verb and justifying it. *Model response (studied narrative: Mad Max: Fury Road, 2015)*: The construction of the relationship between **Furiosa and Max rejects** — a strong form of challenge — a view held widely in the **Western societies of the mid-2010s** in which the film was produced (a *social* and *cultural* context): the belief that a woman’s story is completed by romance, so that a man and a woman who fight side by side must finish as a couple rather than as equals. Through **editing and staging**, the narrative keeps the two as wary allies and then as equals, building their partnership through shared tasks and mutual reliance while pointedly **omitting** any romance plot or love-scene pay-off. This selection of what to include, and what to leave out, constructs them as **equal partners** rather than a couple. The film presses the same point through the **Vuvalini**, a clan of older women built through **casting and performance** as capable riders and sharpshooters rather than frail elders, working against the related value that a woman’s worth falls away with her youth. The genre conventions of the

period — mainstream action films routinely paired their leads and pushed older women to the margins — are the **evidence** that these beliefs were widely held, not the target of the verdict; the target is the beliefs themselves. Because the film does not merely **comment on** them but builds its central relationship so as to refuse them, **reject** is the precise verb, and the construction invites the audience to refuse them too. *Marker's note:* choosing “reject” over the vaguer “challenge”, and justifying the choice, is what lifts a 5-mark “discuss” — but the verb must attach to a **view or value**, not to a genre convention; naming only the convention is a common way to miss the question.

Q14. “Discuss” asks you to develop each improvement. **First, the response offers a theme where a representation is required.** “The theme of courage” is a topic, not a constructed portrayal; the student should instead name a **representation** — for example, the representation of the main character as a courageous figure — and analyse **how it is built** (which codes, what is selected and emphasised). **Second, the response is generic about context.** “What everyone believes”, “every place and every age” and “what people generally think” are far too broad — and the claim that a value holds everywhere and always is precisely what views-and-values analysis denies. The student should pin a **specific context** (time, place and social group), for example “Australian audiences in the 2010s”, and name the **specific value** at stake. The response also gives no code-level evidence at a named moment (“very brave” is an assertion, not construction). *Common errors:* this stimulus contains the two live traps at once — **theme-as-representation** and a **universal, unpinned context**.

Q15. “Discuss” asks you to apply the language, not label a taxonomy. Take one construction choice — say a warm, low-angle hero shot of a family-business owner in an Australian drama. In the **cultural** context of mainstream 1990s Australia, this choice **reflects a dominant** view: that the hard-working small-business owner is admirable and deserving of success, a view widely taken for granted at the time. Here the value reflected is the dominant one, and saying so is what makes the verdict precise, since a narrative may equally reflect a value that is only emerging. A differently positioned audience, however, might **contest** the reading: a viewer alert to the workers or competitors the business displaces could read the same admiring shot as one-sided and resist its invitation to admire. The construction still reflects the dominant view, but its meaning is not fixed — audiences positioned differently can read against it. *Marker's note:* use the SD term **dominant** and show the choice reflecting it, then show a plausible contesting reading — do not simply define “dominant, emerging and oppositional”.

Q16. “Discuss” asks you to develop the argument from the named processes. A media representation is best understood as a **construction, not a neutral mirror**, because every representation is the product of **choices**. Through **selection**, a maker chooses what to include; through **omission**, what to leave out; and through **construction**, how the selected material is assembled, framed and emphasised so that it carries meaning. Because no product can show everything, what reaches the audience is always **shaped** by these choices and by the codes used to build it. Two makers representing the same event would select, omit and assemble their material differently and so construct **different** representations of it. It follows that a representation always carries a **point of view** and can reflect or challenge values — which is exactly why we analyse **how it is built** rather than treating it as reality. *Marker's note:* reward the causal link from the three processes to the conclusion that representations are never neutral.

Q17. “Analyse” asks you to break the narrative into its constructed parts and show how they work together to reflect or challenge views and values, with specific evidence. *Model response (studied narrative: Rabbit-Proof Fence, 2002):* *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (Phillip Noyce, 2002) dramatises the 1931 removal of three Aboriginal girls under Western Australia’s protection policy; its specific context of production is **Australia in 2002 — socially and politically**, a nation reckoning with the Stolen Generations after the 1997 *Bringing Them Home* report. The **first representation** is that of the three girls, **Molly, her younger sister Daisy and their cousin Gracie**. Through the **camera** — sweeping wide landscape shots that hold the girls tiny against the vast country as they walk home — and through the recurring **mise en scene** of the fence itself as their guide, the construction foregrounds their endurance and resolve, building Molly and Daisy in particular as resourceful heroes of their own return. This **challenges the protectionist view**, dominant in 1930s white Australia, that such children were helpless and better off removed. The **second representation** is that of the removal authority, the **Chief Protector**, constructed through **setting and performance** — an austere office, files, and the bureaucratic classification of children by descent, played with cool, controlled authority. This construction exposes the policy as clinical control rather than care, so it too **challenges** the historical view that removal was benevolent. Analysed together, the two representations work as a pair — the girls’ heroism and the authority’s coldness pull the audience the same way — and, produced in **2002**, the film **reflects** the dominant reconciliation-era value of its own production context: that the harm done to the Stolen Generations must be acknowledged. *Marker's note:* an 8-mark “analyse” needs at least **two representations**, specific **code-level evidence**

for each, and an explicit **reflect/challenge verdict** — and the verdict attaches to the **2002 production context**, not the 1930s the film depicts.

Q18. Command term — analyse: break the narrative into its constructed elements and show how they work together to reflect or challenge views and values, with specific evidence at named moments.

Media narrative: *Whiplash* (2014)

Model response (studied narrative: Whiplash, 2014):

Whiplash (Damien Chazelle, 2014) was produced for **American audiences in the mid-2010s**, a context in which the belief that **extraordinary success demands extraordinary sacrifice** was both widely held and widely debated. Two central representations — the ambitious student **Andrew Neiman** and the tyrannical teacher **Terence Fletcher** — are constructed to both reflect and challenge this value.

Andrew is constructed as a young man willing to destroy himself for greatness. Through **mise en scene** and the **emphasis of editing**, the narrative returns repeatedly to his practice sessions — his blistered, bleeding hands and the isolation of the drum kit in a dim room. This **selection** of images constructs ambition as physically punishing. In doing so the representation **reflects** a dominant American value: that **individual achievement is worth any personal cost**.

Fletcher, the mentor, is constructed largely through **costume, lighting and sound**. He is dressed in plain **black, lit against the shadowed rehearsal studio**, and characterised by sudden, explosive verbal abuse and by confrontations over tempo. This construction builds him as a figure who believes **cruelty produces genius**. Here the narrative is more double-edged: by showing the **damage** Fletcher causes, the representation also **challenges** the value that such ruthlessness is justified, inviting the audience to question whether the results are worth the cost.

Analysed together, the two representations hold the value up and interrogate it at once: Andrew's construction **reflects** the belief that greatness requires suffering, while Fletcher's construction **challenges** the idea that this suffering is justified. Because the codes — the bleeding hands, the black costume, the shadowed room, the abusive dialogue — do the work at **specific, named moments**, the reflection and the challenge are developed **side by side** rather than asserted. *Whiplash* therefore both reflects and challenges a defining value of its production context.

Band descriptors (Section B, out of 15):

- **High (12–15):** analyses at least two representations, each anchored to **multiple specific codes at named moments**; the specific context (American society, mid-2010s) is **integrated causally**, not bolted on; reflect/challenge is explicit and **balanced**; specialised media language is precise and sustained; all bullet requirements met.
- **Mid (7–11):** at least one representation analysed with some code-level evidence; context **named but linkage partly asserted** rather than developed; reflect/challenge present but uneven, or one representation described more than analysed; media language present but not sustained.
- **Low (1–6):** **retells** the narrative or offers a **theme** instead of a representation; context **generic** (“society”); little or no code-level evidence; reflect/challenge missing or unclear; few media terms.

Common errors: whole-film generality instead of named moments; a **theme offered as a representation**; context **bolted on** at the end; the representation described but the **view or value left vague**; **imbalance** (one representation, or one verb, dominating the response).

Q19. Command term — analyse: break the representation into the choices that build it and show what each does to the view or value, with a verdict. The **representation** is that of an Aboriginal mother fighting to keep her children, constructed in *The Moogai* (Jon Bell, 2024) — a narrative co-produced by the First Nations company No Coincidence Media with Causeway Films and released in Australian cinemas on **31 October 2024**. The **specific context** of production is **Australia in 2024: historically and socially**, a nation living with the acknowledged consequences of the forced removal of Aboriginal children in the years after the 2008 national apology. The construction evidence sits at the level of **form**. The **narrative convention** chosen for the antagonist is a **child-stealing spirit**, an unstoppable supernatural threat, and the **sound codes** of the horror form — shock and unsettling scoring — are used to make that threat felt rather than explained. This is a **selection** of horror over historical drama, and the selection is the argument: because the removal of children is built as the monster of a horror film, the audience is positioned to experience it as terror rather than to receive it as history. The representation therefore **reflects** a dominant value of its 2024 production

context — that the removals were a wrong whose harm is still being lived with — while at the same time **challenging** the protectionist view of the removal era that taking children from their families was benevolent. *Marker's note*: five marks need the **form itself** treated as the code-level choice, and the verdict attached to the **2024 production context**, not the removal era the allegory refers to — the same rule as Example 2. Keep to public-record facts (the release date, the credits, the maker's own published account) and invent no scene detail.

Chapter 3 Narratives in context: representations, views and values — 3C Audiences from different contexts

Theory

A media narrative does not carry one fixed meaning that every audience receives in the same way. The same film, series, podcast, photographic series or video game can be read quite differently by different audiences — and one of the strongest reasons is the audience's **context of reception**. This subtopic is about how audiences **from different contexts** engage with, consume and read the same media narrative differently.

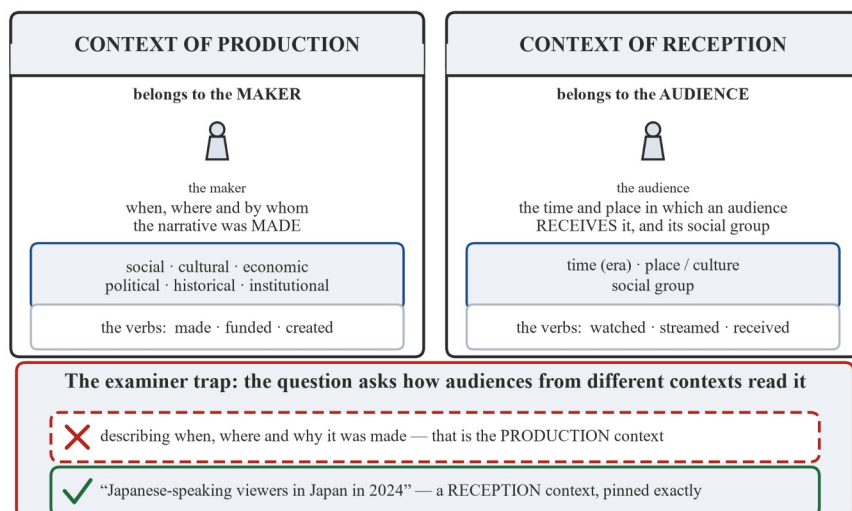
Context of reception versus context of production. These two ideas sound alike and are constantly confused, so pin them apart first.

- The **context of production** is the set of circumstances in which a narrative was **made** — when, where and by whom, and the social, cultural, economic, political, historical and institutional factors that shaped its making. This is the subject of 3A, and it belongs to the **maker**.
- The **context of reception** is the set of circumstances in which an **audience receives** the narrative — the **time** and **place** in which they consume it, and the **social group** they belong to. In the study design's words, "Audience reception" is "both the physical way audiences consume media products and the context of the time and place in which they receive it." This context belongs to the **audience**.

The most costly error in this subtopic — examiners flagged it on the 2024 exam — is to be asked about the audience's context and to write about the production context instead, describing when and why the narrative was *made* rather than how a particular *audience received it*. Whenever the question is about audiences from different contexts, keep your attention on the audience: their time, their place, their social group, and what they made of the narrative. A quick test is the verb: *made, funded* and *created* signal the production context; *watched, streamed* and *received* signal the reception context. The figure below sets the two contexts side by side with their owners, their dimensions and those verbs, and shows the substitution being refused.

Two contexts, two owners — and the verb that tells them apart

Whenever a question is about audiences, keep your attention on the audience: their time, their place, their social group.



The contextual lens. Every audience reads a narrative through a **contextual lens** — the sum of the time they live in, the place and culture they belong to, and their experiences, interests and media literacy. Because that lens differs from audience to audience, the same narrative can produce different readings. (The *process* of reading — how meaning is made from codes and conventions — is the work of 2C. Here we take that process as given and ask a sharper question: how do audiences in **different reception contexts** end up reading the same narrative differently?)

The three dimensions of reception context. A reception context can differ along three dimensions. A single pair of audiences may differ on one dimension, or on several at once.

Dimension	What it is	How it can shift a reading	Illustrative example
Time (era)	The period in which the audience receives the narrative	A release-era audience and a later audience live amid different events, knowledge and values, so the same aspect can carry a different meaning; re-release, restoration and streaming move a narrative to a new time	A confronting portrait of a national culture read as an insult on release, and as valuable social criticism decades later
Place / culture	The territory and cultural background of the audience	A convention that is novel in one culture is familiar in another; a representation may mean one thing to audiences in the culture it depicts and another to audiences elsewhere	A martial-arts spectacle read as breathtakingly new in one country and as a routine genre staple in another
Social group	The demographic, community or subculture the audience belongs to (age, generation, gender, cultural community, fandom, festival-versus-mainstream)	Two groups receiving the narrative at the same time and place can still read an aspect differently, because each brings a different lens of experience and interest	A children's song read by young children as a fantasy of freedom and by another community as an anthem of self-acceptance

Re-release, restoration and — above all — **streaming platforms** are the machinery that moves a narrative across time and place to audiences it was never originally made for. When a decades-old film is restored and re-released, or a foreign-language series is picked up by a global streaming service, the narrative is **recontextualised**: placed before a new audience whose context of reception differs sharply from the original one. Recontextualisation is where the most dramatic shifts in reading occur, and it is the practical way most of the examples in this subtopic arise.

Name the context precisely — never “modern audiences”. One of the three common errors reported on the live 8-mark question of 2025 was “being too general about the audience of the context (e.g. ‘modern audiences’)”. A reception context has to be pinned exactly as a production context is — by **time, place and social group**: “Japanese cinema audiences in 1998”, “Australian teenagers streaming it in 2025”, “Spanish free-to-air viewers in 2017”. Loose stand-ins such as “society today” or “the modern world” fail in the same way. A vague context cannot be linked to a specific reading, so the answer has nowhere to go. Precision in naming the audience is the foundation of every mark that follows, and a question set to discriminate between students will punish vagueness directly.

An aspect, not the whole narrative. The live 8-mark analyse asks about “**an aspect** of the media narrative”, and another of those three errors was “discussing the whole narrative rather than focusing on a specific aspect (scene, character, sequence or representation)”. An **aspect** is one element you can hold still and examine: a single representation, a character, a code choice, a convention, a sequence, a symbol or a theme-carrying moment. Choosing one aspect lets you show precisely how two contexts read *that* differently; sweeping across the whole narrative spreads the response thin.

The linking move. Naming a context and describing a reading is not enough. Leaving the two unconnected is the remaining one of those three errors — “discussing context at length without connecting it back to how audiences would read the narrative”, or, in this book’s shorthand, *context described but never linked*. You must **link** them: state **why** that context produces that reading. The move sounds like this: “**Because** these viewers were [something about their time, place or group], they read [the aspect] as [reading].” The word “because” is the whole task in miniature. Without it, the context is decoration.

