

GCE



**Principal Moderator's and
Chief Examiner's Report
Moving Image Arts**

Summer Series 2019



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the Summer 2019 series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's section on our website at www.ccea.org.uk.

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GCE MOVING IMAGE ARTS

Principal Moderator's Report

Subject Overview

Moving Image Arts is a course of study and practice in film offering candidates the unique opportunity to develop and refine their creativity as filmmakers. In a knowledge economy that is increasingly defined and shaped by the moving image, it enables candidates to broaden their experience of audio-visual culture and history to inform, inspire and contextualize their own creative practice and ideas.

Given its practical and skills-based nature, it is an ideal choice for candidates wishing to pursue a career in the creative industries where independence, originality, creative enterprise and technical skills are valued and promoted. The course will enable candidates to develop creative and critical abilities in writing, directing, editing, producing and analysing films from a broad range of contexts and disciplines. Moving Image Arts is a challenging and rewarding course which offers a solid foundation for progression to higher and further education and the creative industries.

Assessment Unit AS 1 Realist and Formalist Techniques and the Classical Hollywood Style: Foundation Portfolio

Overview

This unit enables candidates to study Classical Hollywood Style, Realism and Formalism to inform the creation of a 3 - 4 minute narrative film sequence or 1½ - 2 minute animation sequence in response to stimulus provided by CCEA. The portfolio must include evidence of planning, research and evaluation.

Principal Moderator Comments

Moving Image Arts is a unique and special subject, and at this level we continue to be highly impressed by the varied, often personal and wide ranging themes explored, with many candidates often producing visually interesting, unique and conceptually complex work. As experienced, innovative and creative teachers, you must be strongly commended for the superb work that continues to be evidenced in the portfolios your candidates produce.

It was clearly demonstrated through the work submitted by the majority of centres, that solid teaching of film language alongside practical exploration of creative filmmaking techniques is now an integrated and extremely successful method of facilitating the subject. Where this practice was shown, often candidates produced some really creative, mature and interesting final films.

The importance and focus on Classical Hollywood Style continues to be seen with the work produced showing that the large majority of candidates understand the main technical concepts of this film movement along with some highly creative use of realist and/or formalist techniques. This understanding was not only demonstrated practically, but also in the observation of excellent analysis and evaluation of film language through both candidates' discussion of the work of others and their own creative and technical successes.

Centre marking on the whole was at a consistent level to that observed last year with a similar number of adjustments or amendments being applied. Therefore, there are still some recommendations to be taken on board, which are highlighted below in more detail.

Suggestions for Improved Learning and Teaching

The detailed and repeated viewing of CCEA exemplars (available at the Agreement Trial) is not only a way for teachers to improve their marking but could also be a way to help facilitate future candidates' success, illustrating the expected standards across different assessment objectives, whilst also highlighting where problems might occur and how they could potentially be resolved. Ensuring that all five film language areas are being addressed across each of the assessment objectives will also help to improve the quality of work produced.

Below are also some suggestions for resources and support that may also be helpful:

CCEA Website

The MIA area of the CCEA website contains the following resources:

- . Student Guidance (AS and A2)
- . Teacher Guidance (AS and A2)
- . Specimen Assessment Materials (SAM)
- . Specification Snapshot
- . Student Guide
- . Exam Fact Files

Into Film Resources

Into Film have produced a series of resources specifically designed for Moving Image Arts. These can be found on the Into Film website. <https://www.intofilm.org/resources/1086>

Creative Learning Centres (CLCs): Nerve Centre, Nerve Belfast, Amma Centre

The three CLCs offer a range of training throughout the year and MIA teacher Week in partnership with CCEA at the end of the Summer Term, which is essential in skills building for teachers. They also offer Schools Partnership support programmes. Visit their websites for more information:

www.nervebelfast.org

www.nervecentre.org

www.ammacentre.org

MIA Google Group

Moving Image Arts has always been a subject where there is a community of sharing and support amongst teachers. The MIATeacher group continues to be a place where this culture of sharing can continue.

The address for the group is: <http://groups.google.com/group/MIATeacher>. Please note that you must register with Googlegroups and sign in using your username and password to join the MIA Teacher group. Once you have joined the group you will be able to email the group with any film/MIA related queries using the following email address: miateacher@googlegroups.com

Teacher Assessment

On the whole, clearer understanding of the expectations of each Assessment Objective was demonstrated through the majority of work submitted. This is to be fully commended, and would suggest that the advice given at the previous two years' Agreement Trials has been put into action. The main focus now needs to turn to the consistent and accurate application of marks as outlined in the mark grids.

