

Exemplar for Internal Achievement Standard

Media Studies Level 2

This exemplar supports assessment against:

Achievement Standard 91249

Demonstrate understanding of narrative in media texts

An annotated exemplar is an extract of student evidence, with a commentary, to explain key aspects of the standard. It assists teachers to make assessment judgements at the grade boundaries.

New Zealand Qualifications Authority

To support internal assessment

	Grade Boundary: Low Excellence
1.	For Excellence, the student needs to demonstrate critical understanding of narrative in media texts. This involves: • selecting and describing narrative features in media texts • providing supporting evidence of the narrative feature being used within the text • explaining how the narrative feature contributes to the narrative • examining the implications of the contribution of the features to the narrative of the text. This student has selected the use of makeover to develop character. The student demonstrates understanding of this feature in the television series <i>Breaking Bad</i> by describing the use of the makeover within the episode (1) and providing several detailed examples to support their argument (2). The student explains the impact the makeover has on Walt's personality and the why this has an impact on the narrative (3). The student examines the implications of the change in Walt's personality by linking it to narrative theory (4), the impact on the audience's expectations (5) and provides a comparison with the makeover's more traditional use in other media texts (6). For a more secure Excellence, the student could: further examine how Walt's personality change impacts on further episodes, and the role of character change and development in a TV drama series (7); develop the comparison with the use of the makeover in other texts (6); and examine the implications of Walt's physical makeover on the makeover of his moral code (5).

Low Excellence:

A significant convention used in Episode 7 of Breaking Bad is the convention of the makeover. [1] This convention is used to show Walt's development as a character as the narrative progresses towards the season finale. Time is manipulated through footage of days and night passing; accelerating the stages of chemotherapy and Walt's hair loss to set the stage for the makeover. In Breaking Bad the makeover occurs when Walt shaves his head. [1] Through this we see him physically change.

The purpose of the makeover here is to act as a full acceptance of the call. This stage of the narrative is fundamental, according to Vogler's Writer's Journey, in which the main protagonist of a narrative must go through around 12 crucial steps that construct the overall story. [4] Through this makeover we come to understand that Walt has not only changed physically, but the shaving of his head represents an ultimate change in his psyche, and Heisenberg is born. [3] This transformation into Heisenberg serves as a way for Walt to act confidently in his business dealings that surround the dangerous methamphetamine world. Additionally, we see Walt transformed in the household too, as previously he was never taken very seriously. This makeover gives him the confidence to take control of his life and the situations that his wife and son present him with; [3] shown in the shop when he aggressively bets down a boy for laughing at Walt Jr. [2]

This has numerous effects and implications in the narrative. The short term effect of this comes from the reactions of his family: Skyler is clearly shocked and puts her hand over her mouth, whereas, when seeing his father's bald head, Walt Jr. smiles and says "Badas, dad." Although Walter shrugs this comment off as a mindless teenage thought, we get the idea that that's exactly how Walt intended to look to make an impact on his new industry; Badas. The long term effect of this makeover comes from Walt's [now Heisenberg's] meeting with Tuco. He demands money and threatens to blow up the entire building; winning over Tuco, profiting fifty thousand dollars, and even exclaiming to Tuco that "one pound isn't gonna cut it, you have to buy two." [2] Walter is extremely 'badas' in this scene and as he gets back to his car and holds the money, he slams the dashboard and yells "YES". This shows that Walt has asserted his dominance over a big player of the meth industry and is confident and ecstatic about his profit; all thanks to his makeover giving him new determination and confidence. [3]

This makeover has a big effect on the audience as they're not used to this kind of transformation. A generic makeover would consist of an 'ugly duckling' changing into something more attractive. [5] [6] Walt's makeover, however, is almost the opposite, as he is transforming into a drug dealing, 'badas' business man. This is important because it illustrates the scale of Walt's desperation and situation in the narrative; in order to provide for his family he's had to disregard his sound moral code and take on the life of 'Heisenberg'. [5] This shows his character development, which is crucial to the narrative's progression. [7]

	Grade Boundary: High Merit
2.	For Merit, the student needs to demonstrate in-depth understanding of narrative in media texts. This involves: • selecting and describing narrative features in media texts • providing supporting evidence of the narrative feature being used within the text • explaining how the feature contributes to the narrative. This student has selected the narrative feature of manipulation of time. The student demonstrates understanding of this feature in the television series <i>Breaking Bad</i>, by describing the use of a flash forward and the manipulation of time (1) and supporting these responses with detailed examples from the episode (2). The student describes the contribution of the feature to the overall narrative of the series (3), and explains clearly how the manipulation of time contributes to Walter's storyline by developing the audience's interest and expectations of this character (4). To reach Excellence, the student could demonstrate critical understanding by examining the consequences the manipulation of time has on the narrative in greater depth, by developing the discussion of the impact of Walt's moral switch has on the audience (5) and examining in more detail the impact on the series as a whole (6).