The analysis method. For every audiences-from-different-contexts question, work through four steps in order:

1. **Name the aspect** of the narrative — one representation, character, code, convention, sequence or symbol — not the whole narrative.

2. **Name two specific audience contexts**, each pinned by time, place and/or social group — never “modern audiences”.
3. **State how each context reads or engages with that aspect** — the two divergent readings, developed evenly.
4. **Link each reading to its context** — the causal “because”: why that time, place or group produces that reading.

Applied to a one-line hypothetical: (1) the aspect — a war film’s triumphant final battle; (2) two contexts — cinema audiences at the film’s wartime release, and a later, anti-war generation watching it on television a decade on; (3) the release-era audience reads the battle as stirring and heroic, while the later audience reads it as troubling and jingoistic; (4) **because** the wartime audience shared the nation’s pride in the conflict, while the later audience had lived through its disillusioning aftermath, the very same sequence lands as heroism for one and as propaganda for the other. Keep both readings developed side by side, and tie every reading to its context.

Contemporary example — FX Productions, September 2024

FX Productions is the television production arm of the United States network FX. Its adaptation of James Clavell’s novel *Shōgun*, set amid a power struggle among warlords in Japan in 1600, premiered on **27 February 2024** on FX and Hulu in the United States and on Disney+ in Australia and most other territories; the majority of its dialogue is in Japanese. On **15 September 2024**, at the 76th Primetime Emmy Awards, *Shōgun* won **Outstanding Drama Series** and set a record for the most Emmys won by a drama series in a single cycle — 18 in all, four at the ceremony and 14 at the Creative Arts Emmys — with Hiroyuki Sanada and Anna Sawai winning Lead Actor and Lead Actress in a Drama Series. *The Hollywood Reporter* recorded it as the first majority non-English-language series to take the drama award.

One narrative, two very different **contexts of reception**. Take a single **aspect**: the representation of Lord Toranaga, the warlord Sanada plays. Japanese-speaking viewers streaming the series in Japan in 2024 receive his dialogue directly, in their own language and within a period of national history already familiar to them. English-speaking viewers streaming it in Australia in the same year receive the identical scenes through **subtitles** — a difference in the physical way the product is consumed, which the study design counts as part of audience reception — and largely without that historical knowledge. **Because** those audiences differ on **place and culture**, the same representation can read as a familiar national figure for one and as an absorbing but unfamiliar introduction to another culture’s history for the other. Note how exactly each context is pinned: “Japanese-speaking viewers in Japan in 2024”, never “modern audiences”.

Source: Television Academy, *Shōgun* and *The Bear* Set Records at 76th Emmy Awards, 15 September 2024 — <https://www.televisionacademy.com/features/news/awards-news/76th-emmy-winners>; first majority non-English-language drama winner per *The Hollywood Reporter*, “*Shogun*” Makes History With Record 18 Emmy Wins, 15 September 2024 — <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-news/shogun-record-18-emmy-wins-1236003391/>. Accurate as at July 2026.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Analyse how audiences from two different contexts may read one aspect of a media narrative differently. Refer to *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000). (5 marks)

This is the shape of the smaller Section A version of the analyse question, working the **place/culture** dimension. The table builds the response one sentence at a time.

Working	Comment
The aspect I will analyse is the film’s wire-assisted martial-arts sequences — the weightless, flying swordfights of <i>Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon</i> (Ang Lee, 2000) — an aspect of the narrative’s construction, not the whole film.	Step 1. Fix on ONE aspect (here a spectacle/convention), not the whole narrative — the analyse question rewards depth on an aspect.
The two audience contexts are Western art-house	Step 2. Name two contexts precisely by place/culture

Working	Comment
cinema audiences in the United States in 2000–01, and Chinese-speaking audiences in Hong Kong and mainland China in 2000.	and time — never “modern audiences”. The dimension here is place/culture.
For the Western audiences, largely unfamiliar with the wuxia (Chinese martial-arts) tradition, the flying sequences read as strikingly new and poetic — a revelation, and part of why the film became the highest-grossing non-English-language film released in the United States at the time.	Step 3a. State the first reading and anchor it to the context’s unfamiliarity — the reading follows from the lens.
For the Chinese-speaking audiences, steeped in decades of wuxia films, the same sequences read as a familiar, even conventional, genre staple, judged against a long tradition rather than experienced as a novelty; the film’s reception in these markets was more muted.	Step 3b. State the contrasting reading for the second context — divergence is the point.
Because the Western audiences had no wuxia frame of reference, they read the wire-work as astonishing artistry, whereas the Chinese-speaking audiences, reading through a lens shaped by the genre’s history, read the very same aspect as ordinary — the difference in reading follows directly from the difference in cultural context.	Step 4. LINK each reading to its context with “because”: the causal move examiners reward, and the one whose absence is a reported common error.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Discuss how audiences from two different contexts may read one aspect of *Wake in Fright* (1971) differently. (4 marks)

This is the 4-mark **discuss** shape — develop the point with evidence and reach a position — working the **time** dimension and the practice of **re-release / recontextualisation**: how a restoration can place a narrative before a new audience decades on.

Working	Comment
The aspect is the film’s representation of outback masculinity — the aggressive, hard-drinking “hospitality” of the mining town in <i>Wake in Fright</i> (Ted Kotcheff, 1971).	Step 1. One aspect: a representation, held still for analysis.
The two contexts are Australian cinema audiences on the film’s 1971 release, and Australian audiences at its restored 2009 re-release.	Step 2. Two contexts on the TIME dimension — same place, different era; a re-release moves the narrative to a new audience.
On release, many Australian audiences read this representation as a hostile insult — an unflattering, shameful portrait of their own country — and the film failed commercially at home.	Step 3a. First reading, located in the release-era context.
At the 2009 restoration, which premiered at Cannes Classics, Australian audiences instead read the same representation as a searing, valuable critique of a national culture, and the film is now regarded as a landmark of Australian cinema.	Step 3b. The contrasting later reading — the recontextualisation.
The reading changed because the context changed: the 1971 audience, close to the culture being depicted, read the portrait as an attack, whereas the 2009 audience — distant enough to see it as social criticism, and primed by the film’s celebrated rediscovery — read it as an honest reckoning. The aspect did not change; the	Step 4. LINK, then land the position a discuss must reach: the shift is caused by the change in time/context, not by the text — this is the re-release recontextualisation move.

reception context did.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Describe how audiences from two different social groups may read one aspect of *Frozen* (2013) differently. (3 marks)

In *Frozen* (Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee, 2013), the aspect of Elsa’s transformation during the song “Let It Go” is read differently by two social groups receiving it at the same time. For young children, the sequence reads as an exhilarating fantasy of freedom and power — the newly crowned queen casting off restraint to build an ice palace of her own. For many LGBTQ+ audiences, the same sequence reads as an anthem of self-acceptance and “coming out” — Elsa refusing to hide who she is. The two readings arise from the same aspect because each group brings a different lens: children read the literal spectacle of magic and escape, while a community familiar with the experience of concealing an identity reads the lyric of no longer hiding as their own. *Takeaway*: to describe divergent readings, name the single aspect, name each social group, and show how each group’s lens makes the same aspect mean something different.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Analyse how audiences from two different contexts may read one aspect of *Money Heist* (*La Casa de Papel*, 2017) differently. (6 marks)

The aspect I will analyse is the series’ central iconography — the red jumpsuits, the Salvador Dalí masks and the recurring anthem “Bella Ciao”. Two audience contexts read this aspect very differently. The first is Spanish free-to-air television audiences in 2017, who watched the series on the network Antena 3, where its audience fell away across the run. To these viewers, the mask-and-jumpsuit iconography read as the stylish costuming of a homegrown heist thriller — striking, but essentially the branding of a genre entertainment made for a domestic audience.

The second context is global streaming audiences from 2018 onward, who discovered the series after Netflix acquired it and re-cut it into shorter episodes. To these viewers, the very same iconography read as a symbol of anti-establishment resistance: the Dalí mask and red jumpsuit, paired with the anti-fascist anthem “Bella Ciao”, were taken up as protest imagery and appeared at demonstrations in a number of countries. The reading diverged because the reception context diverged. The 2017 Spanish audience, receiving the show as one more domestic drama within a crowded local schedule, read the costumes as genre style; the post-2018 global audience — receiving it as a shared worldwide event, stripped of its original national broadcast context and circulating through social media — read the same costumes as a portable emblem of defiance that could be lifted out of the story and carried into the street. The aspect was identical; the platform, the scale and the moment of reception transformed what it meant. *Takeaway*: a strong analyse names one aspect, pins two precise contexts, gives each its own reading, and links every reading back to the context that produced it — here, the shift from a national broadcast to a global streaming platform.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Define each of the following terms: (a) context of reception; (b) context of production; (c) an aspect of a media narrative.

Q2. Audience reception contexts vary along three dimensions. (a) Name the three dimensions of reception context. (b) For each dimension, give a one-line example of how it could change an audience’s reading. (c) Explain why a re-release, or a move to a streaming platform, is a common way a narrative reaches a new reception context.

Q3. Naming a reception context precisely matters. (a) Explain why “modern audiences” is too vague to use in an answer. (b) Rewrite “modern audiences” as a precise reception context (name a time, a place and/or a social group). (c) Explain what a precise context lets you do in your answer that a vague one does not.

Q4. The linking move is the heart of this skill. (a) State what it means to “link” a context to a reading. (b) Complete this sentence so that it links context to reading: “Because these viewers were _____, they read the [aspect] as _____.” (c) Explain why “context described but never linked” is a common way to lose marks.

Q5. Reception context and production context are often confused. (a) State the difference between the context in which a narrative is produced and the context in which it is received. (b) Classify each of the following as a production-context detail or a reception-context detail: (i) the film was funded by a national broadcaster; (ii) an audience streamed it on a phone during a commute in 2025; (iii) the creators were responding to a political climate at the time of making; (iv) a festival audience watched it on opening night. (c) Explain why writing about the production context when the question asks about the audience's context is a costly error.

Q6. A reliable method for this outcome is: name the aspect → name two precise contexts → state each reading → link each reading to its context. (a) List, in order, the four steps of this method. (b) For a media narrative you have studied this year, complete the first two steps (name an aspect; name two precise contexts). (c) Complete the last two steps for the same aspect (state and link the two readings).

Un scaffolded

Q7. Describe the difference between the context in which a media narrative is produced and the context in which an audience receives it. (3 marks)

Q8. (*Stimulus.*) Read the scenario below.

Stimulus. Two people watch the same nature documentary about a threatened coral reef. One is a marine scientist watching it at a 2016 industry conference; the other is a primary-school student streaming it in a 2025 classroom.

Describe how these two audiences, from different contexts, might read the documentary's footage of the bleached reef differently. (4 marks)

Q9. Explain how the time in which an audience receives a media narrative can shape the way they read an aspect of it. In your response, refer to the idea of re-release or recontextualisation. (4 marks)

Q10. Explain how the cultural context of an audience can lead audiences in two different countries to read the same aspect of a media narrative differently. (4 marks)

Q11. Describe how two different social groups receiving a media narrative at the same time and place might read one aspect of it differently. (3 marks)

Q12. Discuss how moving a media narrative to a streaming platform, or re-releasing it, can place it before a new audience and change how an aspect of it is read. (4 marks)

Q13. (*Stimulus.*) A student wrote the response below to a question asking how audiences from different contexts might read a media narrative.

Stimulus. "Modern audiences would read this film differently to older audiences. Back then society was different, and now society has changed a lot. This shows how context affects the way people watch things."

Discuss two ways this response could be improved. (4 marks)

Q14. Discuss how audiences from two different contexts might read one aspect of a media narrative you have studied this year differently. (5 marks)

Q15. Explain why the same media narrative can produce different readings in audiences from different contexts. (4 marks)

Q16. (*Stimulus.*) Read the scenario below.

Stimulus. In 2025, a streaming service adds a 1968 Western that was a huge hit on its original cinema release. The film's hero is a lone gunman who takes the law into his own hands; on release, audiences cheered him as an admirable figure of frontier justice.

Explain how a young audience streaming this film in 2025 might read the aspect of the vigilante hero differently from the film's 1968 cinema audience. (4 marks)

Q17. Analyse how audiences from two different contexts have read one aspect of a widely seen media narrative differently. Use an example in which a narrative reached a new audience through streaming, re-release or international distribution. (6 marks)

Q18. (*Extended response.*) Analyse how audiences from two different contexts may engage with or read an aspect of the media narrative that you have studied this year. (8 marks)

Media narrative: _____

Q19. (*Contemporary example.*) On 15 September 2024, FX Productions' *Shōgun* — a series set in Japan in 1600 whose dialogue is mostly in Japanese — won Outstanding Drama Series at the 76th Primetime Emmy Awards and set a record of 18 Emmys for a single cycle. The series streamed in Japan and, with subtitles, in Australia. Analyse how these two audiences, from different contexts, might read **one aspect** of the series differently. (5 marks)

Answers

Q1. (a) The circumstances in which an audience receives a narrative — the time and place they consume it in, and the social group they belong to. (b) The circumstances in which a narrative was made — when, where and by whom, and the factors shaping its making (the subject of 3A). (c) One element of a narrative held still for analysis — a single representation, character, code choice, convention, sequence or symbol — not the whole narrative. **Q2.** (a) Time (era), place/culture, social group. (b) One line each — time: a later generation reads a once-celebrated hero as dated; place/culture: a convention familiar in one country reads as exotic in another; group: two age groups read the same song differently. (c) A re-release or streaming platform moves the narrative to audiences it was not originally made for — recontextualisation. **Q3.** (a) It names no time, place or group, so it cannot be linked to a specific reading. (b) Any precise version, e.g. “Australian teenagers streaming it in 2025”. (c) A precise context can be causally linked to a specific reading; a vague one cannot. **Q4.** (a) To state WHY the context produces the reading — the causal “because”, not just placing the two side by side. (b) A completed sentence with a plausible context and reading. (c) The marks are for the link; a context named but not linked leaves the analysis incomplete (the 2025 penalty). **Q5.** (a) Production = circumstances of making (belongs to the maker); reception = circumstances of receiving (belongs to the audience). (b) (i) production; (ii) reception; (iii) production; (iv) reception. (c) The question is about the audience; writing about the maker answers a different question and scores little (the 2024 trap). **Q6.** (a) 1 name the aspect; 2 name two precise contexts; 3 state each reading; 4 link each reading to its context. (b)–(c) Any studied narrative correctly worked through the four steps (see solution). **Q7.** Production context = circumstances of making (belongs to the maker); reception context = circumstances of receiving — time, place, social group (belongs to the audience); both given an account, and the difference stated. (*both defined + difference*) **Q8.** Two readings of the bleached-reef footage: the marine scientist (expert, 2016) reads it as evidence/data of a known crisis; the child (2025 classroom) reads it as a shocking, sad image; each linked to its context. (*two contexts + two readings + link*) **Q9.** Time changes an audience’s events, knowledge and values; a re-release or streaming moves the narrative to a later era; a worked chain from the changed context to a changed reading. (*time → changed reading, with re-release*) **Q10.** Two countries’ cultures differ (familiarity, values, history); the same aspect read differently in each; a full how/why chain from cultural knowledge to reading. (*culture → divergent reading across two territories*) **Q11.** Two social groups at the same time/place; each brings a different lens; the same aspect read differently, with why. (*two groups + divergent readings + why*) **Q12.** Streaming/re-release places a narrative before a new (often global or younger) audience it was not made for; that audience’s different context changes the reading; reach a position on why. (*recontextualisation → changed reading*) **Q13.** Two of: it names no precise contexts (“modern”/“older”, no time/place/group); it describes context (“society was different”) without linking it to any specific reading; it names no aspect; it gives no evidence. (*vagueness + no-link traps*) **Q14.** Own studied narrative; one aspect; two precise contexts; two readings developed evenly and each linked to its context. (*own narrative, linked*) **Q15.** Audiences read through a contextual lens (time, place, culture, experience, media literacy); because lenses differ, the same aspect yields different readings; a clear causal account of the mechanism. (*lens → divergence*) **Q16.** The 1968 cinema audience read the vigilante hero as admirable frontier justice; a 2025 young streaming audience may read him as a dangerous figure taking the law into his own hands; each linked to its era’s values. (*applied time/re-release + link*) **Q17.** A named narrative that reached a new audience via streaming/re-release/international release; one aspect; two contexts (era or territory); each reading linked; specialised language. (*analyse, recontextualisation*) **Q18.** See Fully-worked solutions for a full model plus band descriptors and common errors. **Q19.** Analyse (5). One named **aspect** (e.g. the representation of Lord Toranaga, a particular Japanese-language exchange, or the depiction of the 1600 power struggle) — not the whole series; two contexts pinned by **place, culture and time** (“Japanese-speaking viewers in Japan in 2024”; “English-speaking viewers streaming it in Australia in 2024”), never “modern audiences”; two readings developed evenly; each **linked** with a causal “because” — direct-language reception plus prior national-historical knowledge for one, subtitled reception without that background for the other. Credit for treating **subtitling** as part of the physical way the product is consumed. (*aspect + two pinned contexts + two readings + link*)

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) The **context of reception** is the set of circumstances in which an **audience receives** a narrative — the **time** and **place** in which they consume it and the **social group** they belong to. (b) The **context of production** is the set of circumstances in which a narrative was **made** — when, where and by whom, and the social, cultural, economic, political, historical and institutional factors shaping its making; it is the concern of 3A. (c) An **aspect** of a narrative is

a **single element held still for analysis** — one representation, character, code choice, convention, sequence or symbol — as opposed to the whole narrative.