In this section, advice will be provided on how continued improvements could be made in the production of individual elements of the coursework and in the assessment of these.

AO3 Statement of Intention (including the Synopsis and Evaluation)

This element of coursework generally continues to be more leniently marked across a significant number of centres.

Synopsis

On the whole, the standard of the synopsis was good. However, candidates should be encouraged to keep their synopsis clear and concise. There also continued to be some cases where the synopsis was included in AO2b (Director's Notebook) instead of in AO3, or otherwise repeated across both assessment objectives.

Statement of Intention

Overall, the standard of submission for this element continues to show some excellent analytical understanding of film language with mature, considered thought given to the intended emotive impact a wide variety of well chosen filmmakers are intending to have on their audience. This in turn leads some candidates to have clear and well-developed personal intentions, which are strongly connected to the work of others. Where these features of purposeful, detailed analysis coupled with well-defined, thought-out personal goals are present ultimately leads to a higher level of work for this assessment objective.

The following observations made during this year's moderation series should be considered:

Some candidates continue to provide descriptive commentary on the film language techniques observed in the work of others, or indeed describe various filmmaking techniques such as continuity editing rules. Candidates should be encouraged to carefully and purposefully pick out techniques from a short sequence (advised to be no more than 20 seconds in length) or from a screenshot that they are specifically interested in using themselves and analyse these, in other words discuss the creative and emotive impact the techniques are having on the audience.

Candidates need to provide this level of considered analysis for each film language area, rather than potentially missing out on the discussion of one or two key areas. Some candidates would benefit from having a defined structure where each film language area is addressed, and then from this within each one, identify and analyse a few key techniques that are of particular focused interest. Then after the discussion of each technique, candidates should be outlining their own creative intentions in terms of the specific use of each technique discussed within their own narrative film sequence.

It was observed that there were many candidates who were either adept at providing analysis or outlining their personal creative goals, however they were not interweaving the two together which limited marks to within high Level 2 or low Level 3 at the most. Furthermore, candidates need to be able to associate the techniques observed with the Classical Hollywood Style, Realism or Formalism. These film movements are the fundamental building blocks to both AS units and therefore aid not only candidates' own practical filmmaking but also their analytical appreciation of them, as required within this Foundation Portfolio and also their Unit 2 examination.

It is important that the Statement of Intention is well-illustrated throughout by including screengrabs and/or embedded short film clips. In instances where research has been undertaken, either independently or in relation to the resources provided by CCEA and Into Film, full referencing and a bibliography need to be included at the end, and in the case of direct quotations, quotation marks need to be used.

On a positive note, it was observed that there were much fewer instances of biographical information on directors, or superfluous general background information on Classical Hollywood Style, Realism and Formalism. Also, on the whole, candidates were choosing examples from the works of others that were relevant to the genre and visual style they were hoping to create in the production of their narrative film sequence. Both of these developments are welcomed.

Finally, candidates should be encouraged to consider issues of ethics and representation where appropriate and valid. It was observed that whilst some candidates did this well and purposefully, it continues to be an area that could be improved on in order to develop and increase understanding of how directors exercise control over the intended portrayal of characters' traits and the message this conveys to their anticipated audience.

Evaluation

Generally, those candidates who provided detailed, focused analysis of the work of others and linked these in a well-considered manner to their own creative intentions which were fully developed within their Statement of Intention (SOI), tended to provide a detailed analysis of their own creative practice through thorough reflection back to the information provided in the first part of their AO3. In addition, these candidates mainly demonstrated purposeful visual comparison between their own creative outcomes and the work of others as initially detailed within the SOI. This allowed for marks to be securely awarded within Level 4.

Some evaluations were not always insightful with some candidates finding it difficult to reflect honestly on the degrees of creative and technical success. There are often two key factors which contributed to this difficulty. Firstly, a lack of analysis of the work of others and well-developed personal goals in the SOI that made it hard to have anything purposeful to reflect back on. Secondly, not showing other finished narrative film sequences to an audience, which would aid both attaining feedback and also proper acknowledgement of audience response. Audience response is a vital element to consider when discussing each film language area within the evaluation, and undeniably an important element of the whole GCE specification.

