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OUTSTANDING SCHOLARSHIP EXEMPLAR



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Scholarship 2025 Media Studies

Time allowed: Three hours
Total score: 24

ANSWER BOOKLET

Check that the National Student Number (NSN) on your admission slip is the same as the number at the top of this page.

Answer all THREE questions from Question Booklet 93303Q, and write your answers in this booklet.

Begin your answer to Question One on page 3, your answer to Question Two on page 11, and your answer to Question Three on page 19.

If you need more room for any answer, use the extra space provided at the back of this booklet.

Check that this booklet has pages 2–28 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

Do not write in the margins (///). This area will be cut off when the booklet is marked.

YOU MUST HAND THIS BOOKLET TO THE SUPERVISOR AT THE END OF THE EXAMINATION.

Page 1

INSTRUCTIONS

Answer all **THREE** questions. Plan and write your answers below.

For EACH question:

- You should refer to a wide range of specific evidence to support your analysis.
- You may respond by agreeing or disagreeing with your chosen quotation or statement, OR by considering a variety of points of view.

Do NOT use the same material to answer more than one question.

QUESTION ONE: The relationship(s) between media and wider society

With reference to ONE of the quotations or statements below, **analyse the development** of a medium / media industry and / or the factors that shape it.

Quotations / statements (Choose ONE)

- ☐ 1. "Old media is now scared stiff. They finally have figured out that they must adapt – or die." *Ted Gioia*
- ☒ 2. "... in its current state, the country's [New Zealand] film and television sector is 'on its knees'." *Shayne Currie*
- ☐ 3. "AI will reshape industries; it will not end industries." *Nathaniel Whitemore*
- ☐ 4. Social media services are now the shapers of mainstream culture.

PLANNING

Hollywood paragraph: Hesmondhalgh, Adorno and Horkheimer Culture Media

NZ paragraph: Graeme Turner

Algorithm: Zuboff, Stuart Hall Encoding/ Decoding

ANSWER

Type your answer to **Question One** in the space below.

B I U

"... in its current state, the country's [New Zealand] film and television sector is 'on its knees'."

Shayne Currie

In the contemporary era of film, the NZ film and television sector is restricted by guidelines under global media forces with the challenges of balancing cultural authenticity and national identity with economic survival in global markets. The sector faces global forces and formulas such as streaming platforms, institutions, audience data, and algorithms which present significant challenges in a time where lack of originality and cultural specificity is impacting industry performance. We witness the NZ film and television sector 'on its knees' through NZ on Air, a localised, state funded media system which aims to promote local voices and national identity whilst still being appealing to brand audiences and global distributors. We see how these same forces impact other media systems differently with Hollywood franchise culture, and additionally, the impact of algorithms on both media systems. In this current state, the NZ film and television sector is in a complex position of balancing cultural identity with economic survival; a state that resonates with the entirety of the industry.

The NZ film and television sector is under immense pressure to fund local projects and promote voices, while still being in a state where they can continue to be commercially viable and appeal to global distributors. This sector state aligns with Graeme Turner's theory; that small national industries must balance cultural specificity with economic survival in global markets. The New Zealand industry specifically has significant challenges in this regard, as they must recognise the disproportionate accessibility and funding of media for Maori communities. If not acted upon, this severely harms the cultural ties and perseverance of indigenous story-telling that is detrimental to New Zealand culture. We see the sector's strives in maintaining a balance of commercialisation and cultural specificity through NZ on Air's projects. Drama TV show 'Panthers' (2021), represents Pasifika culture and national identity, yet is dramatised to be more universally marketable. Additionally, the show is distributed through a British Television Company, Fremantle. Other examples of the sector's balance between originality and representation with economic viability include 'Free Lane Bridge' (2021), which showcases NZ iconography and recognisable Queenstown landscapes with a traditional crime-thriller format, and 'Power of the Dog' (2021), which is NZ-funded but distributed by Netflix. While these various examples show NZ on Air's commitment to maintaining balance, funding these projects and promoting cultural specificity, there is also acknowledgement that this poses challenges for long-term commercialisation. These projects are detrimental to providing the originality that is needed to keep film as an engaging and unpredictable medium, yet are nowhere near the most significant commercial and profit-driven projects that the NZ sector can promote. New Zealand's unique scenery and cinematography combined with unevenly distributed population make it uniquely suitable for billion dollar global film productions, specifically Hollywood funded. The New Zealand sector has been under significant pressure in the decision of continuing to allow massive productions such as the Minecraft Movie, Lord of the Rings, and Thor, as while these films make large profits, the income is not necessarily distributed locally and fails to promote New Zealand cultural voices. This highlights the challenges of the current state of the NZ film and television sector in finding methods to uphold cultural story-telling and national identity that is crucial in maintaining cultural ties and innovation, whilst still under the pressures of globalisation and commercialisation.