Q2. (a) **Time** (era), **place/culture**, and **social group**. (b) One example each: *time* — a later generation reads a once-celebrated hero as dated; *place/culture* — a convention familiar in one country is read as exotic in another; *social group* — two age groups read the same song differently. (c) A **re-release** or a move to a **streaming platform** places a narrative before audiences it was **not originally made for** (often global or younger), moving it into a new reception context — **recontextualisation**. *Marker's note:* the three dimensions can combine; a single pair of audiences may differ on more than one at once.

Q3. (a) “Modern audiences” names **no time, no place and no group**, so it cannot be tied to any specific reading — the analysis has nowhere to go. (b) Any pinned version, e.g. “**Australian teenagers streaming it in 2025**” (time + place + group). (c) A precise context can be **linked causally** to a specific reading (“because these viewers were ..., they read ...”); a vague one cannot — which is exactly why the live exam penalised “modern audiences”. *Common errors:* “society today” and “the modern world” are the same fault as “modern audiences”.

Q4. “*Explain*” asks for a *how/why account*. (a) To **link** a context to a reading is to state **why** that context produces that reading — the causal “because”, not just placing the two side by side. (b) A completed sentence, e.g. “Because these viewers were **watching in a country unfamiliar with the genre**, they read the flying swordfights as **strikingly new**.” (c) The marks are awarded for the **link**: a context that is named but never connected to a reading leaves the task half done — the weakness the 2025 report lists as “discussing context at length without connecting it back to how audiences would read the narrative”. *Marker's note:* if you can delete your “because” clause and the sentence still makes sense, you have not yet linked.

Q5. (a) The **production context** is the circumstances in which the narrative was **made** (it belongs to the **maker**); the **reception context** is the circumstances in which an **audience receives** it (it belongs to the **audience**). (b) (i) **production**; (ii) **reception**; (iii) **production**; (iv) **reception**. (c) The question asks about the **audience's** context; writing about the **maker** answers a different question, so it earns little — this is the trap that lowered scores on the 2024 consumption-context question. *Marker's note:* the giveaway is the verb — *made / funded / created* signals production; *watched / streamed / received* signals reception.

Q6. (a) The four steps: **1** name the **aspect**; **2** name **two precise contexts**; **3** state **each reading**; **4** **link** each reading to its context. (b)–(c) *Model response (media narrative: Amélie, 2001):* **1** The aspect: the film's representation of Paris — the warm, idealised, storybook Montmartre in which the story unfolds. **2** Two contexts: some **French critics and audiences in 2001**, and **international art-house audiences in 2001–02**. **3** Several French commentators read the idealised Paris as an unrealistically sanitised, nostalgic postcard, while international audiences read it as enchantingly romantic. **4** The readings diverge **because** the French audience, receiving a representation of their own city, judged it against the real, diverse Paris they knew and found it a false idyll, whereas international audiences, without that local knowledge, received the same representation as pure charm. *Marker's note:* the four steps must connect — the frequent error is to name an aspect and two audiences and then stop short of the causal link in step 4.

Q7. “*Describe*” asks for an *account of the features*. The **context of production** is the set of circumstances in which a narrative was **made** — the time, place, people and the social, cultural, economic, political, historical and institutional factors shaping its creation; it belongs to the **maker** and is the concern of 3A. The **context of reception** is the set of circumstances in which an **audience receives** the narrative — the time and place in which they consume it and the social group they belong to; it belongs to the **audience**. The difference is one of standpoint: the production context is about how and why the narrative came to be, while the reception context is about who is receiving it and under what conditions — which is what shapes their reading. *Marker's note:* three marks want both contexts given an account AND the difference stated, not two definitions left side by side.

Q8. “*Describe*” asks for an *account of how each audience reads the aspect*. The aspect is the footage of the bleached reef. The **marine scientist at a 2016 industry conference** reads this footage as **evidence** — a documented instance of a crisis they already study and understand, read cognitively and professionally, and measured against data they know. The **primary-school child streaming it in a 2025 classroom** reads the same footage as a **shocking, saddening image** — a once-colourful reef now drained of life, read emotionally and with fresh alarm. Each reading follows from the audience's context: the scientist's expertise and professional setting make the footage read as confirmation and data, while the child's youth, lack of specialist knowledge and later, more climate-aware schooling make it read as an

upsetting revelation. *Common errors*: describing the reef or the documentary instead of the two audiences' **readings**; naming the audiences but not linking each reading to its context.

Q9. "Explain" asks for a how/why chain. The **time** in which an audience receives a narrative shapes their reading because each era carries its own events, knowledge and values, and audiences read through them. When a narrative is **re-released, restored or added to a streaming service**, it is placed before an audience living in a different time from the original one, and that later audience brings a changed lens. Take a worked chain: a film from an earlier decade that presented constant cigarette smoking as glamorous and sophisticated (the choice, read in its own time as stylish) is received decades later by a health-conscious audience (the changed context) that now associates smoking with serious harm, and that audience reads the same glamorous framing as reckless or even irresponsible (the changed reading). The aspect on screen has not changed — the audience's time has, and with it the reading. *Marker's note*: four marks need the chain completed to the **changed reading**, with the re-release or recontextualisation making explicit how the narrative reached the later audience.

Q10. "Explain" asks for a how/why chain. An audience's **cultural context** — the traditions, values, history and familiarity they bring — shapes how they read a narrative, so audiences in two different countries can read the same aspect differently. The chain runs from cultural knowledge to reading: an aspect built on a convention or reference that is **familiar** in one culture is read there as ordinary or expected, whereas the **same** aspect encountered by an audience unfamiliar with that convention is read as strange, exotic or strikingly new. For example, a comedy built on one nation's particular slang, self-deprecation and social references is read by a home audience as sharp and relatable, while an overseas audience without that cultural knowledge may read the very same scenes as puzzling or flat. The difference in reading follows from the difference in cultural lens, not from any change in the narrative. *Common errors*: asserting that "different cultures read it differently" without a how/why chain from the specific cultural knowledge to the specific reading.

Q11. "Describe" asks for an account. Two social groups receiving a narrative at the same time and place can read one aspect differently because each brings a different lens of experience and interest. For instance, a documentary sequence celebrating a famous sporting victory is read by **devoted fans of that sport** as a stirring, meaningful moment they feel personally invested in, while **viewers with no interest in the sport** read the same sequence as an ordinary highlight reel that leaves them unmoved. The aspect is identical; the fans' knowledge and attachment make it read as significant, while the non-fans' lack of investment makes it read as unremarkable. *Marker's note*: three marks need the single aspect, the two groups, and a statement of why each group reads it as it does — same time and place, different lens.

Q12. "Discuss" asks you to develop the point and reach a position. Moving a narrative to a **streaming platform**, or **re-releasing** it, commonly places it before an audience it was never made for — frequently a **global** or a **younger** audience — and that new audience's different context changes how an aspect is read. A series originally made for one national broadcast audience, once acquired by a global streaming service, is suddenly received by millions of viewers in other countries and later generations, stripped of its original scheduling and national framing and circulated through social media. An aspect that read one way to the original domestic audience — a piece of local styling, say — can be read by the new global audience as something quite different, even lifted out of the story and taken up in the wider culture. On balance, recontextualisation matters not because the narrative changes but because the **platform changes the audience**, and a changed audience brings a changed reading. *Marker's note*: reach a position on WHY the platform-move changes the reading (it changes the audience), rather than simply listing platforms.

Q13. "Discuss" asks you to develop each improvement. First, the response names no precise contexts. "Modern audiences" and "older audiences" pin no **time, place or social group**; the student should name contexts exactly — for example, "Australian cinema audiences in 1975" and "teenagers streaming it in 2025" — so that each can be tied to a reading. **Second, the response describes context but never links it to a reading.** "Society was different" and "society has changed" are vague assertions that are never connected to how any audience actually **read** any aspect of the narrative; the student should make the causal link — "because these viewers were [context], they read [the aspect] as [reading]". The response also never names an **aspect** to analyse, and gives no evidence. *Common errors*: this stimulus contains the two live traps at once — the "**modern audiences**" **vagueness** and **context stated but never linked** to a reading.

Q14. "Discuss" asks you to develop the point with evidence and reach a position. Model response (studied narrative: *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, 1994): The aspect I will discuss is the representation of the travelling performers — the flamboyant stage numbers and costumes of the trio who cross the outback: two drag

queens and Bernadette, a transgender woman who performs in the same shows. Two audience contexts read this aspect differently. To many mainstream Australian cinema audiences in 1994, the performances read as broad, exuberant comedy — a colourful novelty and the source of much of the film’s feel-good humour. To contemporary LGBTQ+ audiences watching it now, the same performances read as an early, affirming celebration of queer visibility in mainstream Australian cinema — a landmark rather than a novelty. The readings diverge because the contexts diverge: the 1994 mainstream audience, receiving the film within the comic conventions of its time, read the performances mainly for their humour, whereas today’s LGBTQ+ audience, receiving the film through a culture in which queer identity is far more openly discussed and valued, reads the same performances as a proud assertion of visibility. The aspect is the same; the social and historical context of the audience changes what it means. *Marker’s note*: keep both readings developed and, above all, make the link explicit — the common error is to describe the two audiences without ever saying WHY each reads the aspect as it does.

Q15. “*Explain*” asks for a how/why account. The same narrative can produce different readings because meaning is not simply contained in the narrative and delivered unchanged to every viewer; each audience makes meaning by reading through a **contextual lens** — the time they live in, the place and culture they belong to, and their experiences, interests and media literacy. Because no two audiences share exactly the same lens, the same aspect can be read differently: what one audience’s lens makes obvious or admirable, another’s makes strange or troubling. The chain is: the narrative offers an aspect → each audience filters it through its own context → the filtered readings differ. This is why a single narrative can be celebrated by one audience and rejected by another without a single frame changing. *Marker’s note*: explain the mechanism (the lens), not just the outcome — the marks are for WHY divergent readings arise.

Q16. “*Explain*” asks for a how/why chain. The aspect is the representation of the vigilante hero who takes the law into his own hands. The **1968 cinema audience** received the film amid the conventions and values of its day, in which the self-reliant frontier gunman was a celebrated figure; through that lens they read the hero as **admirable** — a deliverer of rough but righteous justice — and cheered him. A **young audience streaming the film in 2025** receives the same hero through a very different lens: a contemporary awareness of the dangers of individuals bypassing the law and dispensing violence on their own authority. Through that lens the same character can read as **troubling** — not a hero but a dangerous figure. The reading changes because the context changes: **because** the 2025 audience brings later values about lawful authority and violence, the identical representation that once read as heroic now reads as alarming. *Marker’s note*: four marks need the explicit link — the later reading follows *because* of the later audience’s values, not merely “because times have changed”.

Q17. “*Analyse*” asks you to break the narrative into its parts and show how they work, with specific evidence and an explicit link from context to reading. *Model response (media narrative: Friends, 1994–2004)*: The aspect I will analyse is the sitcom’s recurring humour built around a character’s discomfort with gender nonconformity and same-sex situations — for example, jokes made at the expense of a character’s drag-performing parent, and a storyline treating a man employed as a nanny as inherently ridiculous. Two audience contexts read this aspect differently. The first is mainstream Australian and American sitcom audiences in the 1990s, watching the show on broadcast television during its original run. To these viewers, the jokes read as ordinary, good-natured mainstream comedy, well within the humour of the era. The second context is Gen-Z audiences discovering the show on streaming platforms in the late 2010s and 2020s, after it was added to services such as Netflix. To many of these viewers, the same jokes read as dated and insensitive.

The two readings follow directly from the two contexts. The 1990s broadcast audience shared the comedic norms of their moment, in which such jokes were common and largely unremarked, so they read them as simply funny. The Gen-Z streaming audience received a 1990s text decades later, through a culture far more attentive to LGBTQ+ representation and more likely to question humour that treats an identity as a punchline; the streaming platform itself is what placed a 1990s narrative before a 2020s audience it was never made for. Because the audience’s time, values and mode of access had all changed, the identical jokes that once read as harmless now read as out of step. *Takeaway*: an analyse of this kind names one aspect, pins two precise contexts, gives each reading, and — crucially — links each reading to the specific features of its context that produced it.

Q18. *Command term — analyse*: break the narrative into its constructed elements and show how audiences from two contexts read an aspect of it, with specific evidence and an explicit link from context to reading.

Media narrative: *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008)

Model response (studied narrative: Slumdog Millionaire, 2008):

The aspect I will analyse is the film's representation of the Mumbai slum — the poverty, the crowding and the hardship of the setting in which the protagonist grows up, together with the “slumdog” framing announced in the title. Two audiences, in two very different contexts, read this aspect in almost opposite ways.

The first context is Western cinema and awards audiences in 2008 and 2009 — viewers in the United States, Britain and Australia who encountered the film first as an art-house crossover and then as the year's major awards success. To these audiences, the representation of the slum read as the harsh but ultimately inspiring backdrop to an uplifting, rags-to-riches fairy tale: the hardship made the hero's rise all the more moving. The film was embraced on this reading and won a string of major awards.

The second context is urban Indian audiences in 2009, including residents of the very kinds of neighbourhood the film depicts. To many of these viewers, the same representation read very differently — as a demeaning, outsider's portrait that dwelt on squalor and reduced their communities to a spectacle of poverty for foreign consumption, with the word “slumdog” itself widely felt to be insulting. In several Indian cities the film's representation drew documented protest.

The two readings diverge because the reception contexts diverge, and naming why is the heart of the analysis. The Western 2008–09 audience received the film from the outside, with little direct experience of Mumbai's neighbourhoods, and through the frame of an awards-season feel-good story; from that position the slum functioned as an affecting setting for a triumph. The urban Indian audience of 2009 received the same images from the inside, as a representation of places and people they knew, made by a largely British production team for a global market; from that position the emphasis on squalor and the “slumdog” label read not as inspiring but as exploitative. The film — a British-made narrative set in and depicting India — is itself a study in the gap between the context of production and the context of reception: the same aspect, received from outside and from inside, produces two incompatible readings. Note that the analysis stays on how each **audience received** the slum representation, not merely on who made the film.