As advised in the production of the SOI, candidates should ensure all five film language areas are addressed within the evaluation. Candidates would benefit from thorough reflection back on the techniques they discussed within their SOI, bringing the Foundation Portfolio full circle where they have been able to outline their intentions (SOI), realize these within the production of AO2a (Narrative Film Sequence) and then evaluate the implementation of these within their evaluation.

Where candidates make changes to their storyline, the evaluation allows for them to discuss the reasons for this change and the implications these changes had on the creative and technical successes of their narrative film sequence.

Some evaluations continue to be rushed as the end of the course approaches. On some occasions this lead to a variation in the quality of work observed across AO3 with the SOI being stronger and more competent whereas the evaluation was overly briefly and limited. This brought down therefore, the overall marks awarded for the complete AO.

Finally, the importance of the word count needs to be highlighted for AO3. Whilst a greater number of candidates adhered to the overall word count for AO3, this continues to be an area where improvements can be made.

AO2a Pre-production

On the whole, the three formal elements of pre-production were completed to at least a competent, if not highly competent, standard with the majority being marked accurately. Most candidates were aware that all three elements should correspond, and this aided the development of the narrative film sequence.

To aid further development for this AO, the following should be considered:

Overall there was an improvement in the quality of scripts developed with many centres now using software to help format the script correctly such as 'Celtx' or 'Fade In'. However, there were some candidates who did not follow the correct script-writing conventions or provided scripts that were either too short or, on the other hand, overly long. Scripts provide the visual blueprint for a film and as such are vital in aiding the successful production of AO2a (Narrative Film Sequence). Even films (including animations) that rely on visual storytelling and therefore may not include dialogue must have an accompanying script, which is of the required 3 - 4 page length (or 1½ - 2 page length of animation).

It is vital that storyboards and shot-lists correspond completely with one another if they are to demonstrate a highly competent ability to manage and organize the production process.

Within the production of the storyboards, candidates need to include appropriate annotation for character and camera movement. The sustained ability to creatively apply an effective range of visual storytelling techniques requires candidates to think more creatively about the camera and editing techniques applied to convey a particular emotive impact or tell a narrative in a more visually interesting manner rather than planning to repetitively use standard shot types. In addition, candidates need to make sure that each frame drawn (or photographed) is correctly labeled. Continued errors in labeling of frames reduce the competency demonstrated.

Shot lists continue to vary quite considerably. Candidates attaining marks within Level 4 typically include detailed consideration of props, location, sound, camera angle/shot/movement and even the length of each potential shot or editing technique that are intended to be used. Shot list and storyboard templates that help to encourage more detailed and thorough consideration of each shot would help to ensure that candidates are enabled to meet the criteria for the higher levels.

Candidates should also continue to be encouraged to show evidence of the pre-production materials as working planning documents by indicating changes and alterations made during the shooting process through written annotations.

Finally, centres should ensure that they read the Instructions to Teachers on the CCEA website and submit all documents as one single .pdf.

AO2b Director's Notebook

Overall, whilst there was improvement seen in the visual investigative element of this area of coursework, there are still a number of important points that need to be addressed for candidates to attain marks in the upper levels. In addition, it continues to be an assessment objective which tends to be marked leniently. Consideration of the points raised below should help candidates to produce material that is more likely to enable them to achieve marks within Levels 3 or 4, and should also aid centres in the application of marks within these two mark bands.

Firstly, the Director's Notebook is a working document that should include candidate's evidence of planning, designing and organising in preparation for filming and as such should not be written during post-production such as the inclusion of material from the candidate's final narrative film sequence. Candidates should also show evidence of planning and designing across all five film language areas.

There should be direct correlation between the primary investigative work included within the Director's Notebook to the techniques analysed and discussed in relation to the candidate's own creative intentions as stated within each individual SOI. Where there is purposeful, sustained and creative primary planning evidenced through still images and/or filmic experimentation, this is more likely to allow candidates to achieve marks within the upper mark bands. In addition, it was observed that those candidates who experimented with and planned for composition, lighting, mise-en-scene, editing and sound produced more competent and creative film productions (AO2b). Candidates achieving marks in the higher levels also often include some short evaluative commentary on the success of these primary investigative trial exercises, which effectively allows them to demonstrate contingency planning in relation to the changes they may want to implement as a result when it comes to the filming of their final narrative film sequence.