We see how these global forces impact other media systems with the Hollywood global franchise machine. In contrast to New Zealand, this industry does not have the same challenges of finding ways of being long-term commercially viable and globalised, however, like the New Zealand counterpart, must find ways to maintain originality. While the NZ sector is desperate for global distribution, Hollywood almost has too much. This media system has reached an environment where projects significantly lack any originality or innovation, further burdened by the formulaic competition of streaming platforms such as Disney+ and Netflix and the heavy reliance on Intellectual Property (IP). Hesmondhalgh's theory is that the industry manages risks through repetition and standardisation. This is increasingly relevant to Hollywood, which relies heavily on franchises. Franchises like the Marvel Cinematic Universe (worth \$31 billion), Starwars (worth \$10 billion), and Fast and Furious (worth \$7 billion), are evidently extremely successful in long-term commercialisation and universal marketability, but however, lack any significant originality and cultural specificity. To be universally marketable, these franchises rely on lowest common-denominator story-telling. We see in contrast to the NZ sector, how Hollywood portrays Adorno and Horkheimer's Culture Media theory where mass-produced entertainment pacifies audiences with pseudo-individualised content. This is because, unlike New Zealand projects such as Panthers, and Free Lane Bridge, these franchises consist of the same emotional beats and distraction of social issues. Where the NZ sector represents the country's social issues, Hollywood aims to provide a diversion which contributes to the significant lack of the production of anything of substance. While these franchises are successful in long-term commercialisation through generic, repetitive standardised story-telling, they no longer have the 'it-factor' or uniqueness that contributes to often the greatest projects. This industry failure of representing identity is shown through Marvel's first box office failures occurring in the past 3 years. The Marvels made only \$206 million despite being a multi million dollar production, and films such as Captain America: Brand New Age, and The Thunderbolts have also had disappointing turnouts. These results showcase the global industry's challenges in contrast to New Zealand's. Where NZ is 'on its knees' in attempt to remain profitable while still representing its society, Hollywood faces the same issue in different order. They've achieved the profits, but are in an unsustainable place where audiences are tired of the same content and crave the identity that NZ on Air projects offer.

In this contemporary industry state, the NZ sector faces significant challenges with the global formula of algorithms. This is seen with Zuboff's capitalist media theory, where user data controls production decisions giving the illusion of choice, but instead reinforces familiar patterns of taste being defined by algorithms, not risk. This formula impacts New Zealand on a global stage significantly, as global audiences are subconsciously trained to not be susceptible to unfamiliar portrayals and mediums of film. While corporations like NZ on Air aim to promote local projects and voices, this is almost impossible on a global stage. Despite being tired of receiving the same content from the global Hollywood franchise machine, global audiences aren't able to identify which content it is that they desire. This is reinforced by streaming platforms such as Netflix, which encourages homogenisation through shows such as 'You' and 'Outerbanks'. While NZ-produced shows like 'The Gone' and 'Creamerie' compete on a global stage, they are nowhere near as successful as the content produced by the formulaic competition of streaming platforms. This idea is represented in Stuart Hall's decoding/ encoding theory, which states that audience agency is limited by institutional frameworks. Despite global audiences craving new formula, they are conditionally trained not to adapt or receive international media that upholds cultural specificity. It is these factors that further contribute to New Zealand's complex issues in this current industry state.