Band descriptors (Section A analyse, out of 8):

- **High (7–8):** one clearly chosen **aspect**; two **precisely named contexts** (time + place + group); both readings developed evenly; each reading **explicitly linked** to its context with causal language; specialised media language; the reception focus sustained, not drifting into the production context.
- **Mid (4–6):** an aspect chosen but sometimes widening toward the whole narrative; contexts named but one vague, or the link partly asserted rather than explained; one reading fuller than the other.
- **Low (1–3):** “modern audiences” or “society” instead of pinned contexts; the whole narrative retold rather than an aspect analysed; context described but never linked to a reading; the production context given where the audience's context was asked.

Common errors: “modern audiences” instead of a time-place-group context; analysing the whole narrative instead of an aspect; describing each context but never **linking** it to the reading (the 2025 penalty); slipping into the **production** context (the 2024 trap); developing one reading and merely mentioning the other.

Q19. “Analyse” asks you to isolate one aspect and show how each context works on it — the 5-mark shape. *Model response:* The **aspect** I will analyse is the representation of Lord Toranaga, the warlord at the centre of the series' power struggle. The first context is **Japanese-speaking viewers streaming *Shōgun* in Japan in 2024**. They receive Toranaga's dialogue **directly**, without mediation, and they receive him inside a period of their own national history — the warlord conflict of 1600 — that is already part of their cultural knowledge. Through that **contextual lens** the representation reads as a familiar national figure, and their attention falls on how *this* telling handles a story they know. The second context is **English-speaking viewers streaming it in Australia in 2024**. They receive the identical scenes through **subtitles**: they read the words while watching the performance, which is a difference in the **physical way** the product is consumed and therefore part of their context of reception. They also meet the historical setting largely for the first time. Through that lens the same representation reads as a compelling but unfamiliar figure, and the reading is shaped as much by the act of cultural translation as by the character. The readings diverge **because** the two audiences differ on **place and culture** — one audience's language and history, another audience's subtitles and unfamiliarity — while the aspect itself never changes. *Marker's note:* five marks need the single aspect, both contexts pinned by place and time, both readings, and the explicit **because**; naming Emmy wins instead of reading an aspect drifts into the **production** context and scores little.

Chapter 3 Narratives in context: representations, views and values — 3D Close analysis of a media narrative

Theory

This subtopic teaches no new concept. It teaches a **method** — how to study one media narrative so thoroughly that a single set of preparation can answer every studied-narrative question the exam can throw at you, from a 3-mark opener to a 15-mark Section-B analysis. The codes (1B), the conventions (1C), audience engagement, consumption and reading (2A–2C), contexts of production (3A) and the construction of representations that reflect or challenge views and values (3B) are all already yours. Close analysis is the discipline of **turning one narrative into a small kit of study documents**, and then **assembling responses from that kit** at whatever size the marks demand.

Why the method matters: the exam’s studied-narrative architecture. The paper does not let you choose a different product for each question. Under the first Section A banner, a single declaration fixes one narrative and then instructs you to use it for several questions; Section B, Question 1 requires a studied narrative again. One narrative, studied deeply, therefore has to carry a 5-mark representation item, an 8-mark audience item and a 15-mark codes-and-conventions capstone — sometimes all on the same paper. Students who “know the story” but cannot point to a **named sequence** or a **specific code at a specific moment** stall at mid-range marks every year; the single most repeated examiner complaint across every report is **generality** — “throughout the film...” where a named moment was needed. The kit below is the cure.

(a) Choosing and knowing the product — the Unit 3 AoS1 menu. You study **one** narrative from the AoS1 options:

- a **feature film** of at least one hour (or a **television/streaming** narrative of equivalent length);
- an **audio** product of at least one hour (radio drama, narrative podcast);
- a **photographic series** with a narrative structure;
- a **digital** product (for example a video game) of equivalent length **or** complexity to the other forms.

Choose a product you can **re-visit** and evidence at named-moment level, that is **rich in codes and conventions**, carries **clear representations**, has a **knowable production and reception context**, and that different audiences could plausibly **read differently**. A three-minute clip cannot be studied to this depth — the length requirement exists so there is enough constructed material to analyse. Throughout this subtopic the worked model is the feature film *The Truman Show* (Peter Weir, 1998); wherever a model response appears, a bracketed note shows how the same move transfers to **your** narrative.

(b) The sequence log — named boundaries. Divide the narrative into a workable set of **sequences** (roughly eight to fifteen), each given a **name** and a **boundary** — a start and end a marker would recognise at once (“the falling-light scene”, “the boat-and-dome climax”). A **named boundary** is your **unit of evidence**: it is the thing you point to instead of writing “throughout the film”. Log where each sequence sits in the **three-act structure** and what **changes** across it (the cause-and-effect turn it delivers). A partial log for the model narrative:

Sequence (named boundary)	Position (three-act)	What changes (cause → effect)
The morning greeting — Truman leaves home with his cheery to-camera farewell	Act 1, establishment	Establishes Seahaven and Truman’s contentment (the baseline)
The falling light — a studio lighting rig drops from the artificial sky onto the street	Act 1, inciting disturbance	The first crack in the world → Truman’s doubt begins
The rain that follows only Truman on the beach	Act 2, rising suspicion	A glitch he cannot explain → suspicion hardens
The travel agency and the stalled bus	Act 2, thwarted escape	He tries to leave → the world quietly blocks him
The engineered traffic jam and roadblock	Act 2, thwarted escape	He nearly breaks out by car → he is forced back

Sequence (named boundary)	Position (three-act)	What changes (cause → effect)
“Cue the sun” and the night search	Act 2 → 3, turning point	Truman is found missing → the machine mobilises
The storm at sea on the <i>Santa Maria</i>	Act 3, climax	He sails out → Christof attacks him with the weather
The boat strikes the sky and the EXIT door	Act 3, resolution	He reaches the painted wall → he chooses to leave

The log is an **index**, not an essay: it names sequences so you can find and cite them. The analysis itself is built later, from the sequences the question happens to need.

(c) The evidence bank — codes and conventions per sequence. For each logged sequence, record the **media codes** present (camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics, and paper stock for print) and the **narrative conventions** at work (character, characterisation, character arc, three-act structure, cause and effect, setting, point of view, the structuring of time, multiple storylines) — and, in the last column, **what they construct when they work together**. That final column is decisive: the 2025 Section B demand is that codes and conventions “**work together**”, so the bank must record their **interaction**, not two separate lists. Worked for one sequence:

Element (in “Cue the sun” and the night search)	On screen	What it constructs
Sound	Christof’s calm command to raise the sun; the hush of the control room	The showrunner’s godlike, unhurried control
Lighting	Dawn arriving on command in the middle of the night	The artificiality of Truman’s world, laid bare
Editing / camera	The grid of surveillance feeds cut together as crews sweep the town	Truman as a tracked subject inside a machine of watching
Narrative convention: cause and effect	Truman’s disappearance forces the show to expose its own workings	The plot turns on his first true act of agency
Codes + convention together	Sound and lighting operate the fake world <i>while</i> the cause-and-effect turn breaks it open	The audience sees total control and its first failure at the same instant

(d) Representation and views/values map. List the key **representations** (of a specific person, group, place or idea — never a *theme*), pin the **specific production context** (time, place and social group, tied to a **social, cultural, economic, political, historical** or **institutional** factor), name the **dominant** view or value at stake, and give a **reflect / challenge** verdict. Remember the two rules from 3B: a verdict attaches to the **production (or reception) context, not the era depicted**; and a representation is a *constructed thing you can point to*, not a topic the story is “about”. For the model:

Representation (of...)	Specific production context (when / where / who + factor)	Dominant view or value	Reflect / challenge
Truman, the unknowing everyman	US, 1998 (social/cultural)	that an authentic, self-directed life is worth having	reflects it — his escape is built as heroic
Seahaven, idyllic suburbia	US, 1998 (cultural)	the ideal of the safe, wholesome suburb	challenges it — the idyll is exposed as a manufactured set
Christof and the network, the media creator	US, 1998 (institutional/economic)	trust in the media institution as benign	challenges it — the creator is controlling; the industry, commercial

The Truman Show has no separate “era depicted”, so its 1998 **production context** is the only lens. Where **your** narrative is a period piece, judge the **production context** (when it was made), not the period it shows — a film made in 2012 about the 1960s reflects 2012’s values while it may challenge 1960s ones.

(e) The context dossier — production and reception. Keep to **public record**. Record the production facts and the factors that shaped them, and the reception facts — how and where audiences first met the product, and how the reception context has since shifted (re-release, streaming, a changed world). This dossier is what lets you **integrate** context causally instead of bolting it on at the end (the 2024 B1 weakness).

Production. Directed by Peter Weir, written by Andrew Niccol, released in 1998 by Paramount Pictures (USA). *Institutional / economic factor:* a major-studio satire made as cable and tabloid television were expanding. *Social / cultural factor:* a rising public fascination with — and unease about — constant media exposure and the blurring of private life into entertainment. (The reality-television format arrived as a mass phenomenon the following year; the film is widely regarded as anticipating it.)

Reception. Released to cinemas in 1998; today most audiences meet it by streaming, decades into an era of social media, personal-data harvesting and everyday surveillance — a reception context that makes its premise read as far less fanciful than it did at release.

(f) The audience-readings grid. For **named** audience contexts — pinned by time, place, culture, experience or media literacy — record how each would **engage with or read an aspect** of the narrative (never the whole product). “Modern audiences” is exactly the phrasing the 2025 report penalised; pin the group precisely.

Audience context (pinned)	Aspect read	Likely reading
Cinema audiences at the 1998 release	the surveillance premise	an inventive, satirical “what if?” fantasy
An Australian teenager streaming it in 2025	the same surveillance premise	uncomfortably close to a life of tracked, monetised online activity
A media-literate viewer analysing Christof	the ethics of the show-within-the-show	a study of institutional power and audience complicity

(g) The declaration furniture — how the exam asks for your narrative. The live paper hands your studied narrative a fixed piece of scaffolding. Reproduce it in your own preparation and practise the **write-in**:

Section A (2025 wording, after Question 1). Identify the media narrative that you have studied this year for ‘Narratives and their contexts’. **You must use this media narrative to respond to Questions 2 and 3.**
Media narrative _____

Section B, Question 1 carries its own line: Media narrative _____

Filled in, the line simply reads **Media narrative: *The Truman Show* (1998)**. The instruction “you must use this media narrative to respond to Questions 2 and 3” is the whole reason the study kit pays off: **one** narrative has to serve several questions of different sizes, so the sequence log, evidence bank, maps and grid are re-used, not rebuilt, from question to question.

(h) Assembling responses at 5, 8 and 15 marks. Every response, at every size, runs the **three-step micro-structure** the reports reward: **name** the precise element (a code, a narrative convention, a representation, a context factor) → **apply** it at a **named moment or sequence with boundaries** → **state** the meaning, effect or link. What changes with the marks is how many times you run it and how much you connect. The kit feeds each size:

Size	Live shape	Kit documents it draws on	The move
5 marks	A2 — one representation reflects/challenges one view or value	rep/values map + one evidence-bank row	one tight paragraph, three steps run once
8 marks	2025 Q3 — audiences from two contexts read an aspect	audience-readings grid + context dossier	two audience strands on one aspect , each a mini three-step
15 marks	Section B — one of the	all five documents	multi-paragraph; two-plus

Size	Live shape	Kit documents it draws on	The move
	three rotations below		sequences; integrated context; explicit interaction

Read that mapping the other way — across the documents rather than down the sizes — and the pay-off is plain: four of the five documents are drawn on by more than one question size, and every one of them is drawn on by the 15-mark question.

One narrative, one kit: which document answers which question

Read across a row, not down a column — that is where the re-use is.

	5 marks	8 marks	15 marks	used by
	one representation: reflect or challenge	two audience contexts, one aspect	Section B — any of three rotations	
(b) sequence log — named boundaries	☐	☐	☒	1 of 3
(c) evidence bank — codes × conventions	☒	☐	☒	2 of 3
(d) representation and views/values map	☒	☐	☒	2 of 3
(e) context dossier — production and reception	☐	☒	☒	2 of 3
(f) audience-readings grid	☐	☒	☒	2 of 3
documents drawn on	2 of 5	2 of 5	5 of 5	

Every document is drawn on by the 15-mark question, and none is built twice.

Prepare the kit once; assemble the response the marks ask for.

The 15-mark Section B narrative question **rotates** through three proven shapes; each is fed by different documents in the same kit, so preparing the kit prepares all three:

B1 rotation (year first seen)

	Stem core	Kit documents it draws on	Mandatory requirements
Codes × narrative conventions × two sequences (2025)	how codes and narrative conventions work together to convey meaning	sequence log + evidence bank	two specific sequences; multiple codes AND multiple narrative conventions ; explicit interaction
Representations × views/values (2024)	construction of representations, and how they reflect/challenge views and values of the production context	rep/values map + context dossier	at least two representations ; causal, integrated context linkage
Audiences × contexts, with a representation rider (sample)	factors influencing how audiences from different contexts engage/read; must consider representations reflecting/challenging views and values	audience-readings grid + rep/values map	different, named contexts; the representation rider addressed

Whichever rotation appears, the answer is **assembled**, not improvised: pull the sequences the stem names, run the three-step move on the codes and conventions in them, integrate the context from the dossier, and — critically — make the elements **interact** on the page (“the low-angle framing *works with* the swelling score so that...”) rather than listing them. That interaction, at named boundaries, in specialised language, is the whole difference between a mid-band and a high-band response.

Contemporary example — Origma 45, October 2023

Origma 45 is an Australian independent film production company. On **5 October 2023** its feature *Shayda* — written and directed by Noora Niasari, produced by Vincent Sheehan through Origma 45 and distributed in Australia by Madman Entertainment — opened in Australian cinemas, having won the **Audience Award in the World Cinema Dramatic Competition** at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2023. It was made with production investment from Screen Australia and support from VicScreen and the Melbourne International Film Festival Premiere Fund.

Shayda is the kind of product this method is built for. It meets the AoS1 menu as a **feature film**, but a **contained** one: a small principal cast, a women's shelter as its central setting, and a narrative organised around a single **point of view**. Containment is what makes the kit tractable. Few settings mean **named boundaries** a marker would recognise at once, rather than “parts” of a sprawling story. A small cast means several **media codes** stack at the same moment, so the evidence bank's “what they construct together” column has something real to record. Because the narrative is set in 1995 but the film was produced in 2022–23, it also demonstrates the rule from 3B precisely: the **reflect/challenge** verdict attaches to the **production context**, not the era depicted. And its **context dossier** can be built from **public record** — the funding bodies above are all publicly listed — while its reception already spans two pinnable audience contexts: a festival audience at Sundance in January 2023, and Australian cinema audiences from October 2023.

Source: Screen Australia, Screen Guide — *Shayda*, accessed July 2026 — <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/screen-guide/shayda-38765/>; Australian release date per *The Conversation*, “*Shayda: this unflinching portrayal of domestic violence marks a profound shift in Australian cinema*”, 5 October 2023 — <https://theconversation.com/shayda-this-unflinching-portrayal-of-domestic-violence-marks-a-profound-shift-in-australian-cinema-212535>. Accurate as at July 2026.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Build a sequence-log entry for one sequence of the model narrative, *The Truman Show* (1998), rich enough that a 15-mark response could later draw on it. Use the **falling-light** sequence.

A sequence-log entry is not a paragraph of analysis — it is a labelled index card. The table builds one, field by field.