Although there continued to be an increase in visual documentation this year, the majority of notebooks observed included the over-use of secondary images, rather than candidates' own purposeful first hand visual planning. Although secondary images can be helpful to add as a comparison to the candidate's own work it would be helpful if candidates labelled these as well as their first hand evidence.

Where candidates produce filmic experimentals, these should be submitted along with the .pdf of the Director's Notebook in a corresponding folder which contains the separately compressed .mov files that are labelled carefully to relate with the page in the .pdf that the work relates to (e.g. 71000_1234_pg12).

There also continued to be a tendency by some candidates to include research on directors, film movements etc. and/or clip analysis. The Director's Notebook should not repeat or extend the analysis of visual influences already explored in their Statement of Intention.

Contingency planning was evidenced by the majority of candidates by presenting excerpts from call sheets, risk assessments, shooting schedules and prop lists, etc. However, this evidence should ideally be kept to around 4 of the 20 pages.

Finally, animation portfolios would benefit from including more evidence of character and set design and construction as well as evidence of experimentation with animation techniques.

AO2a Narrative Film Sequence

The work produced by many candidates this year, continued to demonstrate some really mature, creative and sophisticated use of film language to convey a narrative film sequence that often fully achieved the candidate's goals with regards to the emotive intent as outlined in AO3 (Statement of Intention).

As observed last year also, teacher marking of this AO continued to improve due to many centres demonstrating clear engagement with the exemplar materials shown at the Autumn Agreement Trial. However, the trend for some centres to award low Level 3 marks instead of mid/high Level 2, or low Level 4 marks rather than mid/high Level 3 was also observed, leading to marking on these occasions falling outside of tolerance on a number of occasions. This will be an area of focus when choosing and compiling the material for this year's Autumn Agreement Trial.

The wide range of narratives conveyed in this summer's submission showed many candidates creating work, which was highly individualised with extremely high production values. This was due to the development of technically well-considered films that showed clear engagement with the five areas of film language in order to convey their use of Classical Hollywood style and Realist or Formalist techniques. It was observed, however, that on many occasions it was difficult for moderators to discern the narrative clearly even in those narrative film sequences where high production values were evident. Often, a simpler yet well-considered narrative visually is more effective at ensuring the narrative and therefore creative intentions are unambiguously conveyed.

Candidates' camera work continues to be a further area where improvement has been noted. Many demonstrate considered use of the camera to convey their intended narrative in a visually interesting manner with established links to the work of others as outlined in AO3 (Statement of Intention), experimented with in AO2b (Director's Notebook) and then clearly refined by the time the candidate comes to shoot the footage for their narrative film sequence. This developmental process is to be very much encouraged, and where demonstrated by centres has an evidently positive impact on the outcome achieved not only with higher ability candidates, but also those who benefit from a more structured approach.

This year also demonstrated some highly creative and controlled use of lighting by some candidates who had obviously given much thought to the visual style and technical processes required to produce an outstanding result in terms of production values. Some candidates, however, continue to shoot their footage at night where the technical resources available to them often mean that sub-optimal results are likely as the footage becomes very grainy or poor at presenting clearly what is happening within a series of shots. Consideration of such issues needs to be considered during the planning stages of the portfolio, and in particular should be trialed in the creation of material for AO2b.

Sound continues to be an area in which the production values can vary. For any narrative film sequence (whether live action or animation), full use of diegetic and non-diegetic sound is essential in helping to achieve the emotive and creative impact of each candidate's piece of work. On some occasions this year, it was noted that there were some more able candidates whose film sequences were restricted by the choice of a single soundtrack, which was relied upon to drive the narrative. This practice should be discouraged and instead candidates should be experimenting and producing multi-layered soundtracks to create the emotive intentions outlined in AO3. In addition, some films were marred by wind noise, unclear dialogue and overuse of white noise which limited the production values of individual final films.

Many candidates really pushed the creative boundaries when it came to the careful consideration of mise-en-scene. This was particularly evident in the choices of locations, use of special effects make-up and costume design. This is to be very much encouraged, extending beyond the restrictions that tend to be observed when limiting the production of a narrative film sequence to home or school settings without consideration given to how these locations could be presented more effectively to convey the intended narrative in a more convincing manner.