High Merit – Breaking Bad

Episode 6 of the television series, “Breaking Bad”, created by Vince Gilligan, begins with the use of manipulation of time. The fracturing of time in this episode is shown through a flash-forward. A flash-forward is a future event being inserted into the present storyline to hint towards future happenings. [1]

In episode 6, Walter White, back in business with Jesse Pinkman, begins telling Jess how things will be from now on. He tells him that he wants to be the “silent partner” in their operation and that his “realm” is only the chemistry and “out there on the street, you deal with that”. Walt also states that “no matter what happens, no more bloodshed, no violence.” [2] Time is manipulated when this scene is intercut with shots of a bald man ominously walking through a group of shady looking people on a street littered with smoking debris, and various car alarms blaring. He is also holding a white bag with a blood stain on it, exiting what appears to be an extremely ‘violent’ situation. As the shot pans up and his face is revealed, we see that this bald man is actually Walt and we are in a flash-forward. [1] Vince Gilligan’s purpose in using a flash forward was to interest the viewers and also give incentive to the audience to continue watching the series. [3] The audience wants to find out how a character such as Walt, who has had honest intentions from the beginning of the series, goes from a normal family-orientated individual to a ruthless looking thug. It’s the huge contrast, between the different snippets of the timelines that create this interest. Up until this point in the season, Walt has had a distinctive family man look. In the flash-forwards, he is no longer normally dressed, but we are shown a far more threatening depiction of the man. His head is shaved, his face is bloody; he’s dressed in all black, with his overall image explicitly implying villainy. The shots in the flash-forward [e.g. low angle shots and slightly silhouetted] also show Walt in a powerful light, [2] it begins to suggest the result of Walt becoming a meth kingpin [Heisenburg] later on in the series. [3] The audience is now intrigued, to find out how much Walt will continue to change.

This sharp visual contrast foreshadows the division in Walt’s personality we see later on in the series. This contradicting image, affects the audience by giving us a sense of dramatic irony, through the dialogue, conflicting with what we are shown. The audience knows that his version of Walt will occur, and throughout the episode the episode, wait in anticipation for this change to occur. [4] [5] Because it shows how Walt will directly defy his previous moral ground, it shows us of how Walt will descend further into the criminal lifestyle despite his originally wholesome intentions. It further highlights the change Walt has undergone and will undergo in just one season. [6]

	Grade Boundary: Low Merit
3.	For Merit, the student needs to demonstrate in-depth understanding of narrative in media texts. This involves: • selecting and describing narrative features in media texts • providing supporting evidence of the narrative feature being used within the text • explaining how the narrative feature contributes to the narrative. This student has selected the narrative feature of conflict. The student demonstrates in-depth understanding of this feature in the television series <i>Breaking Bad</i> by describing the conflict Walter suffers because of his involvement in the drug industry (1). This is supported with specific examples from the episode (2). The student describes the contribution of Walter's conflict to the overall narrative (3), and begins to explain how the conflict develops his character (4). For a more secure Merit, the student could demonstrate additional depth by explaining further what the conflict drives Walter to do in the series, and the impact that this has on those around him (5).

Low Merit Breaking Bad Conflict

Conflict is a common convention used in most media texts as it creates rising tension, suspension, etc. [1] It is usually the basis of a text, hence "Breaking Bad." The conflict is Walter changing from a good, law abiding citizen, into a dangerous, Methamphetamine producing criminal. [1] These conflicts are due to binary oppositions, where one binary force causes the other to respond. A conflict could be internal or external, Walter is suffering from an internal conflict, where he is stuck between a good vs bad binary, where on the good side he is a husband, father and teacher, versus his bad side where he is known by the name Heisenberg, where he is a methamphetamine manufacturer who gets his way through destruction and power.