Working	Comment
Name and boundary: “The falling light” — from the moment a studio lighting rig, labelled as a star, drops out of the artificial sky and smashes onto the Seahaven street, to Truman driving off puzzled as a radio bulletin explains it away as aircraft debris.	Give the sequence a name and pin its start and end . A boundary a marker would recognise is the unit you cite instead of “early in the film”.
Position: early Act 1 — the inciting disturbance of the three-act structure; the first crack in an otherwise seamless world.	Locate it in a narrative convention (three-act structure) so you can later talk about its function , not just its content.
Codes present: camera (Truman's startled reaction in a tight medium shot); mise en scene (the incongruous industrial rig on the pristine suburban road); sound (the smooth radio cover story).	Inventory the codes actually on screen — you are banking evidence, not yet analysing it.
Narrative conventions present: cause and effect (malfunction → Truman's first suspicion); setting (Seahaven as a controlled, closed world); character (Truman's curiosity awakening).	Inventory the conventions too — a 15-marker needs both codes and conventions, so log both now.
What changes: Truman shifts from unquestioning contentment toward doubt; the sequence plants the seed of his character arc.	Record the cause-and-effect turn. A good entry captures what the sequence <i>does</i> to the story, not just what happens in it.
Could evidence: codes × conventions working together (B1); the surveillance premise of the production context;	Note which exam tasks this one entry could feed — a single well-logged sequence can serve several different

Working	Comment
the opening of Truman's arc.	questions.

[Substitute: for your narrative, log any early sequence where the product first hints at its own tension or artifice — name it, bound it, list its codes and conventions, and record what it sets in motion.]

Example 2 — scaffolded

Turn one evidence-bank row into a body paragraph of a 15-mark codes-and-conventions response, showing the codes and a narrative convention **working together**. Use the **rain-on-the-beach** sequence.

This is the step most students skip: converting a banked row into prose in which the elements **interact** rather than sit in a list.

Working	Comment
In the beach sequence — bounded by the moment a narrow column of rain begins to fall on Truman alone and ends as the downpour abruptly spreads to cover him — codes and the convention of setting work together to construct Truman as a subject managed by an unseen power.	Open with the named boundary and a claim that already promises interaction (“work together”), not a list.
The visual effect and mise en scene isolate a single shaft of rain that tracks only Truman across an otherwise dry beach.	Name the first code and its specific on-screen choice — evidence, at this exact moment.
A beat later the sound and editing cut in a sudden, saturating downpour, as though a technician has over-corrected the error.	Name the second and third codes and what they do — still anchored to the sequence.
Because the setting — the beach as part of a sealed, operated world — is what makes a targeted rain shower <i>possible</i> in the first place, the codes do not merely decorate the scene: they expose the convention , letting the audience read the whole environment as a controlled stage.	This is the “work together” sentence: state how the codes and the narrative convention interact to make one meaning, with causal language (“because”, “letting”).
The moment therefore advances Truman's arc from comfort to suspicion — the same suspicion the next sequences will harden.	Close by linking the paragraph back to the larger argument (the arc), so the body paragraph earns its place in a 15-marker.

*[Substitute: take one row from your evidence bank, name two or three codes at the moment, then write the sentence that shows a narrative convention and those codes producing **one** meaning together.]*

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Analyse how audiences from two different contexts may engage with or read an aspect of the media narrative you studied this year. (8 marks)

Model response (studied narrative: The Truman Show, 1998):

The aspect I will analyse is the film's **hidden-camera surveillance aesthetic** — the way Truman is shown through concealed, obstructed and button-sized viewpoints, so the audience always seems to be spying on him. This is one aspect of the narrative, not the whole of it, and two very differently placed audiences read it in opposite emotional registers.

For **cinema audiences at the 1998 release**, the surveillance aesthetic reads as **inventive fantasy**. The concealed framings — Truman glimpsed through a car dashboard, a bathroom mirror, a neighbour's rubbish bin — were, in 1998, a clever conceit: a “what if a whole life were broadcast?” thought experiment. When Truman's car radio briefly picks up the crew tracking his movements, a 1998 audience engages **cognitively** with the ingenuity of the premise and

emotionally with Truman as a likeable innocent in an absurd situation. The reading is largely one of satirical delight, because the surveillance it depicts had, for that audience, no everyday equivalent.

For an **Australian teenager streaming the film in 2025** — a viewer whose own life is tracked by platforms, cameras and data harvesting — the identical aesthetic reads as **unsettling realism**. The concealed viewpoints no longer feel like a fantastical conceit; they resemble the ordinary condition of being filmed, logged and monetised online. Sylvia’s warning to Truman that everyone around him is performing lands, for this audience, as a description of curated social media rather than a plot point. This viewer engages **emotionally** with a recognisable unease, and **cognitively** with the film as a prophecy that has partly come true — a very different reading of the same shots.

The two readings diverge not because the aspect changes but because the **context of reception** does: what a 1998 audience received as speculation, a 2025 audience receives as commentary on lived experience. *Takeaway*: an 8-mark audience answer pins **two named contexts**, holds them to **one aspect**, and shows **how** each context produces its reading — never “modern audiences”, never the whole film.

[Substitute: choose one aspect of your narrative, name two audiences pinned by time/place/experience, and explain why each reads that aspect as it does.]

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Analyse how codes and narrative conventions work together to convey meaning in the media narrative you studied this year. (*This is a partial model — one sequence built in full, the second signposted; the complete 15-mark version is modelled at Q18.*)

Model response (studied narrative: The Truman Show, 1998) — opening and first sequence:

The Truman Show (Peter Weir, 1998) constructs its meaning by making media codes and narrative conventions expose the artificiality of Truman’s world together, sequence by sequence. I will analyse two: the **travel-agency and stalled-bus** sequence, and the **engineered traffic jam** that follows.

In the **travel-agency and bus sequence** — bounded by Truman entering the agency to book a flight and ending as the departing bus stalls and cannot restart — multiple codes work with the convention of **cause and effect** to construct his world as a **trap disguised as a town**. The **mise en scene** of the agency is decisive: a poster on the wall shows an airliner struck by lightning above a caption warning of the dangers of travel, a prop selected to discourage the very act Truman is attempting. The **acting** of the clerk, coolly unhelpful, and the **editing**, which cuts briskly from the thwarted booking to the bus that dies the moment it should carry him away, chain these obstacles into a visible **cause-and-effect** sequence: every route out fails in turn. Because the codes are arranged to *answer* Truman’s initiative with obstruction, they and the cause-and-effect convention work together so the audience reads Seahaven not as a place Truman lives but as a mechanism built to **keep** him — the setting itself resisting his will.

A second sequence would then be developed to the same depth through a **different code mix** — for example the “**Cue the sun**” **night search**, where sound and lighting operate the fake world while the cause-and-effect turn breaks it open — so that across two sequences the film’s central meaning (a life managed) is built by **codes and conventions acting in concert**, not asserted. (Here that second sequence is only signposted; the full two-sequence response is modelled at Q18.)

Takeaway: a 15-mark codes-and-conventions answer is **assembled** from banked sequences — each body paragraph names a bounded sequence, runs several codes into a narrative convention, and states the shared meaning; the full version, with a second sequence developed to the same depth, is modelled at Q18.

[Substitute: pick two banked sequences from your narrative; build the first fully as above, and make sure the second develops the same controlling meaning through a different set of codes.]

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Close analysis begins with choosing a product you can study in depth. (a) List the four Unit 3 AoS1 product options, with the minimum length or complexity attached to each. (b) State two things you must be able to do with a

narrative for it to be worth choosing for close study. (c) Explain why a three-minute clip cannot be the product you study for this outcome.

Q2. A sequence log divides a narrative into named, bounded sequences. (a) Define “sequence” and “named boundary”. (b) For a media narrative you have studied this year, log three sequences, each with a named boundary and its position in the three-act structure. (c) Explain why “throughout the film...” scores poorly where a named sequence scores well.

Q3. An evidence bank records the codes and conventions in each sequence. (a) For one sequence of your studied narrative, name two media codes and one narrative convention present. (b) State what each of the three constructs. (c) Using your entries, explain what it means for codes and a narrative convention to “work together”.

Q4. A representation-and-values map connects construction to context. (a) Name one representation in your studied narrative and pin its specific production context (time, place and social group, with a context factor). (b) State one dominant view or value at stake and give a reflect/challenge verdict. (c) Explain how you would keep the verdict attached to the production context rather than any era depicted.

Q5. An audience-readings grid pins named audiences to their readings. (a) Name two different audience contexts for your studied narrative, pinned by time, place or experience. (b) State how each might read one aspect of the narrative differently. (c) Explain why “modern audiences” fails as an audience context in an exam response.

Q6. The exam scaffolds and re-uses one studied narrative. (a) Reproduce the Section A declaration line and complete the write-in for your studied narrative. (b) List the three steps of the micro-structure used in every response, at every size. (c) Explain how the same evidence-bank paragraph can be scaled from a 5-mark answer to part of a 15-mark answer.

Un scaffolded

Q7. Describe how one media code conveys meaning in one specific, named sequence of a media narrative you have studied this year. (3 marks)

Q8. (*Stimulus.*) A student’s sequence log contains the entry below.

Stimulus. “Sequence: the sad part. Throughout the film the main character is sad and things go wrong for them. This shows the mood. Codes: lots of them. This is important for the story.”

Discuss two ways this log entry could be improved so that it is usable in a 15-mark response. (4 marks)

Q9. Discuss how two media codes work together to develop one narrative convention at a specific moment or sequence of a media narrative you have studied this year. (5 marks)

Q10. Discuss how the construction of one representation in a media narrative you have studied this year reflects or challenges one view or value held in the society in which it was produced. (5 marks)

Q11. Analyse how audiences from two different contexts may engage with or read an aspect of a media narrative you have studied this year. Pin your two audiences by **experience or media literacy** rather than by era, and use a different aspect from the one analysed in Example 3. (8 marks)

Q12. Explain the relationship between the context in which a media narrative you have studied this year was produced and one construction choice within it. (6 marks)

Q13. (*Stimulus.*) A student has drafted the plan below for a 15-mark Section B response to the stem “Analyse how codes and narrative conventions work together to convey meaning”.

Stimulus. “Plan: 1. Say the film is about being watched. 2. Talk about how good the acting is throughout. 3. Mention the genre conventions of the thriller. 4. Say it has good camera work in general. 5. Conclude that it conveys meaning well.”

Discuss two ways this plan fails the mandatory requirements of the task, and how each should be fixed. (4 marks)

Q14. Explain how you would build a 15-mark response to the following: “Analyse the construction of representations in the media narrative you have studied this year, and how these representations reflect or challenge views and values

prevalent in the context in which it was produced.” Name the representations, the codes, the specific context and the verdicts you would use, and say why each is needed to meet the task. (6 marks)

Q15. Explain how you would build a 15-mark response to the following: “Analyse the factors that may influence the ways in which audiences from different contexts engage with and read the media narrative you have studied this year. You must consider how the construction of representations reflected or challenged the views and values of a specific context.” Name the audience contexts, the aspect and the representation rider you would use, and say why each is needed to meet the task. (6 marks)

Q16. Discuss why analysing two named, bounded sequences is more effective than writing about a narrative “as a whole” when responding to a 15-mark codes-and-conventions question. (4 marks)

Q17. Analyse how multiple codes and narrative conventions work together to convey meaning in **one** named sequence of a media narrative you have studied this year. (8 marks)

Q18. (*Extended response — Section B style.*) Analyse how codes and narrative conventions work together to convey meaning in the media narrative that you have studied this year. (15 marks)

Your response must analyse:

- two specific sequences in the media narrative
- multiple codes and multiple narrative conventions.

Media narrative: _____

Q19. (*Contemporary example.*) On 5 October 2023, Origma 45’s feature *Shayda* opened in Australian cinemas, having won the Audience Award in the World Cinema Dramatic Competition at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2023. Analyse how a **contained** narrative — one with a small principal cast, few key settings and a single point of view — supports the close-analysis method taught in this subtopic. Refer to at least **three** of the five kit documents. (5 marks)

Answers

Q1. (a) Feature film ≥ 1 hour (or TV/streaming of equivalent length); audio product ≥ 1 hour; photographic series with a narrative structure; digital product (e.g. video game) of equivalent length **or** complexity to the other forms. (b) Any two of: re-visit/re-watch it; cite it at named-moment level; identify its codes, conventions, representations, context and likely readings. (c) Too little constructed material to analyse in depth, and it is outside the AoS1 length requirement.

Q2. (a) Sequence = a bounded stretch of the narrative; named boundary = a start-and-end label a marker would recognise. (b) Three sequences, each named + bounded + placed in the three-act structure. (c) “Throughout the film” is generality — the top examiner complaint; a named sequence gives specific, citable evidence.

Q3. (a) Two codes + one narrative convention from one sequence. (b) What each constructs. (c) “Work together” = the codes and the convention combine to make **one** meaning, interacting rather than listed separately.

Q4. (a) One representation + specific production context (time/place/group + factor). (b) Dominant view/value + reflect or challenge verdict. (c) Judge the values of the society that **made** the product, not the era it depicts.

Q5. (a) Two audiences pinned by time/place/experience. (b) Each reads one aspect differently. (c) “Modern audiences” is unpinned and generic — the 2025 report penalised exactly this.

Q6. (a) “Identify the media narrative that you have studied this year... Media narrative: [title].” (b) Name the element $\rightarrow$ apply it at a named moment/sequence $\rightarrow$ state the meaning/effect/link. (c) The same named-moment paragraph is one full answer at 5 marks and one body paragraph among several at 15 marks.

Q7. Describe (3). One code, one named sequence, what the code constructs there — a specific moment, not “throughout”.

Q8. Discuss (4). Two of: give the sequence a real **named boundary** (not “the sad part”); name **specific codes** and what each constructs; replace “throughout” with a bounded moment; state the **cause-and-effect** turn, not just “the mood”.

Q9. Discuss (5). Two named codes + one narrative convention at one bounded moment; the **interaction** (codes develop the convention) made explicit with causal language.

Q10. Discuss (5). One representation, pinned production context, code-level construction, one specific view/value, an explicit **reflect/challenge** verdict — representation and value balanced.

Q11. Analyse (8). One **aspect** (not Example 3’s), two **named** audience contexts pinned by **experience or media literacy**, how **each** context produces its reading (emotional and/or cognitive); no whole-film, no “modern audiences”.

Q12. Explain (6). A **causal chain** from a named context factor to a specific construction choice — integrated, not “the context was X and separately the film did Y”.

Q13. Discuss (4). Two of: no two **specific sequences**; **genre** conventions offered where **narrative** conventions are required; codes named “in general”, not at named moments; no **interaction** of codes and conventions. Each with its fix.

Q14. Explain (6). A plan naming ≥ 2 representations, their codes, the specific production context, and reflect/challenge verdicts — context integrated causally, with a reason given for each choice.

Q15. Explain (6). A plan naming ≥ 2 audience contexts, the aspect, factors shaping each reading, and the **representation rider** (a representation reflecting/challenging views/values of a specific context) — each justified against the task’s requirements.

Q16. Discuss (4). Named bounded sequences give citable evidence and let you show interaction at a precise moment; “as a whole” forces generality, the recurring examiner penalty.

Q17. Analyse (8). One named sequence; **multiple** codes + **multiple** narrative conventions; the meaning they build **together**; specialised language throughout.

Q18. See Fully-worked solutions for a full model, high/mid/low band descriptors and common errors.

Q19. Analyse (5). At least three kit documents, each tied to a **specific** quality of a contained narrative: few settings $\rightarrow$ **named boundaries** instead of vague “parts”; small cast $\rightarrow$ several codes stacking at **one moment** for the evidence bank’s interaction column; single **point of view** $\rightarrow$ one clearly pinned representation. Credit also for the 1995 setting versus the 2022–23 **production context** (the verdict attaches to the latter), the **public record** available for the context dossier, and the two already-pinned reception contexts (Sundance January 2023; Australian cinemas from October 2023).