Understanding of Classical Hollywood style through the implementation of continuity editing techniques continued to be an area that, on the whole, many candidates engaged with and used fairly competently. Some candidates moved beyond this to demonstrate the highly creative use of Realist and/or Formalist inspired editing techniques that had obviously been labour-intensive to produce highly competent pieces of work. Noticed this year, was the use of stock-footage beginning to appear within some of the work submitted. Whilst it is not forbidden within the GCE MIA Specification, this practice is to be discouraged. Candidates are being marked on the work they have produced, and as such it is necessary that where instances of stock-footage are being included, they should be clearly referenced within the closing credit sequence, or within the candidate's evaluation (AO3). Finally, some candidates' live action work continues to go over the 3-4 minute time limit. This can adversely effect the pace, timing and audience impact therefore it is advised that centres encourage candidates to create narrative film sequences that remain within the 3-4 minute time limit.

The number of animations submitted continues to be significantly smaller than the number of live action productions. The creation of an animation is a particularly time-consuming and difficult process due to the development of all elements that are required. However, those observed were generally of a high standard with a range of animation styles demonstrated

through 3D, 2D and stop-motion. Of particular note, those candidates deciding to do animation must understand the importance of the narrative being clear and secondly the use of sound in helping to achieve their creative and emotive intentions.

AO1 Knowledge and Understanding of Film Language (whole portfolio)

The mark for this portfolio element is applied at the end of the marking process when the rest of the portfolio has been marked. It is to award candidates' marks for the knowledge and understanding they have shown of film language, styles, practices, techniques, movements and contexts across the full portfolio. In general, this mark was accurate for most centres where the marks for the other Assessment Objectives had also been applied correctly.

Submission of work for moderation

For the successful submission of coursework, it should be formatted, saved and compressed according to CCEA instructions to centres and submitted, at the latest, by the final coursework deadline. One pen drive containing the coursework for each centre/consortium should be submitted for each assessment unit/GCE Level.

Chief Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit AS 2 Critical Response

Overview

This online examination requires candidates to analyse unseen film clips and to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- Hitchcock and the Classical Hollywood Style
- Formalism: Early European Cinema and American Expressionism

Supervising Examiner Comments

This examination presented candidates with four different question types covering key areas of the subject content for Moving Image Arts AS. As in the previous two years of the revised specification, the cohort generally responded well to the analytical questions (Question 2 and Question 4) where the majority of the available marks are to be gained (60 of the 80).

Last year's Chief Examiner's report identified a number of issues relating to the poor performance of candidates in Question 1 and Question 3, which require contextual and historical knowledge. The continuing poor performance of many candidates in Question 1 and Question 3 in this year's examination suggests that a lack of preparation is causing these candidates to lose marks, even amongst those candidates who have scored well in Question 2 and Question 4. Although Question 1 and Question 3 are worth a total of 20 marks – just one quarter of the available marks of the examination - poor performance on both questions will result in a lower mark than candidates are clearly capable of achieving.

Question 2 and Question 4 drew some very articulate responses, with most candidates choosing to discuss each area of film language separately under a heading, while a minority of candidates opted for an integrated analysis of the three areas of film language which often gave their responses a more fluid structure. Some candidates displayed a sound grasp of language and grammar and a strong ability to analyse mood but were imprecise in their use of film language terminology (for example, failing to distinguish between diegetic and non-diegetic sound or discussing lighting without any application of technical vocabulary).

Section A

Alfred Hitchcock and the Classical Hollywood Style

Question 1

The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of at least two forms of suspense associated with Alfred Hitchcock. While many candidates were able to explain vicarious suspense, shared suspense or surprise, candidates frequently gave a partial or confused explanation of dual/split suspense.

Some candidates mixed up the types of suspense or gave inaccurate definitions, as in these examples.

“Direct suspense is when only the audience knows something is going to happen so only they are very anxious, however the character in the film doesn't know that there is this suspense or anxiousness of what he will do next. for example in Hitchcock's film...”

“Split suspense, this is when two different people in the film, usually the villain and good guy, are both in the middle of a battle. It is done in a cross cutting sort of way where you see both sides with two outcomes but you or them don't know what's going to happen, Hitchcock really influenced this type of suspense throughout the majority of his films.”