An example of this conflict is seen in episode 4, when he is sitting at Jesse's kitchen table trying to decide the fate of Krazy-8, who remains locked up in the basement. Walter is obviously showing signs of conflict as he sits with his head in his hands; he finally can't take the pressure, so he starts to smoke some marijuana to help give his mind some ease. [2] Walter is later questioned by Jesse about why he hasn't done yours." The purpose of this internal conflict between Walter's good sides versus his bad side, is to help his character alongside the storyline, where he could either turn back to doing well, or continue along his bad path. [3] This is important for the story and the development of Walter as a character, as it asks the question about how far he will go in order to provide for his family after he kicks the bucket, and won't be able to fund his family, or he is perhaps too sick to work at all. [4]

This conflict of good vs bad is important because it questions the motive behind Walter's wrong doings. [4] The conflict creates a mystery and unpredictability around Walter White, so the audience may wonder what he will do next and how/why, as he has an unpredictable personality, as he doesn't know his own boundaries yet, or how far he will go before the illegal activities he performs is too much for him. [5]

	Grade Boundary: High Achieved
4.	For Achieved, the student needs to demonstrate understanding of narrative in media texts. This involves: • selecting and describing narrative features in media texts • providing supporting evidence of the narrative feature being used within the text • describing how the narrative feature contributes to the narrative. This student has selected the narrative feature of character development. The student demonstrates understanding of this feature in the television series <i>Breaking Bad</i> by identifying and describing the change in Walter's personality (1), and supporting the responses with examples (2). The student provides a description of how Walter's transformation contributes to the narrative in the film (3). To reach Merit, the student could demonstrate depth by exploring how and why the transformation defines Walter as a character, and by further developing the impact it has on the overall series (4).

91249 Character – Breaking Bad –

In the first season of Breaking Bad, Walter White transforms from a protagonist at the start of the season, to an antagonist by episode 7 of the first season. [1] This can be seen as at the start of the show in episode 1, he was a gentle, kind, husband, teacher and father. The equilibrium in this episode suddenly changes as Walter finds out that he has a rare form of lung cancer, which then sets him thinking for ways to provide for his family up to, and after his death. He then unite with an old college dropout of his, “Jesse Pinkman”, to manufacture and distribute a high quality variant of methamphetamine, in order to make money for his family, and even pay for his medical. He turns down his friends, Elliot and Gretchen’s money in episode 4, [2] after feeling shame in the fact that the money would be coming from his true love, and her husband, he however has found a new sense of control from his anew activities, he believes he doesn’t need his money, if he did accept the money he would have had his medical covered and money for the family, without becoming a dangerous person, but he had already been corrupted with greed and power.

In episode 6 of the first season you can see Walter make the transition from a protagonist to an anti-hero as the episode starts off with him not wanting to know about the distribution of the drugs he produces. Later in the episode he discovers that Tuco, the new dealer in town, had beaten up his partner, Jesse. This causes Walter to snap, and you can tell that Walter is a different man, as he turns up to Tuco’s place to threaten Tuco into collecting pre-orders and the money from the drugs he stole from Jesse. [2] He then blows up the room with crystallised mercury fulminate, this shows Walter’s true colours as he becomes a hardened criminal [3].

This is an important development in the series as it defines Walter as a character and how he will take on the series and how he has developed ulterior motives to when the series’ first started [4] and how he must act to provide for his family.

	Grade Boundary: Low Achieved
5.	For Achieved, the student needs to demonstrate understanding of narrative in media texts. This involves: • selecting and describing narrative features in media texts • providing supporting evidence of the narrative feature being used within the text • describing how the narrative feature contributes to the narrative. This student has selected the narrative feature of external conflict. The student demonstrates just sufficient understanding of this feature in the film <i>Mean Creek</i> by describing the external conflict in the film through the character of Marty and his relationships with Kile and George (1), and providing evidence from the film (2). The student provides a basic description of how the use of external character conflict contributes to the narrative of the film (3). For a more secure Achieved, the student could demonstrate greater understanding of the impact the conflict between Marty and George has on the end of the film and how it contributes to George's death (3), and how the external conflict between Marty and Kile contributes towards Marty's conflict with George (4). The student could describe the examples of the external conflict more clearly.

Low Achieved Narrative Convention: External conflict

External conflict is the struggle against an external force like a person or an element. In Mean Creek, the character Marty faces a lot of external conflict especially with his brother Kile [1]. They have an unhealthy relationship as brothers and you can see the conflict between them in the scene where Marty borrows Kile's gun for 'target practice' because Kile grabs Marty's ear painfully and threatens him [2]. You can feel the tension between them [1]. Their relationship changes once Marty tells Kile that he and his friends killed George [3] and there isn't much conflict at all apart from the internal conflict within Marty.