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) The four AoS1 options are a **feature film of at least one hour** (or a **television/streaming** narrative of equivalent length); an **audio product of at least one hour**; a **photographic series with a narrative structure**; and a **digital product** such as a **video game** of equivalent length **or** complexity to the other forms. (b) You must be able to **re-visit** the product and **cite it at named-moment level** — that is, point to specific sequences, codes and conventions rather than summarising the plot. (c) A three-minute clip contains too little constructed material to analyse in the depth the outcome requires, and it falls outside the AoS1 **length requirement**, which exists precisely so there is enough to study.

Q2. (a) A **sequence** is a bounded stretch of the narrative that hangs together as a unit; a **named boundary** is a recognisable label with a start and an end (for example “the falling-light scene”). (b) *Model (studied narrative: The*

Truman Show, 1998: (1) **The morning greeting** — Truman’s cheery to-camera farewell as he leaves home; **Act 1 establishment**. (2) **The rain on the beach** — the column of rain that follows only Truman; **Act 2 rising suspicion**. (3) **The boat and the sky wall** — the *Santa Maria* striking the painted horizon; **Act 3 resolution**. (c) “Throughout the film...” is **generality**, and generality is the single most repeated examiner complaint; a **named sequence** gives the marker a **specific, citable moment** to credit, which is what analysis marks reward. *Marker’s note*: a common error is to log vague “parts” (“the beginning”, “the sad bit”) — a boundary must be nameable.

Q3. (a)–(b) *Model (studied narrative: The Truman Show, 1998), the falling-light sequence*: **camera** — a tight medium shot of Truman’s startled face constructs his first flicker of doubt; **mise en scene** — the industrial rig lying on the pristine suburban street constructs the world as **built** rather than real; **narrative convention: cause and effect** — the malfunction directly triggers Truman’s suspicion, constructing the turn that starts his arc. (c) The three **work together** because the codes do not simply coexist: the shot of doubt and the out-of-place rig **feed** the cause-and-effect turn, so the audience reads one combined meaning — an ordered world beginning to fail — rather than three separate observations. *Marker’s note*: “work together” must be shown as **interaction**; listing a code, then a code, then a convention, is exactly the 2025 B1 failing.

Q4. (a)–(b) *Model (studied narrative: The Truman Show, 1998)*: the representation of **Seahaven** as idyllic suburbia, pinned to **US society in 1998** (a **cultural** context). The **dominant value** at stake is the ideal of the **safe, wholesome suburb**; the film **challenges** it, because Seahaven’s manicured perfection is progressively **exposed as a manufactured set**, inviting the audience to distrust the ideal rather than admire it. (c) Keep the verdict on the **production context** by asking “what did the society that **made** this believe?” — here, 1998 America — not “what era does it show?”. *The Truman Show* has no separate depicted era, but for a period narrative you would judge the values of the production year and only *then* note which of the depicted era’s values it challenges. *Marker’s note*: the classic slip is to praise or criticise “the values of the time shown” — the verdict attaches to the **making**, not the setting.

Q5. (a)–(b) *Model (studied narrative: The Truman Show, 1998)*: (1) **Cinema audiences at the 1998 release** read the surveillance premise as an **inventive fantasy** — a clever thought experiment with no everyday equivalent. (2) An **Australian teenager streaming it in 2025**, whose own life is tracked and monetised online, reads the **same** premise as **unsettling realism**. (c) “Modern audiences” is **unpinned** — it names no time, place or group — so it cannot support a claim about *why* a reading arises; the 2025 report penalised this generality directly. Pin the audience by **time, place and experience** instead. *Marker’s note*: the reading must be explained by the **context**, not merely asserted (“some people like it”).

Q6. (a) The Section A line reads: “**Identify the media narrative that you have studied this year for ‘Narratives and their contexts’. You must use this media narrative to respond to Questions 2 and 3. Media narrative: The Truman Show (1998).**” (b) The three steps are: **name** the element (code / convention / representation / context factor) → **apply** it at a **named moment or sequence** → **state** the meaning, effect or link. (c) At **5 marks** that single named-moment paragraph, run once, is the **whole** answer; at **15 marks** the very same paragraph becomes **one body paragraph** among several, joined to other sequences and to integrated context — you scale by **repeating and connecting** the move, not by changing it. *Marker’s note*: students often think a 15-marker needs a new technique; it needs the **same** move, done more times and made to interact.

Q7. “Describe” asks for an account of how the code works. *Model (studied narrative: The Truman Show, 1998)*: In the **elevator sequence** — bounded by Truman stepping toward an office lift and glimpsing, through its open side, a crew and catering table behind what should be a solid wall — the **mise en scene** conveys meaning by revealing the **back of the set**. The ordinary prop of an elevator is shown to have no real interior; the selected detail of crew caught mid-break constructs Truman’s world as a **stage with a concealed workforce**, so the audience reads his reality as **operated**. *Marker’s note*: three marks need one code, one **named** moment and what it constructs — not a summary of the plot around it.

Q8. “Discuss” asks you to develop each improvement. **First, the entry has no usable boundary**. “The sad part” and “throughout the film” name nothing a marker could locate; the student should replace it with a **named, bounded sequence** — a specific stretch with a recognisable start and end — so it can be cited as evidence. **Second, the codes are unspecified**. “Codes: lots of them” bankrupts the entry; the student should name **specific codes** (for example lighting and sound) and record **what each constructs**, plus the **cause-and-effect** turn the sequence delivers, rather than the vague “shows the mood”. Fixed, the entry becomes something a 15-mark paragraph can actually draw on. *Common errors*: this stimulus contains the two live traps at once — **generality** (“throughout”) and **unnamed codes** (“lots of them”).

Q9. “Discuss” asks you to develop the point with evidence and reach a position. Model (studied narrative: *The Truman Show*, 1998): In the **reunion-with-his-father** sequence — bounded by a dishevelled man approaching Truman in the street and ending as he is bundled away before Truman can reach him — two codes work together to develop the narrative convention of the **character arc**. The **acting**, Truman’s face shifting from shock to desperate recognition, and the **editing**, which cuts sharply between Truman straining forward and unseen hands hauling the man onto a bus, combine to construct a man whose past has been **taken from him and is now being managed**. Because the performance and the cutting reinforce each other — the emotion rising exactly as the escape is blocked — the codes **develop** Truman’s arc from suspicion toward resolve: this is the moment his private grief becomes evidence that his life is controlled. The two codes and the arc therefore work as one. *Marker’s note:* five marks reward the **interaction** (“work together”) at a **named** moment; naming two codes without linking them to the convention stalls at mid-range.

Q10. “Discuss” asks you to develop and reach a position — the 5-mark A2 shape. Model (studied narrative: *The Truman Show*, 1998): The representation of **Seahaven** as a picture-perfect suburb **challenges** a **cultural** value held in **US society in 1998** — the ideal of the safe, wholesome suburban town as the good life. Seahaven is **constructed** through a bright, symmetrical **mise en scene** of manicured lawns and identical smiling neighbours, and through the **selection** of relentlessly cheerful staged interactions (including product placements delivered straight to camera). Because the narrative steadily reveals this perfection to be a **manufactured set** operated for profit, the construction works **against** the idealised-suburb value, inviting the audience to see the wholesome facade as artificial and controlling rather than admirable. The representation and the value are developed together: we read the challenge **through** how the suburb is built. *Marker’s note:* keep the representation and the view/value balanced and the **challenge** explicit — the common slip is to describe how pretty Seahaven looks and tack the value on at the end. [Substitute: name one representation in your narrative, pin its production context, and make the reflect/challenge verdict explicit through the codes that build it.]

Q11. “Analyse” asks you to break an aspect into its parts and show how two contexts read it — the 8-mark shape. Model (studied narrative: *The Truman Show*, 1998): The aspect I will analyse is the film’s recurring **cutaways to the show-within-the-show’s own viewers** — the bar regulars, the man watching from his bath, the two car-park security guards who follow every episode — and how this aspect is read by two audiences pinned by **experience** rather than era. For a **first-time teenage viewer watching for the story**, these spectators read as **harmless enthusiasts** who make Truman’s popularity believable; they are part of the film’s warmth and comedy, and the viewer engages with them **emotionally**, as fellow fans rooting for a likeable man. For a **media-literate adult analysing the film critically**, the same cutaways read as an **indictment of passive, complicit spectatorship**: people who consume a stranger’s private life for entertainment, and who — the film pointedly shows — will move straight on to the next programme once his story ends. This viewer engages **cognitively** with the spectators as a **mirror** of the real audience, so the aspect becomes a comment on media consumption itself. The two readings diverge because the audiences bring different **experience and media literacy** to the same aspect: one sees fans, the other sees an accusation. *Marker’s note:* eight marks require **one aspect, two named contexts** — here pinned by **experience and media literacy**, as the question directs, not by era — and an explanation of **why** each context reads as it does; a whole-film summary or “modern audiences” caps the mark. [Substitute: pick one aspect of your narrative and two audiences pinned by experience or media literacy; explain what each brings to that aspect.]

Q12. “Explain” asks for a how/why chain from context to construction. Model (studied narrative: *The Truman Show*, 1998): The film was produced in a **1998 institutional and cultural context** in which cable and tabloid television were expanding and the public was increasingly fascinated by — and uneasy about — lives lived on camera. This context directly shapes a central **construction choice**: the film’s **concealed-camera visual style**, in which Truman is repeatedly framed through hidden vantage points (a car dashboard, a mirror, a button). Because the production context was one of proliferating, boundary-blurring television, Weir and Niccol **build** the whole look of the film to imitate a broadcast that never stops watching — the style is not incidental but a **response** to the media anxieties of its moment. The causal chain runs from **context** (a surveillance-curious media culture) to **choice** (the concealed-camera aesthetic) to **meaning** (a world in which private life has become continuous entertainment). *Marker’s note:* “explain” here means the chain must be **causal and integrated** — the 2024 B1 penalty was for context “bolted on”; state *because the context was X, the film did Y*.

Q13. “Discuss” asks you to develop each fault and its fix. **First, the plan supplies no two specific sequences.** The stem’s first mandatory bullet demands **two specific sequences with boundaries**; “say the film is about being watched” and “good acting throughout” are whole-film generalities. The fix is to name **two bounded sequences** and

analyse codes and conventions **within** them. **Second, the plan offers genre conventions where narrative conventions are required.** “The genre conventions of the thriller” answers a different question; the second bullet requires **narrative conventions** — character, character arc, three-act structure, cause and effect, setting, point of view. The fix is to replace the genre talk with named **narrative** conventions and to show them **interacting** with the codes, not listed beside them (“good camera work in general” must become a specific code at a specific moment). *Common errors*: the two faults here — **no bounded sequences** and **genre-for-narrative conventions** — are the exact failings the 2025 report named for this rotation.

Q14. “Explain” asks for a how/why chain — here, how the response would be built and why each element is required; the plan, not the full essay — rotation 2 (representations × views/values). Model plan (studied narrative: *The Truman Show*, 1998):

- **Frame / context:** produced in **1998 America** (cultural/institutional factor: expanding television, media saturation) — the lens for every verdict.
- **Representation 1 — Truman, the unknowing everyman.** Codes: **acting** (his open, trusting manner) + **camera** (framing him as the watched centre of every scene). Verdict: **reflects** the value that an **authentic, self-directed life** is worth having — his fight to leave is built as heroic.
- **Representation 2 — Christof and the network, the media creator.** Codes: **lighting** (Christof lit coolly in his lunar control room) + **sound** (his calm, godlike commands). Verdict: **challenges** trust in the media institution as benign — the creator is shown as controlling and the industry as commercial.
- **Integration:** link both verdicts **causally** to 1998’s media anxieties, not as a separate paragraph; keep representation and value balanced in each body paragraph.
- **Requirements met:** at least **two representations**, because the stem asks for the construction of representations in the plural; **causal, integrated** context, because the 2024 penalty was for context bolted on at the end.

Marker’s note: a plan answer is marked on **coverage, structure and justification** — name the representations, codes, context and verdicts and say what each is doing for the task; do not write the finished prose. [*Substitute: swap in two representations from your narrative, their codes, your production context and two reflect/challenge verdicts.*]

Q15. “Explain” asks for the how/why chain behind the plan — rotation 3 (audiences × contexts, with a representation rider). Model plan (studied narrative: *The Truman Show*, 1998):

- **Aspect chosen:** the **surveillance premise** (one aspect, carried through the response).
- **Audience context 1: cinema audiences in 1998** — factors: no everyday experience of life-broadcast, so they read the premise as **satirical fantasy**.
- **Audience context 2: an Australian teenager streaming it in 2025** — factors: lived experience of tracked, monetised online life, so they read the same premise as **unsettling realism**.
- **Factors influencing the readings:** time, experience and media literacy (the changed context of reception).
- **Representation rider (required):** the representation of **Seahaven** as idyllic suburbia, constructed through manicured **mise en scene**, **challenges** the 1998 **cultural** value of the wholesome suburb — and a 2025 audience, primed by surveillance, reads that challenge even more sharply.
- **Requirements met:** two **named**, differently pinned contexts, because “different contexts” is the stem’s controlling term and an unpinned group cannot explain a reading; the **representation rider** addressed, because the stem makes it compulsory (“you must consider...”).

Marker’s note: the rider is a **mandatory** element of this rotation — a plan that analyses audiences but forgets the representation-and-values requirement cannot reach the top band. [*Substitute: swap in two audience contexts for your narrative, one aspect, and one representation that carries the views-and-values rider.*]

Q16. “Discuss” asks you to develop the argument. Analysing **two named, bounded sequences** beats writing about the narrative “as a whole” because it converts vague impression into **citable evidence**. A named sequence gives the marker a precise location — “the beach-rain sequence”, “the boat-and-sky-wall climax” — at which a specific code and a specific convention can be shown **interacting**; “as a whole” forces **generality**, which every examiner report from 2018 onward names as the reason mid-range answers stall. Two bounded sequences also let you demonstrate that the film’s meaning is **built repeatedly**, through different code mixes, which is exactly what “analyse how codes and

narrative conventions work together” rewards. Breadth without boundaries reads as retelling; **two sequences, each analysed at a named moment**, reads as analysis. *Marker’s note*: the point is not “more is better” but “**specific** is better” — depth at named boundaries, not coverage of the plot.

Q17. “*Analyse*” asks you to deconstruct one sequence and show multiple codes and conventions working together — the 8-mark shape. *Model (studied narrative: The Truman Show, 1998)*: I will analyse the **engineered-traffic-jam sequence** — bounded by Truman impulsively driving out of Seahaven with his wife and ending as a staged gridlock, a forest fire and a roadblock at the Seahaven nuclear plant, staffed by police and men in radiation suits reporting a leak, halt the escape. Multiple codes and narrative conventions work together here to construct Truman’s world as a **machine that closes around him**. The **editing** cuts with rising speed between Truman’s determined driving and the town’s instant improvisation of obstacles, while the **sound** layers his wife’s escalating, scripted panic over the scene; together these codes build **momentum and then blockage**. They operate on two narrative conventions at once: **cause and effect** (each initiative of Truman’s is met by a manufactured counter-move) and **setting** (Seahaven revealed as a controlled space that can reconfigure itself at will). The **acting** — the wife’s performance cracking under pressure — feeds the same meaning, hinting that the people around him are staff, not family. Because the codes and both conventions are arranged to **answer** Truman’s every attempt, the sequence constructs, in one continuous build, the film’s central idea: a life that looks free but is **operated**. *Marker’s note*: eight marks need **multiple** codes and **multiple** narrative conventions in **one** named sequence, shown **interacting** — not one code analysed at length, and not a tour of the whole film.

Q18. *Command term — analyse*: break the narrative into its constructed elements and show how codes and narrative conventions **work together** to convey meaning, with specific evidence across **two** bounded sequences.