In this current state, the NZ film and television industry is in a place of complexity and intersectional issues. Seen through NZ on Air, the sector faces the significant challenge of having to fund local projects and maintain cultural specificity to not undermine indigenous story-telling and uphold national identity, while still having to be economically successful through globalisation. We further understand this state through the contrast to the Hollywood franchise culture, which is setup for long-term commercialisation and universal marketability, yet is burdened by lowest common denominator story-telling. The complexity of the NZ sector's issues are deepened by algorithms, which contribute to lower engagement for franchise culture, yet viewers are not converted to NZ media due to illusion of choice. In order to address the state of the NZ sector, it does not come from rejecting globalisation, but instead, finding a way to be culturally specific within these guidelines. To maintain commercialisation, the sector should not switch to solely promoting international projects, but should recognise the sustainability of dedicating more funds to local projects. Instead of wishing for low-funded local projects to uphold the industry, more support should be provided in ensuring that these projects can be globally viable and accessible through increased funds.

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QUESTION TWO: Media production

With reference to ONE of the quotations below, **demonstrate critical understanding of one medium and its production context**, including reference to your own production experience.

Quotations (Choose ONE)

- ☐ 1. "... knowing and understanding genre conventions informs my decisions ... and whether to conform to or subvert genre expectations." *Raelke Grimmer*
- ☐ 2. "'Make me care' – please, emotionally, intellectually, aesthetically, just make me care."
Andrew Stanton
- ☐ 3. "With every film that I am doing, I am learning new things either about myself, or about film-making."
Sanya Malhotra
- ☒ 4. "Part of film-making is always a guessing game, and part of it is always a game of trust."
Greg Kinnear

PLANNING

Topic: with our film, we had to make guesses but also relied on what we knew.

P1: Making guesses

P2: Realisation of we need to focus on what we know

ANSWER

Type your answer to **Question Two** in the space below.

B I U     

"Part of film-making is always a guessing game, and part of it is always a game of trust."

Greg Kinnear

While successful film-making requires some form of originality and innovation, it has also always relied on the interpretation of what we know to be tried and true. The innovation and originality of film as a medium is often just reimagining or recontextualising narratives, archetypes, and genres. Throughout my creation of '3 New Zealand's (a music video for Sister's Underground 'In the Neighbourhood') with my two friends, we were making guesses throughout the entire process. However, eventually we learnt the importance of relying on what we knew we could trust; inspiration from texts before us and people around us. Together, we were able to create a final project that was a real representation of ourselves and our guesses, but also the entire kiwi experience and iconography.

When we were first assigned with creating a film in media studies class, we were definitely just making guesses. We were struck with no inspiration, not excited by fantasy, horrors, or sci-fi with a large climax like those around us. We thought that in order to be successful, we had to innovate and create something that wasn't already overused or expected. Our first major step was deciding what convention we wished to represent and due to our lack of inspiration regarding plot devices, we decided to create a music video. We came to the conclusion that a music video was the medium that best allowed us to not follow a classically structured script with a beginning, middle, climax, and end, deciding that this wasn't representative of what we wished to create. It was then that our most major realisation came, that guessing with a desire to innovate isn't going to occur without any prior inspirations. This realisation is depicted with Barthes intertextuality theory, that texts are just reworkings of what came before it. Film as a medium draws open surroundings, which not only reflects society, but also shapes it. We knew we were capable of reflecting society, but only then did we realise that reflecting also allows shaping; innovation and originality comes from perspective, not invention. We realised that to create something original and specific, we must work off something we know we can trust. This lead us to searching for inspiration through watching previous music videos and listening to songs that best represent a story we wish to tell. We decided to choose 'In the Neighbourhood' by Sisters Underground, as the context of this song was similar to our own. This text was produced by two teenage sisters from Otara, and therefore was representative of the teenage girl in New Zealand experience. It was this decision that was pivotal in our film-making experience, leading us to wish to recreate the kiwi experience as a whole - something we knew we could trust, but also represent our own personal experiences - something we had to guess on how to achieve. In film, it is often these projects that can successfully represent a community while still having a personal spin that are most successful.