Candidates tended to write very brief answers that lacked illustration. The higher marks were awarded to those candidates who were able to illustrate Hitchcock's use of surprise by reference to *Psycho* or vicarious suspense by the poisoned coffee cup in *Notorious* or the young boy carrying the bomb in *Sabotage*.

Some candidates were clearly not familiar with the key forms of suspense associated with Hitchcock as outlined in the Fact Sheets and chose instead to discuss Hitchcock's use of film language. While these candidates were able to demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of Hitchcock's visual style, as in the following example, the question required knowledge of the different types of suspense employed by the director.

“The first type of suspense is sound, this is usually used in a smart way where the music is dramatic/eerie, this helps build up the tension of the scene. It causes the audience to know when something is about to happen in a particular scene. Sound effects added into the scene can also add suspense to a scene, such as non-diegetic and diegetic sound, this is usually used for a sense of realistic effect to a scene so that it doesn't appear too much, so that it stays realistic and focuses on the tension building up. The second type of suspense is the actors facial expression to bring out how the character is feeling/reacting in the moment where the suspense is there. This helps the audience focus more and being able to predict what is about to happen just by concentrating on the characters' facial expression and reactions to certain things happening in the scene. Lastly, I notice that Hitchcock uses colour excessively, this definitely adds to suspense...”

As in the last year's examination where Question 1 required precise knowledge of the auteur theory and its application to Hitchcock, knowledge and understanding of Hitchcock's visual style cannot replace careful examination preparation and detailed knowledge of the Fact Sheets covering different aspects of Hitchcock's approach to suspense and his position in film history.

Question 2

The majority of candidates demonstrated good emotional engagement with the sequence and many noted the significance of the POV shot from the GoPro camera or the canted angle tracking movements towards the seagull.

There was often good evidence of independent thinking with many candidates commenting on the squawking of the seagull as an alarm call or warning to the audience of imminent danger. Some candidates identified this as a direct reference to Hitchcock's *The Birds*. It was impressive to see quite a number of candidates bringing their knowledge of the different forms of suspense employed by Hitchcock (assessed in Question 1) into their analysis of the suspense generated by the shark attack. This demonstrated a high level of application of understanding to an unseen text.

The key weaknesses in responses to Question 2 were:

1. Lack of balance in the analysis of the three areas of film language.

In the majority of responses, the analysis of camera technique was the strongest area of commentary, although the importance of the director's use of POV camera technique was not always grasped by some candidates. The analysis of diegetic sound throughout the sequence was confident in the majority of cases, but very often the emotional quality of the ominous non-diegetic soundtrack was not analysed, as in this example.

"A non-diegetic sound track is used to control the mood and emotion of the film which builds up as soon as both audience and character find out that the character is in danger which is called vicarious suspense. The non diegetic sound builds up but slowly fades away in the end giving the audience mixed emotions from having curiosity to adrenaline rush to anxiety."

Editing was the weakest area of analysis for many candidates who failed to discuss the changing pace of the editing or the subtle use of slow motion at key moments throughout the sequence and for the shocking climactic high angle shot.

2. Inaccuracy in the use of film language

As pointed out in last year's Chief Examiner's report, candidates are frequently misapplying the term jump cut to describe any example of fast or abrupt cutting. Phrases such as "the camera cuts to a wide-angle shot" are still common errors which candidates could easily avoid.

Some candidates are continuing to wrongly identify POV camera technique as eye-line match or shot-reverse-shots. The following candidate is applying the term eye-line match incorrectly:

"The director uses a lot of different camera techniques to create suspense. In the beginning of the sequence, the director uses eye-line match technique to get a close-up of the blonde woman's face. This allows the audience to feel as if we are actually standing there with her on the rock, staring directly into her face. The eye-line match technique directs the audience's focus on her eyes and facial expressions."

As well as these familiar errors, candidates are coming up with new terms of their own to describe techniques such as slow motion, as in the following example:

"Time remapping is used in this scene, when she realises that her friends can't hear her instructions. This slowing down of time allows the director to make the sequence more dramatic and suspenseful as the audience have longer to take the action and story in...."

Section B

Formalism: Early European Cinema and American Expressionism

Question 3

The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of German Expressionist mise-en-scene and lighting, but many failed to discuss how the formalist style of Expressionist filmmakers challenged the rules and storytelling conventions of Hollywood filmmaking. Consequently, the majority of candidates recorded their lowest mark on this question.