Another example of external conflict shown in the film, is the one between George and Marty. Marty doesn't like George because of what he did to Sam but George likes Marty and wants to impress him [1] [2]. Conflict is shown when George talks about Marty's father and Marty goes all quiet and angry about it. George didn't mean to make Marty angry but he did and you can feel the tension between the two. The director used the external conflict to show that even though Marty is a bully and George is also a bully, that they don't necessarily have to get along just because they are both bullies and that Marty really doesn't like George [4].

Another example of when external conflict is shown between George and Marty is when George insults Marty's dad and says "his daddy splattered his brains all over the wall" and a fight breaks out between the two. George is repeating the phrase over and over which is provoking Marty. Marty then leaps up and tries pushing George and trying to punch him which results in real external conflict: fighting. Earlier on, Marty threatens to George that he will kill him when George first brings up his dad and that suggests that Marty does really hate George and doesn't have any problem showing it. In the end, it was kind of Marty's fault that George drowns but he refuses to admit it and is spooked by the fact that George enough to physically kill him but that's what ended up happening [3].

	Grade Boundary: High Not Achieved
6.	For Achieved, the student needs to demonstrate understanding of narrative in media texts. This involves: • selecting and describing narrative features in media texts • providing supporting evidence of the narrative feature being used within the text • describing how the narrative feature contributes to the narrative. This student has selected the narrative feature of allusion. The student demonstrates some understanding of allusion in the film <i>The Matrix</i> by providing a generic description of allusion (1) and providing specific examples of its use in the film (2). The student begins to make statements linking allusion to the narrative of the film. (3) To reach Achieved, the student could provide more specific and developed description of how allusion contributes to the film's overall narrative by describing the role that allusions to the white rabbit and religion will play in Neo's character journey.

Not Achieved 91249

The Matrix was directed by the Wachowski Brothers in 1999. Genre is Sci-Fi.

Thomas Anderson works as a computer programmer throughout the day but by night he's a computer hacker named Neo. He is contacted by man named Morpheus, who thinks he is the 'one'. Neo is shown the 'real world' and the 'Matrix' by Morpheus. He has to save the world from the 'Matrix' before it is all the world will ever know.

Allusion is an expression designed to call something to mind without mentioning it explicitly; an indirect or passing reference [1]. The use of allusion in this film gives it a uniqueness/quirkiness. It gives the movie a dream-like feature, which is what the 'Matrix' is – a computer-generated dream world [3].

"Follow the white rabbit" was this movie's first idea of allusion[2]. This reference to Alice in Wonderland sets up the audience for the other references to this through the film. This gives the movie a quirk which intrigues the audience. E.G: "I imagine right now you're feeling a bit like Alice, tumbling down the rabbit hole." Morpheus also says "You take the red pill and you stay in wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes." [2] Morpheus is indicating the rabbit hole as the 'real world'. The audience at the start is questioning this, but knows that it will play a part in the storyline to where Neo will go and what it's going to feel like for him [3]. "Tumbling" shows what the effect is going to have on him – its going to be a crazy adventure. "Wonderland" is the 'Matrix' as Neo soon learns [3].

The allusion of Superman and Sleeping Beauty was also in this film, with Trinity flying across building to building. This causes the audience to predict that this will not be a 'stereotypical film' with the main girl being the weaker character compared to the man. In the last scene, Neo flies like Superman with a coat instead of a cape, showing the allusion of Superman. Trinity awakens Neo from death with a kiss – like in Sleeping Beauty [2]. A religious allusion is shown when Neo wakes up in the 'real world' and goes under the water three times – traditional baptism. When Christ died, he resurrected and showed people the miracle of life, just as Neo will now concur [3]. To show people the truth of their lives. The audience wonders what other relating quotations or actions will be shown throughout this film.

An implication of the feature is that sometimes the target audience do not pick up on these small references and actions that give a larger impact if known. This is because the audience is unaware of the hints made, or it hasn't been fully understood [the use of allusion]. Audiences can be confused and misunderstood by this, which makes this a hard feature to add into a movie. A consequence of allusion is that it can mainly be only used well in the sci-fi genre. This is because allusion really only gives a movie more impact in this genre. As it fits the genre because it is unusual and different – such as sci-fi films.