Now with the understanding of the importance in the game of trust to achieve the guessing side of things, we knew that to start our filming process, we must draw inspiration from what's around us. We decided on a format, that our film would consist of short clips representing the kiwi experience as well as our own that integrated successfully with the rhythm of the song, whilst coming across as raw and authentic. Part of our guessing process was the decision that to represent ourselves, it would only be right to include clips of our families and friends. We filmed short clips of wholesome moments with our younger siblings, hangouts with friends, and small nods to the individual experiences of our parents that shape our own. These 'guesses' on how to depict our own personal experiences ended up being greatly important to the construction of our film. We were able to look back and smile at our beginnings and the people that inspire us, creating something uniquely special to ourselves. However, this also contributes to the reaching of emotions of our audience, as viewers can relate to this with their own experiences with family and friends. We were able to draw upon previous film mediums where this has worked successfully, such as the montage in the Barbie movie of the cast's loved-ones. Despite not actually including clips of the audience's own experiences, the Barbie movie montage was successfully able to represent the emotions of the film and accommodate with the viewers.

Additionally, we decided that to represent the kiwi experience as a whole, we would look at what we trust; iconic New Zealand scenery and urban arts. As West-Aucklanders, the iconic scenery of the black-sand west-coast beaches was extremely important for us to include to represent our own experience, as well as the wider West-Auckland experience. We filmed clips at Muriwai Beach, running into the sunset, diving through waves, and Burger King on the Beach. This is all imagery that aligns with the greater New Zealand experience for many, while still being uniquely personal to ourselves. We decided to further draw upon what we can trust by recreating the iconic scene from Taika Waititi's 'Boy', where boy does 'Michael Jackson dance moves'. This was the longest clip in our film and ended up being the most iconic, with its comedic and relatable aspects where audiences can allude to a film that is central to our nation. We filmed this scene at the Corban Arts Centre with the iconic graffiti background, as this is imagery that is representative of several NZ locations, such as the street art of Wellington, and Raglan, and the art-deco of Napier. NZ realism and post-modernism often draw upon this familiar imagery and iconography. To continue to represent ourselves and what we can already trust in the wider NZ experience, we filmed scenes of kapa haka and with poi, and filmed small clips of the wooden art adorning the walls at our school's marae. This was representative of the wider NZ Maori culture and indigenous perspective that is greatly important to our group. We had to make guesses on how to depict this, and ended up deciding that our local perspective was best representative to ourselves, whilst still being relatable to the wider experience.

Our film-making process was definitely one of guesses, starting with a big question mark. However, once we realised that in order to reach a place of innovation and showcase our own guesses, we must look at what we can trust first. We ended up with a product that was full of guesses; raw, shaky, and imperfect. However, it was this imperfection that allowed us to resonate with an audience whilst still being true to ourselves. Our product was relatable to kiwis all over, with iconic scenery, art, and culture, while still featuring our loved ones and our local environments, making it something proudly our own.

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QUESTION THREE: The close reading of media texts

With reference to ONE of the quotations below, **analyse media texts (from any medium)** that you have read closely.

Quotations (Choose ONE)

- ☐ 1. "My films have often looked at the whole dilemma of identity as a straitjacket for people ..."
Todd Haynes
- ☐ 2. "You have to entertain people first before you can educate them."
Danny Boyle
- ☐ 3. "We have to break the rules if we want to tell stories in new ways."
Lulu Wang
- ☒ 4. "Film-making [or other media productions] is a way of understanding the world."
Alice Rohrwacher

PLANNING

Barbara Creed: Monstrous Feminine, sexuality, reproduction, abject
Clovers final girl: Her Body, Himself: Gender in the slasher genre, abject terror personified, deconstruction traditional spectatorship
Mulvey's Male Gaze: Camera eyes up, bearers of meaning, not makers of meaning
Stephen King: Barometer, we create horrors...
Homogenic masculinity, phallic, Hays code...

ANSWER

Type your answer to **Question Three** in the space below.

B I U

"Film-making [or other media productions] is a way of understanding the world."