This was disappointing as German Expressionism is a key area of study in Moving Image Arts and most candidates were clearly familiar with silent classics of Weimar cinema such as *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* and *Nosferatu*. The question required commentary on how the formalist style of German Expressionism offered alternative storytelling possibilities to the Classical Hollywood style so candidates could have drawn upon their study of the continuity style to make comparisons with the stylised techniques of German Expressionism.

Some candidates discussed how expressionist techniques such as chiaroscuro lighting influenced the visual style of Film Noir, but the question was focused on how German Expression broke the rules of Classical Hollywood storytelling, rather than how it influenced Hollywood filmmaking.

Another common tendency was for candidates to give a narrative history of German Expressionism referencing the social breakdown in Germany after the First World War. Such commentary was only relevant when the candidate addressed the question of the challenge posed to the Classical Hollywood style.

Again as with Question 1, it was clear that some candidates were not familiar with the Fact Sheets on German Expressionism and mistakenly discussed Film Noir or Soviet Montage, as in the following example:

“Hollywood filmmaking had rules on story telling when it came to film. In this style they did not lie to edit films as much and preferred longer shots. They would use longer takes and tell the story with narration and flashbacks. These rules meant that the cuts throughout the sequence wouldnt be so obvious and the films would flow more as one piece. On the other hand the expressionist style challenged this as they used techniques such as soviet montage where there would be obvious cuts between the shots and they would focus more on the editing process that in hollywood. they would use techniques such as parrallel editing to show two events happening in two different places at the same time, in order to tell a story. This style would also use flashbacks and non logicalordering of their shots, meaning unlike the hollywood style they would create a sequence that would go back and forward in time and place.”

While inaccuracy such as this not a common mistake on this exam, it did lead to a number of candidates scoring low marks on Question 3.

There was evidence from the incomplete nature of some answers to this question that candidates were completing this question last and were clearly running out of time and were often unable to complete a single paragraph. While it did not appear to be a major issue in this examination, poor time management did lead to some candidates failing to provide complete answers to Question 3.

Question 4

This question offered candidates a choice of three areas of film language to discuss out of a possible five. Those candidates who chose to analyse camera technique tended to provide more detailed evaluation of the sequence than those who discussed cinematography or

mise-en-scene. While this question format allows candidates to freely choose which three areas of film language they wish to discuss, ignoring camera technique does limit the potential for candidates to fully analyse the significance of the visual style of the director.

Those candidates who did analyse camera technique were, in the majority of cases, able to confidently discuss the use of POV shots, hand-held camera, extreme high and low angle compositions and off centre framing. Despite the ability of many candidates to analyse the unconventional camera style, low key lighting scheme and claustrophobic setting, only a minority of candidates noted the expressionist influence on the visual style. Similarly, few candidates referenced the conventions of the horror genre that the director draws upon.

While most candidates were emotionally engaged with key moments in the sequence, it was evident that some struggled to analyse the eerie and unsettling mood and atmosphere. These candidates tended to provide a commentary on the three areas of film language without enough reference to growing mood of entrapment and claustrophobia.

Some candidates failed to properly identify the straitjacket, a key element in the mise-en-scene and referred it as a "coat" therefore failing to understand its significance in revealing the location to be a mental institution. Quite a number of candidates failed to analyse the encounter with the deranged man, the penultimate frame-within-a-frame shot of the asylum inmate and the closing extreme long shot of the boy escaping into the open countryside.

Another common error that a worrying number of candidates are continuing to make with this question type is to discuss all five areas of film language listed in the question, rather than only the three of their own choice that are required. A more careful reading of the question would easily eliminate this basic error which costs valuable marks.

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit A2 1 Creative Production and Research: Advanced Portfolio

Overview

This unit enables candidates to conduct independent study of a chosen film practitioner to inform the creation of an original and complete 4 - 7 minute narrative film or 2 - 3½ minute animation. The portfolio must include an illustrated essay and evidence of planning, research and evaluation.