Media narrative: *The Truman Show* (1998)

Model response (studied narrative: The Truman Show, 1998):

The Truman Show (Peter Weir, 1998) constructs its meaning — that Truman Burbank’s contented life is in fact a manufactured, watched product — by making media codes and narrative conventions work together, so that at each stage the **way** a sequence is built *is* the meaning. Two sequences, drawn from opposite ends of the three-act structure, show this most clearly: the **opening morning greeting** and the **climactic collision with the sky and the EXIT door**.

In the **opening morning-greeting sequence** — bounded by Truman stepping out of his front door and ending as he drives off to work with a cheery farewell to his neighbours — codes and narrative conventions work together to construct a world that is **perfect and therefore false**. The **mise en scene** is relentlessly symmetrical and bright: identical lawns, primary colours, neighbours positioned like furniture. The **acting** of those neighbours is a fraction too warm, their greetings returned on cue, so the **camera**, holding Truman as the centre of every composition, quietly frames him as the one real figure among performers. These codes work directly on the narrative conventions of **setting** and **character**: the setting is established as a closed, ordered world, and Truman is established as its unknowing protagonist, comfortable inside it. The codes and conventions **interact** — the too-bright mise en scene and the on-cue performances make the *establishment itself* feel staged — so that the audience, from the first minutes, reads Seahaven as a construction and Truman as its subject. This is the film setting up, through **cause and effect**, everything the ending will pay off: a contentment built to be broken.

The **climactic sequence** — bounded by the bow of Truman’s boat, the *Santa Maria*, striking the painted horizon and ending as he bows and steps through the EXIT door — reverses that construction to convey the meaning of **agency reclaimed**. Here the codes shift decisively. The **lighting and visual composition** reveal the “sky” to be a solid, painted wall, collapsing the illusion the opening had so carefully built; the **sound** drops to a hush as Truman touches the wall, then swells as Christof’s disembodied voice addresses him from above like a god. The **camera** frames Truman small against the vast dome, then holds on the single dark rectangle of the EXIT door. These codes work together on the narrative conventions of **character arc** and **three-act structure**: the arc that began with the falling light completes as Truman, no longer content, chooses the unknown; and the three-act structure resolves as the protagonist acts against the world that made him. The interaction is exact — the wall (composition) exposing the lie, the hush and swell (sound) marking the moment of choice, and the framing (camera) shrinking then liberating him — so the audience reads a single meaning: the manufactured world, established as seamless in the opening, is **broken by its subject’s will** at the close.

Read together, the two sequences show the film’s meaning built by the **same** collaboration of codes and conventions, inverted from beginning to end: the opening uses bright mise en scene, on-cue acting and centring camera to **construct** the perfect false world, and the climax uses exposing composition, hushed then swelling sound and shrinking-then-freeing framing to **dismantle** it. Because in both sequences the codes operate *through* the narrative conventions of setting, character, character arc and three-act structure — rather than beside them — *The Truman Show* conveys, at named moments, a controlled life and its escape as a single, constructed idea.

*[Substitute: for your narrative, choose one **establishing** sequence and one **climactic** sequence; show the **same** controlling meaning built in the first and paid off in the second, with multiple codes operating **through** named narrative conventions in each.]*

Band descriptors (Section B, out of 15):

- **High (12–15):** analyses **two specific sequences** with **named boundaries**, each carrying **multiple codes and multiple narrative conventions**; codes and conventions shown **interacting** (“work together”), not listed; specialised media language precise and sustained; all bullet requirements met.
- **Mid (7–11):** two sequences present but one thinly evidenced, or codes and conventions **listed separately** rather than interacting; some named moments but some drift to whole-film generality; media language present but uneven.
- **Low (1–6):** **retells** the story or treats the film “as a whole”; only one sequence, or none bounded; **genre** conventions offered where **narrative** conventions are required; codes named “in general”; few media terms.

Common errors: whole-film generality (“throughout *The Truman Show*...”) instead of named boundaries; **genre** conventions supplied where **narrative** conventions were demanded; codes and conventions **listed separately** rather than shown working together; a single sequence analysed twice instead of two; retelling the plot in place of analysing construction.

Q19. “Analyse” asks you to break the product’s qualities into parts and show what each one does to the method — the 5-mark shape. *Model response:* A contained narrative supports close analysis because it **concentrates** evidence rather than spreading it. For the **sequence log**, few key settings — the shelter, the family house, the car — make boundaries easy to **name** and hard to confuse; a marker can locate the cited stretch at once, which is precisely what the sprawling alternative (“throughout the film...”) cannot deliver. For the **evidence bank**, a small principal cast means the same figures recur, so **acting**, **camera** and **mise en scene** stack at a *single* moment instead of being spread thinly across a large ensemble — and it is that stacking that lets the decisive “what they construct **together**” column be filled honestly rather than as two separate lists. For the **representation and views/values map**, a single **point of view** fixes whose representation is being constructed, so the **reflect/challenge** verdict has one clear object; and because *Shayda*’s narrative is set in 1995 while the film was produced in **2022–23**, the product also forces the correct habit — judging the **production context**, not the era depicted. The **context dossier** benefits too: public funding by Screen Australia, VicScreen and the MIFF Premiere Fund puts the production facts on the **public record** that section (e) requires. *Marker’s note:* five marks reward **specific** links — each quality named, each tied to a **named** kit document and to what it makes possible; listing the five documents without saying what containment does to each stalls at mid-range.

Topic 1 Test — Narratives and their contexts

Total 50 marks (Section A 35 marks, Section B 15 marks). Writing time: 75 minutes — exam pace, about 1.5 minutes per mark. Answer all questions in the spaces provided. Stationery only: no calculator, no notes, no formula or data sheet (the VCE Media examination provides none). Question numbering restarts in Section B.

This test examines Chapters 1–3 only — Unit 3, Area of Study 1: media narratives and media language, audiences, and narratives in context. Where a question refers to “the media narrative”, you must use the narrative you declare below.

Section A — structured questions

Narratives and their contexts

Use the information provided below to answer Questions 1 and 2.

Exhibition guide extract — *Clearance*

Clearance is a photographic series of twenty-four framed prints, hung in a fixed order along one wall of a regional gallery. Four of the twenty-four prints are described here.

Frame 1. A girl of about sixteen stands beside a high-jump bar set level with her head on a country athletics track. She is photographed from a low angle, so the bar and its uprights run across the frame above her and a flat grey sky fills the rest of it. The landing mat behind her is still under its cover.

Frame 9. The same girl, photographed from a high angle from the top of the grandstand, walks out her run-up alone on an otherwise empty track. She stands at the far left of a wide frame; the rest of it is empty lanes, the uncovered mat and the long shadow of the uprights.

Frame 17. A close-up of a typed results sheet pinned to the wire fence. Fourteen heights are listed down the page, rising from lowest to highest, each beside the name of the athlete who cleared it. The second-last height has been circled in biro, and the name beside it is hers.

Frame 23. The grandstand is full and the floodlights are on. The same girl, photographed from the same place on the grandstand, is caught in mid-air above the bar at the centre of the frame, her back arched, with the mat, the officials and the crowd close around her.

Question 1 (3 marks)

Describe how one media code conveys meaning in the photographic series described above.

Question 2 (4 marks)

Explain how the series described above depicts a chain of events in a cause-and-effect relationship occurring in physical or virtual space over a period of time.

Identify the media narrative that you have studied this year for ‘Narratives and their contexts’.

You must use this media narrative to respond to Questions 3 to 7.

Media narrative _____

Question 3 (4 marks)

Describe one way in which the construction of the media narrative is appropriate to its media form.

Question 4 (5 marks)

Discuss how the construction of one representation in the media narrative reflects or challenges one view or value held in the society in which it was produced.

Question 5 (6 marks)

Discuss how the construction of one sequence in the media narrative engages a specific audience both emotionally and cognitively, and how those two ways of engaging combine.

Question 6 (5 marks)

Discuss one context in which an audience consumed the media narrative, and how that context of consumption impacted the audience's reading of it.

Question 7 (8 marks)

Analyse how audiences from two different contexts may engage with or read one aspect of the media narrative. In your response, use a different aspect from the one you discussed in Question 5.

End of Section A

Section B — extended response

Section B is worth 15 marks. One question. Question numbering restarts. Answer in the space provided.

Question 1 (15 marks)

Media narrative _____

Analyse how media codes and narrative conventions work together to convey meaning in the media narrative that you have studied this year.

Your response must analyse:

- two specific sequences in the media narrative
- multiple media codes and multiple narrative conventions.

End of examination questions

Topic 1 Test — solutions

Command terms used in this test. The definitions below are the VCAA glossary definitions as reproduced in the 2024 VCE Media external assessment report; every model response is built to the depth its term demands.

Term	Definition	Used at
Describe	Provide the characteristics, features and qualities of a given concept, opinion, situation, event, process, effect, argument, text or narrative in an accurate way. Students are required to go beyond listing and provide a clear explanation.	A Q1 (3), A Q3 (4)
Explain	Account for how or why something occurs — make the process or the reason clear, not merely the features. (Working definition: “explain” is not among the five terms defined in the 2024 report, which reproduced only the terms used on that paper.)	A Q2 (4)
Discuss	Present a clear, considered and balanced argument or prose that identifies issues and shows the strengths and weaknesses of, or points for and against, one or more arguments, concepts, factors, hypotheses, narratives and/or opinions. Students are asked to weigh up the evidence before reaching a conclusion.	A Q4 (5), A Q5 (6), A Q6 (5)
Analyse	Identify the key components and the significance of relationships between them. Students are required to draw out and relate implications and determine the logic and reasonableness of the information.	A Q7 (8), B Q1 (15)

*The model responses for the studied-narrative questions use **Looking for Alibrandi** (Kate Woods, 2000) throughout, as a student would use one narrative across a whole paper. Each is followed by a bracketed substitution note showing how to transfer the move to your own narrative.*

Section A — solutions

Question 1 (3 marks)

Command term — *describe*: provide the characteristics, features and qualities of the code in an accurate way, going beyond listing.

Model response. The media code is the **camera**, specifically the choice of **angle**. In **Frame 9** the girl is photographed from a **high angle**, from the top of the grandstand, looking down on her as she walks out her run-up alone, and the wide framing leaves her at the far left with empty lanes, the uncovered mat and the long shadow of the uprights filling the rest of the picture. Because the camera looks **down** on her and the composition surrounds her with unused space, the code constructs her as small and unwatched — one athlete working in a venue built for a crowd that is not there.

Marks: 1 — a specific code and its device named precisely (“camera / high angle”, not “the way it is photographed”).
1 — its application described accurately at a **named frame**. 1 — the meaning it conveys, linked causally to the choice.

Other creditable codes: **lighting** (Frame 1’s flat grey sky drains the scene of contrast, against Frame 23’s floodlights); **visual composition** (the negative space in Frame 9, and the shift from far left to dead centre in Frame 23); **text and graphics** (the circled height on the results sheet in Frame 17 constructs a single achievement lifted out of a list); **mise en scene** (the covered mat in Frame 1 against the uncovered mat in Frame 9 — the venue not yet in use, then in use). Any study-design code, used precisely, is creditable.

Common errors: naming a code and stopping, with no meaning stated — the marks live in the third step; **confusing high angle (camera looks down) with low angle (camera looks up)** — the first of the three common errors the 2025 report lists on this question shape; describing all four frames instead of one code; “the photo looks lonely” with no code named; general language where media language is required.

Question 2 (4 marks)

Command term — explain: account for **how** the still-image form produces each feature of a narrative — a chain of events, cause and effect, space and time.

Model response. A media narrative is the depiction of a **chain of events in a cause-and-effect relationship occurring in physical or virtual space over a period of time**, and *Clearance* produces all four features even though every frame is frozen. First, the **chain of events** comes from the fixed hang: because the twenty-four prints are displayed in a set order, the viewer reads across them and receives a sequence — she stands beside a bar she has not yet cleared (Frame 1), she works the run-up alone on an empty track (Frame 9), the results sheet is shown (Frame 17), and she jumps in front of a full stand (Frame 23). Second, the **cause and effect** lives in the gaps between the frames, and **Frame 17 is the causal hinge**: because the height beside her name has been circled, the solitary work of Frame 9 has produced a result; because that result stands on the sheet, she is on the track under floodlights in Frame 23. The photographer supplies no captions and no connecting text, so the viewer must supply the “because” — which is exactly how a wordless print or photographic narrative works. Third, the events occur in a definite **physical space**, the country athletics track, its grandstand and the fence around it, and fourth, **over a period of time** — from the flat grey afternoon of Frames 1 and 9 to the floodlit evening of Frame 23, and, through the results sheet, across a whole season of jumps. Because the frames have been **selected and ordered** rather than simply collected, the series is a narrative and not an album.

Marks: 1 — chain of events tied to the fixed order of the hang. 1 — cause and effect identified with the causal hinge named. 1 — space and time both located in the described frames. 1 — the explanatory link: the still-image form makes the audience infer the causal links between frames.

Common errors: listing what each frame shows without identifying a single causal link — a **sequence** is not a narrative; asserting “it tells a story” without testing the four features; claiming a photographic series cannot be a narrative because nothing moves; answering with codes (that is Question 1) instead of the narrative features.

Question 3 (4 marks)

Command term — describe: provide the characteristics and qualities of the construction choice accurately, and go beyond listing.

Model response (studied narrative: Looking for Alibrandi, 2000). The narrative is a feature film, and one construction appropriate to the **moving-image form** is its sustained first-person **voice-over** working with **subjective fantasy inserts**. Melina Marchetta adapted the screenplay from her own first-person novel, where Josie’s running commentary is simply the prose; film cannot print prose, so the construction converts it into two devices the form affords. Pia Miranda’s voice-over runs across the soundtrack, confiding in the audience while the picture track continues, and Josie’s imaginings are staged as literal images — most clearly in the sequence where she pictures the older women of her grandmother’s circle as a “spy ring” reporting her movements, one of them using a brooch as a camera. Because the moving-image form carries a voice on one track and a picture on another, it can hold the narrator’s private commentary and the outside world in the same instant, so the audience receives both her version of events and the events at once — a construction print cannot make and audio cannot show.

Marks: 1 — the media form named and one specific construction choice identified. 2 — the choice described accurately at a named point in the narrative. 1 — a clear statement of **why** the choice suits this form (the affordance it uses).

Common errors: describing the form rather than a construction (“it is a film, and films have scenes”); naming a code with no link to what the form makes possible; discussing **genre** where **form** was asked; whole-narrative generality with no named moment.

[Substitute: name your narrative’s form, one construction choice, the named moment where it operates, and the affordance of that form — a podcast’s ear-only world-building, a photographic series’ viewer-set pace, a game’s interactivity.]

Question 4 (5 marks)

Command term — discuss: weigh the evidence and reach a conclusion — here, a reflect-or-challenge verdict argued from construction evidence.

Model response (studied narrative: Looking for Alibrandi, 2000). The representation I will discuss is the **representation of the Italian-Australian extended family at Tomato Day**, the family’s annual sauce-making ritual with which the film opens. The **context of production** is Australia in 2000 — the film was released on 4 May 2000 — and the relevant factors are **social and political**: immigration and multiculturalism had been publicly and bitterly contested since Pauline Hanson’s maiden speech of 10 September 1996 and One Nation’s eleven seats at the 1998 Queensland state election, and the Howard Government had issued its policy statement *A New Agenda for Multicultural Australia* in December 1999, five months before the film reached cinemas. The **dominant view** at stake in that debate was that migrant communities remain separate from ordinary Australian life and do not assimilate into it.