Across generations, one guaranteed constant of the film industry is that film-making will always provide insight and understanding to the world around us. We see this occur specifically through the slasher genre; a subgenre of horror which typically involves a male killer that displays hegemonic masculinity going after a group of teenagers with a phallic object (knife, chainsaw, etc), with a final girl who is rewarded for her moral superiority. The slasher genre has consistently served as a way of understanding the world, specifically through the medium of the final girl, who represents the fears, expectations, and perceptions of women in society. The term 'final-girl' was coined by Carol Clover in the 1987 novel, 'Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film' which depicts the final girl's coaligning with understanding of the world, calling her 'abject terror personified,' meaning she embodies the fear of society. We witness the development of the final girl in slasher genre representing society and contributing to the understanding of the world with Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 'Psycho' with a conservative society, John Carpenter's 1978 'Halloween' with second-wave feminism, and finally, Wes Craven's 1996 'Scream' with rising feminist movements and a reimagined final girl. It is these portrayals that showcase Stephen King's idea that "we create horrors to reflect real ones."

1950s society was a time of conservatism, with traditional gender roles and significant stigma around unmarried women who engage in sexual activity. Women were viewed as extensions of their husbands and had extremely limited education or employment. Additionally, there was also a lot of xenophobia around mental health, and it was treated as a topic to not be discussed. In the 1930s, the beginning of the slasher genre, starting the 'classical phase' and set the precedence for many to come. Its convincingness as a horror film came from its complete separation from the Hays Code and post-war stability, using voyeurism to entertain audiences.

We are provided insight of society with Marion Crane, the main female character. Marion represented the complete opposite of what a woman was supposed to be in a conservative society. She was filmed having sex, unmarried, and engaged in criminal activity. To audiences at the time, it is these traits that deemed her death inevitable. Mulvey's male gaze is extremely prevalent with Marion, as voyeurism greatly contributed to her character arc. She was filmed showering, with the cameras 'eying her up' (Mulvey) adding to her immense perceived sexuality as a character. This also portrays Barbara Creed's Monstrous Feminine, as the sexuality of her femininity made her 'monstrous' and disobedient. In the shower scene, she was watched by killer Bates through a peephole, depicting surveillance and the male gaze. She was then stabbed/ penetrated by Bates with a phallic object (a knife), representing her taming as a disobedient woman. This leads to understanding of the societal structure at the time as she inevitably was punished for her unsubmitiveness with Bates showing hegemonic masculinity, being the maker of meaning, while Marion was simply the bearer (Mulvey's male gaze). The final girl, Marion's sister Lila, was married, not filmed engaging in sexual activity, and was stereotypically responsible. Therefore this makes her viable in this society and her moral superiority is rewarded with survival. She also represents Mulvey's male gaze as she has no making of meaning other than being the morally superior final girl and does not contribute to taking down the killer, as this role is solely designed for male characters. It is the film's treatment of Marion, and in contrast, Lila, that depict the societal structure in 1950s conservative society, helping us understand the world's fears, perceptions, and expectations of women in this era.

1970s society was when second-wave feminism occurred, contributing to discussions about women's role in society, specifically with education and employment. However, there was also resurging conservatism following backlash from the sexual-revolution. There was increasing fears of random acts of violence in suburban America and mistrust in authority following the Cuban Missile Crisis. We witness society's changing perception of women in John Carpenter's 1978 'Halloween', where final girl Laurie Strode shows more agency than all prior final girls. Laurie still represented the ideologies of women being rewarded for moral superiority, as unlike her friends, she was not sexually-active, didn't party, was stereotypically responsible, and was a good care-provider for children. This was in stark contrast to her friends, who were filmed with Mulvey's male gaze and Creed's Monstrous Feminine - being nude and engaging in sexual activity, and at one point, one even abandoned the child they were baby-sitting to attend a party. This contributes to Laurie's friends inevitable deaths, and Laurie's survival as she steps up and takes care of the abandoned child, showcasing her viability as a woman in this society through her maternal instinct. However, Laurie also defied traits of prior final girls as she was resourceful, aggressive, and actually fought back against killer Michael Myers. This portrays Clover's final girl theory, as at first, the viewers' perspective was with the killer, however identification changes partway through to the final girl, making males feel fear through a female perspective and deconstructing traditional spectatorship. The viewers' identification changes as Laurie gains more agency and hegemonic masculinity symbolised through her change from a skirt to pants. When being stabbed, Laurie turns the phallic object around and instead penetrates Myers, representing the taking of power back, and women gaining more agency in society as well. At one point, Laurie even stabs the killer with a knitting needle, further representing power of femininity being further recognised. This highlights Clover's theory that the final girl also represents empowerment. Laurie Strode provides insight of the world at this time as while she was still undermined by 'morally-superior women' traits, she actually somewhat controlled the narrative, and was a maker of meaning, opposing Mulvey's male gaze. This represents the changes in society from second-wave feminism around the perception of women and what their capabilities were viewed as.

1990s society was a time of post-modernism, and cynicism around the influence of media specifically on teenagers. There was media saturation and increased desensitisation around violence in media, especially with the television of school shootings, the OJ trial, and the Columbine Massacre. There was increased representation of feminism in media and 'girl-power' movements with the Spice Girls. This was a time of significant change in society, shown through the reimagining of the final girl in Wes Craven's 1996 'Scream'. For the first time, viewers went into the cinema knowing what to expect from the slasher genre and were able to acknowledge the formula of treatment towards women based on their personalities. Scream's Sydney Prescott greatly opposed this predictability. Scream was the kickstart of the post-modern/ self-aware Slasher genre phase, using society's expectations against them. Sydney was filmed having sex, spoke crudely, went to parties, and was stereotypically irresponsible. However, it is this 'Monstrous Feminine' that worked in her favour. Her loud femininity allowed her to be unpredictable, and despite being filmed with Mulvey's male gaze, this empowered her. She represented Clover's theory of final girl empowerment and used the slasher genre archetypes to her favour. This highlights the changing perception of women in society, where it was now socially acceptable for a woman to be bold, and still be rewarded with survival. The film shows its self-awareness of the genre through its dialogue, with killers Billy Loomis and Stu Macher stating that because Sydney had sex she must die, contributing to the viewers predictability until the ending. When Sydney turns the phallic object around, she states "Not in my movie," representing the new-found unpredictability in this new stage of the slasher genre. Scream redefined the constraints of a final girl, but only because of its societal representation. This helps us understand the world around us as we firsthand witness the changes in this era regarding perceptions of women, where the expectations were no longer as confining.

The slasher genre's final girl has timelessly served as an understanding of women's role in society. In Psycho, women were inevitably punished for their disobedience and held no real control of the plotline within the slasher genre, representing 1950s conservative society. In Halloween, the final girl held some agency, representing some change with second wave feminism, however, her friends were still punished for their 'disobedience', while the final girl was rewarded for her moral superiority, showcasing the resurging conservatism and backlash post sexual revolution. Finally, the final girl was reimagined entirely in Scream, where a female's personality held no control over her survivability, representing the changing perception of women being just as capable as their male counterparts. This self-aware phase of the slasher genre serves as an understanding of the current societal structure, where unpredictability is the main determinant in successful film as this is what this society fears the most.

Outstanding Scholarship

Subject: Media Studies

Standard: 93303

Total score: 20

Q	Score	Marker commentary
1	7	The candidate provided a convincing understanding of the current state of the New Zealand film and TV sector, including the tensions around creating New Zealand content within a global context, in response to their chosen quotation 2: “... in its current state, the country’s [New Zealand] film and television sector is ‘on its knees’” (Shayne Currie). The candidate supported their argument with detailed analysis and compelling evidence, offering perceptive insight into the current and future trends of the state of the New Zealand sector, while weaving relevant media theory into their response.
2	7	The candidate interrogated their chosen quotation 4: “Part of film-making is always a guessing game, and part of it is always a game of trust” (Greg Kinnear), providing a compelling overview of their music video production process, while weaving detailed evidence into their response. They referenced the influence of other New Zealand film texts and demonstrated valid and accurate understanding of their production process, addressing the quote convincingly.
3	6	The candidate provided a detailed and convincing argument, in response to their chosen quotation 4: “Film-making [or other media productions] is a way of understanding the world” (Alice Rohrwacher). They offered clear analysis across a range of slasher texts (Psycho, Halloween, and Scream), in relation to the final girl trope. The candidate also developed an insightful genre overview by comparing film texts with compelling evidence, including consideration of wider critical perspectives, such as Mulvey and Clover.