The representation is constructed to work **against** that view. The opening is shot in a **sepia tint** — the **colour** code placing the ritual at a nostalgic distance, as though it belonged to another country and another century — and the tint drops away into full colour at the moment Josie appears, her first-person **voice-over** telling the audience that what may look quirky and charming is, to her, simply embarrassing. The **sound** code carries the family’s arguments in fast, overlapping English and Italian, and the **mise en scene** sets the entire ritual in an ordinary suburban Sydney backyard. Because the “old country” framing is switched off by the arrival of a bored Australian teenager, and because the household is built as argumentative, bilingual and suburban rather than sealed and exotic, the representation **challenges** the dominant view of its production context: it places this family inside Australian life, using an Australian daughter’s ordinary embarrassment as the proof.

Marks: 1 — a specific representation named (of a group, person, place or idea — never a theme). 1 — the production context pinned by time, place and a named factor. 1 — code-level construction evidence at a named point. 1 — a specific view or value located in that context. 1 — a reflect/challenge verdict linked causally, with representation and view developed in balance.

Common errors: offering a **theme** (“belonging”, “identity”, “family”) where a **representation** was required; writing “society” or “back then” instead of a pinned time, place and group; judging the **depicted era** rather than the **production context**; developing the representation richly and bolting the view or value onto the final sentence — the imbalance the 2025 report penalised on this exact question shape; construction claims with no code named.

[Substitute: name one representation from your narrative, pin your production context by when, where and which factor, give one code-level moment, name one dominant view or value, then commit to reflect or challenge and justify it.]

Question 5 (6 marks)

Command term — discuss: argue the case, weighing both channels of engagement rather than asserting one.

Model response (studied narrative: Looking for Alibrandi, 2000). I will discuss the **school-fight and its aftermath**, bounded by Josie breaking a classmate’s nose with a school book after being provoked, running through Michael Andretti’s intervention on her behalf, and ending in the argument at home in which Christina accuses her of making her absent father look like a hero. The audience I will name is **Australian secondary students aged roughly 16 to**

18, many of them from migrant families in Australian cities, negotiating their own family authority in their final school years.

Emotionally, the sequence works through **acting** and **editing**. Josie's performance — the flare of temper, the refusal to back down that the film builds into her characterisation — delivers the blow as release, and the tight cutting between faces in the domestic argument that follows converts that release into alarm. The audience feels the satisfaction of retaliation and then the cost of it within a few minutes, which is why the film's family confrontations have been described as bruising rather than comic.

Cognitively, the same sequence sets the audience thinking. Michael's intervention is the first evidence that a father absent for seventeen years might act like one, so the audience is put to work weighing whether this is fatherhood or convenience — and Christina's accusation puts that very question into words, forcing the interpretation rather than supplying it.

The two channels **combine** into the complex experience the study design's definition requires. Because the audience has just enjoyed Josie's retaliation, it is disposed to welcome Michael's rescue; Christina's line then makes that welcome uncomfortable, so the feeling sharpens the thinking and the thinking sours the feeling. For 16- to 18-year-olds already testing the limits of family authority, being made to enjoy a transgression and then to doubt their own approval of it is the engagement itself.

Marks: 1 — sequence named with boundaries. 1 — audience pinned by context, demographics and traits (not “teenagers”). 2 — emotional engagement anchored to a named code or convention at that moment. 1 — cognitive engagement anchored likewise. 1 — the **combination** of the two channels stated explicitly.

Common errors: naming feelings with nothing to generate them (“it is really gripping”); answering with **consumption** (where it is watched) or **reading** (the meaning made) instead of **engagement**; a generic audience; naming both channels but never showing how they combine — the combination is the definitional heart of the term, not an optional flourish.

[Substitute: choose one bounded sequence, pin one audience precisely, and run the four steps — code or convention at a named moment, how it works, which channel, then the combination.]

Question 6 (5 marks)

Command term — discuss: weigh how the mode and setting of consumption bear on the meaning made.

Model response (studied narrative: Looking for Alibrandi, 2000). The context of consumption I will discuss is the film watched **in an Australian secondary classroom**. The **physical way** it is consumed is a single projected screen at the front of the room with modest speakers, viewed in three segments across a week, stopped and rewound at the teacher's discretion, with notebooks open. The **context of the time and place** is daytime school hours, communally, among about twenty-five classmates, with the film already framed as a set text within a unit of study.

That context alters the **reading** causally, in three ways. Because the film is repeatedly paused at points the teacher chooses, the audience is prevented from being carried along by the story and is directed instead at the construction: the opening's shift out of sepia into full colour is stopped on and pointed at, so the class reads it as a deliberate authorial signal rather than absorbing it as atmosphere. Because the viewing is communal, and the class contains students from many family backgrounds, the bilingual family arguments draw audible reaction and then discussion, so any one student's reading is formed partly out of the responses of others in the room. And because the film arrives pre-framed as a text to be analysed, students read it from the first minutes as a constructed argument about belonging in Australia rather than as a romance about a final school year. The same film streamed alone on a phone in one uninterrupted sitting would far more likely be read as Josie's personal love story.

Marks: 1 — mode or site of consumption named specifically (not “at home”, “online”). 1 — the physical way it is consumed. 1 — the context of time and place. 2 — the impact on the **reading**, stated causally (“because ... so ...”); a contrasting consumption context is creditable within these marks.

Common errors: answering with the **production** context — when, where and by whom the narrative was **made** — when the **consumption** context was asked; the 2024 report sets that requirement out expressly, telling students to “discuss the context in which the media narrative was consumed and read, not the context of its production”; naming a

mode of consumption but never reaching a reading; sliding into **engagement** (how it made them feel) instead of **reading** (the meaning made); “people watch it at home” with no detail of time or place.

[Substitute: name one mode or site for your narrative, describe both halves of reception, then link causally to one specific meaning the audience makes.]

Question 7 (8 marks)

Command term — analyse: identify the key components and the significance of the relationships between them — here, one aspect, two contexts, and the causal relationship between each context and its reading.

Model response (studied narrative: Looking for Alibrandi, 2000). The **aspect** I will analyse is the **bilingual dialogue of the Alibrandi household scenes**, in which three generations argue in fast, overlapping English and Italian. This is one aspect, held still across both contexts.

Context 1 — Italian-Australian audiences in Sydney at the film’s cinema release in 2000, and particularly the second generation, who grew up in households where an older generation spoke Italian and they answered in English. This audience reads the switching as **accurate, affectionate recognition**. Because the code-switching matches the ordinary acoustics of their own kitchens — the reality that the two-language dialogue gives the family arguments — and because Australian screens had rarely reproduced it, they read the dialogue not as an exotic marker but as evidence that this household is an Australian household. For an audience meeting the debate about assimilation that surrounded the film’s release, that reading carries weight beyond the joke.

Context 2 — Australian secondary students aged 16 to 18 watching it with subtitles in a classroom in the 2020s, most of whom do not speak Italian and were born two decades after the film was made. For them the same switching reads primarily as a **marker of generational distance**. Because these viewers must *read* the Italian rather than hear and understand it, they experience Katia’s language the way Josie experiences her grandmother’s world — at one remove, translated — so they read the switching as the film’s device for building the gap between the generations. A portion of this audience whose own families move between English and another language will make a third reading, taking the household as a transferable portrait of their own.

The significance of the difference. The construction has not changed; the contexts have. **Time** separates the two audiences by roughly a quarter of a century. **Place and culture** separate an audience that possesses the language from one that does not. **Social group** separates a community seeing its own kitchen on a cinema screen from a cohort meeting a prescribed text in a classroom. Because the 2000 audience brings the language to the film, the dialogue functions as recognition; because the 2020s audience lacks it and must read subtitles, the same dialogue functions as distance. Both are valid readings of one construction, and the difference between them is produced entirely by what each audience brings.

Marks: 1 — one aspect identified and held throughout (not the whole narrative). 2 — two contexts pinned by time, place and/or social group. 2 — the two readings stated and developed evenly. 2 — each reading linked causally to its context. 1 — analytical synthesis showing the difference is produced by context, not by the text.

Common errors: “modern audiences” or “society today” instead of a context pinned by time, place and group — the failing the 2025 report named on this exact question; sweeping across the whole narrative instead of holding one aspect; describing the two contexts but never linking either to a reading; developing one strand for a page and the other in a sentence; answering with the **production** context rather than the audiences’ **reception** contexts.

[Substitute: choose one aspect of your narrative — a representation, a character, a code choice, a convention, a sequence or a symbol — pin two reception contexts, and give each its own reading with a “because”.]

Section B — solutions

Question 1 (15 marks)

Command term — analyse: identify the key components — codes and narrative conventions — and the significance of the relationships between them, drawing out how they work **together** to convey meaning.

Media narrative: *Looking for Alibrandi* (2000)

Looking for Alibrandi (Kate Woods, 2000) conveys a single controlling meaning — that its narrator’s problem is not her family but the lens through which she insists on viewing it — and it conveys that meaning by making media codes operate **through** narrative conventions rather than alongside them. Two sequences, drawn from the establishment and from the film’s first major turn, show the same collaboration doing opposite work: the **Tomato Day opening** and the **“spy ring” argument that ends at Katia’s front door**.

In the **Tomato Day opening** — bounded by the first images of the family’s annual sauce-making and ending as Josie and her friends slip away from the gathering to the beach — the codes and conventions work together to install the narrator’s lens over everything the audience will subsequently see. The **colour** code opens the film in a **sepia tint**, which reads at first as ordinary nostalgia; the tint then drops away into full, unmodified colour at the moment Josie herself appears on screen. That is not decoration, because it is happening at the same instant as the **sound** code delivers her first-person **voice-over**, telling the audience that what may look quirky and charming is, to her, embarrassing. The two codes therefore operate directly upon the narrative convention of **point of view**: the sepia was never the film’s view of the ritual, it was *hers*, and the audience learns, in the space of one cut, whose eyes it has been lent. Around that, the **mise en scene** crowds an ordinary suburban backyard with crates, relatives and the physical labour of the sauce-making, which builds the convention of **setting** as a world dense with obligation, and the **editing** then cuts out of it to the beach, so the convention of **cause and effect** is established in its smallest possible form: because she is embarrassed, she leaves. The interaction is exact — colour and voice-over construct the point of view, and the point of view converts the setting from “a family tradition” into “the thing she is trying to escape”. The audience is not given the Alibrandi family; it is given Josie’s version of them, and it is told so by the construction rather than by the dialogue.

The **“spy ring” sequence** — bounded by Josie’s imagined network of her grandmother’s friends reporting her movements and ending as she is ordered out of Katia’s house and finds Michael Andretti, the father she has never met, standing at the door — takes the same collaboration and breaks it open. Here the **editing** cuts a comic **fantasy insert** into the linear present: the elderly women are staged as surveillance operatives, one of them using a brooch as a camera. That insert works on two narrative conventions at once — **point of view** again, since the audience is watching an imagining rather than an event, and the **structuring of time**, since the fantasy interrupts the chronological present and returns from it. The **sound** code layers her voice-over over the fast, overlapping English-and-Italian dialogue of the argument that follows, and the two-language texture gives the family conflict a reality that a single language could not; the **camera** then tightens into **close-ups**, cutting between faces as the argument sharpens past the point of comedy, until Josie’s remark about the family curse crosses a line and Katia orders her out. The convention of **cause and effect** does the structural work — because she goes too far, she is expelled from the house; because she is expelled at that precise moment, she opens the door onto her father — and the convention of **character** delivers Michael Andretti at the least manageable instant available. The interaction between codes and conventions is what makes the moment land: the fantasy insert has trained the audience to treat what it sees as Josie’s exaggeration, so when the door opens on a real man who is not her invention, the shift from her interior framing to an external fact arrives as a genuine shock. And as it lands, the voice-over goes quiet and the **close-ups** carry the meaning alone — the codes taking over the moment the narrating convention fails her.

Read together, the two sequences show one meaning built and then tested by the same means. In the opening, subjective codes — sepia colour, confiding voice-over — operate through **point of view**, **setting** and **cause and effect** to switch the narrator’s lens on, so the audience receives the family only as she frames them. At the door, the same subjective apparatus — fantasy editing, voice-over, bilingual sound — operating through **point of view**, the **structuring of time**, **cause and effect** and **character**, is interrupted by something Josie did not imagine and cannot narrate away. Because the codes work through the conventions in both places rather than sitting beside them, the film conveys its meaning structurally: a self is built out of the framing it puts on its own family, and it changes when reality declines to stay inside the frame.

[Substitute: choose one **establishing** sequence and one **turning-point** sequence from your narrative. In each, name at least three codes and at least two narrative conventions, and write the sentence that makes them interact — “the X code operates on the convention of Y, so that ...”. Then close by showing the same collaboration doing different work in the two sequences.]

Band descriptors (out of 15):

- **High (12–15):** analyses **two specific sequences with named boundaries**; each carries **multiple codes and multiple narrative conventions**; codes and conventions are shown **interacting** (“work together”), never listed in parallel; meaning is argued at named moments; specialised media language is precise and sustained; both bullet requirements plainly met.
- **Mid (7–11):** two sequences present but one thinly evidenced, or codes and conventions **listed separately** rather than interacting; some named moments alongside drift into whole-narrative generality; media language present but uneven; a bullet requirement partially met.
- **Low (1–6):** **retells** the narrative or treats it “as a whole”; only one sequence, or none with boundaries; **genre** conventions offered where **narrative** conventions are required; codes named “in general” with no application; little media language.

Common errors: whole-narrative generality (“throughout the film...”) in place of named boundaries; **genre** conventions (a jump scare, a meet-cute, a showdown) supplied where **narrative** conventions (character, character arc, three-act structure, cause and effect, setting, point of view, structuring of time, multiple storylines) were demanded; codes and conventions listed in separate paragraphs and never brought into contact; one sequence analysed twice and presented as two; **codes** offered as **conventions**; plot retelling standing in for analysis of construction.

Sources for the real-world material in these solutions

Source: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Glossary of command terms (VCE) — definitions as reproduced in the 2024 VCE Media external assessment report —
<https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce/glossary-command-terms>. Accurate as at July 2026.

Source: Screen Daily, “Looking For Alibrandi finds five AFI Awards”, 19 November 2000 —
<https://www.screendaily.com/looking-for-alibrandi-finds-five-afi-awards/404275.article>. Accurate as at July 2026.
 (Reporting the AFI Awards ceremony of the previous night, Saturday 18 November 2000: Best Film, Best Adapted Screenplay for Melina Marchetta, Best Lead Actress for Pia Miranda, Best Supporting Actress for Greta Scacchi, Best Editing for Martin Connor; the film was released in Australian cinemas on 4 May 2000.)

Source: National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, australianscreen — “Looking for Alibrandi”, curator’s notes and clip notes by Paul Byrnes — <https://aso.gov.au/titles/features/looking-alibrandi/>. Accurate as at July 2026.
 (Source for the three-generation family structure, the bilingual dialogue giving “a reality to the family arguments”, the “spy ring” clip including the brooch used as a camera and the doorstep meeting with Michael Andretti, the bruising quality of the family confrontations, and the school-book incident and its aftermath.)

Source: Screening the Past, Lesley Speed, “‘No matter how far you run’: Looking for Alibrandi and coming of age in Italo-Australian cinema and girlhood”, issue 19, article page dated 30 December 2014 —
<https://www.screeningthepast.com/issue-19-first-release/>. Accurate as at July 2026. (Source for the sepia-tinted opening giving way to unadulterated colour when Josie appears, the function of the first-person voice-over carried over from the novel, and the film’s use of fantasy sequences.)

Source: Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library, Elsa Koleh, “Multiculturalism: a review of Australian policy statements and recent debates in Australia and overseas”, Research Paper no. 6 2010–11, 8 October 2010 —
https://www.apph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1011/11rp06. Accurate as at July 2026. (Source for the contested state of Australian multicultural policy in the late 1990s and for the Howard Government’s policy statement *A New Agenda for Multicultural Australia*, December 1999. Pauline Hanson’s maiden speech was delivered in the House of Representatives on 10 September 1996; One Nation won eleven seats at the 1998 Queensland state election.)