Principal Moderator Comments

Candidates in most centres engaged with work from a wide variety of genres and examined a broad range of auteur filmmakers and animators, including Lynne Ramsey, David Fincher, Ken Loach, Andrea Arnold and Wong Kar-wai. These influences were clearly evident in candidate work, which often demonstrated a sound understanding of film language presented in aesthetically beautiful and expressive filmmaking. It was clearly apparent on many occasions that the whole production process was considered during the teaching and delivery of the subject with effective interweaving of elements informing the next stage of the process. This resulted in some highly sophisticated work with a distinctive, mature quality.

A03 Illustrated Essay & Evaluation

Synopsis

On the whole, the standard of the synopsis was good. However, candidates should be encouraged to keep as clear and concise as possible. There were also some cases where the synopsis was included in AO2b (Director's Notebook) instead of in AO3.

Illustrated Essay

The Illustrated Essay clarifies each candidate's overall approach to their Portfolio. Firstly, candidates must clearly outline their idea for their narrative film sequence in the form of a synopsis. Then, candidates must demonstrate fluent knowledge and understanding of the film-making techniques associated with their chosen practitioner and analyse in detail how they have used different film techniques to create audience responses. Finally, candidates outline their personal creative goals in light of their investigation into the work of others, and explicitly discuss the specific emotional response they hope to achieve.

There was a positive move away from conventional or more obvious choices of director this year with candidates being encouraged to study a variety of directors and cinematographers. The candidates who attained the highest mark band approached the Illustrated Essay in a succinct and focused manner choosing one film practitioner. The practitioner in question was well chosen and clearly reflected the candidate's chosen genre, style and mood.

Candidates provided two/three scene analyses, which covered five film language areas with perceptive, critical and well - illustrated analysis. Finally, candidates in the highest mark band outlined carefully considered personal creative goals with attention given to all five film language areas and insightful links made with the work of others, including discussion about the specific emotional response they hoped to elicit from their intended audience. On occasion, AO3 products erroneously placed in the upper mark bands, lacked insightful and perceptive analysis with personal goals often not included.

At the lower end of the mark range, candidates did not tend to analyse filmic techniques and instead engaged in a superficial manner with the material, using descriptive language, with their own creative intentions remaining unclear. Often at this level candidates provided unnecessary biographical information on their chosen practitioner rather than focused analysis of their practitioner's application of film language techniques. Where appropriate and valid, candidates should be encouraged to consider issues of ethics and representation. Although some candidates did discuss this well, this is an area that could be improved on as it can help to develop and increase understanding of how directors exercise control over the intended portrayal of characters' traits and the message this conveys to their intended audience.

Evaluation

Those candidates that achieved the higher mark bands for AO3 provided a detailed analysis of their practice and referred back to their initial intentions. This was often aided by detailed visual imagery. If candidates change storylines (sometimes making a lot of planning redundant) they should transparently discuss the reasons for the change and reflect on the implications for their practice within the evaluation. Candidates did not always reflect honestly on their films. A test screening of their film might aid them to better consider how successful it has been in reaching its target audience and help them to gain better insight into the audience's responses. There was evidence this year that some evaluations were perhaps rushed at the end and therefore lacked the degree of consideration and reflection demonstrated in the Illustrated Essay's statement of intention, therefore bringing down their overall mark. Although a greater number of candidates adhered to the overall word count for AO3 this also remains an area where improvements could be made.

A02a Creative Pre-production

The scripts in the majority of cases were correctly formatted and had been created using an appropriate free script writing software (e.g. Celtx or Fade In). When scripts are correctly formatted, i.e. with correct indentation, Courier font, scene descriptions, transitions, parentheticals, character notes and dialogue cues, they serve as a purposeful document in helping candidates to anticipate and plan for the duration of the film (typically one page of correctly formatted script equates to one minute of screen time). Some animations and films that relied on visual storytelling were submitted without scripts. Even where films do not include dialogue, a script is still an assessment requirement and is also an essential pre-production tool.

Some storyboards were difficult to see at times, perhaps due to scanning issues. Some candidates also failed to include numbering, labelling, annotation and consideration of camera and/or character movement. In addition, foreground, mid-ground and background should also be visible. Shot lists varied considerably, from highly detailed and competent to quite basic and/or incomplete. It should be noted that shot lists should be sequential and should match storyboards.

Candidates could be encouraged to use shot list and storyboard templates which include sections for annotation of camera angle/shot/movement, sound and editing, etc. This would ensure that candidates are given the opportunity to include detail that will help them to meet the criteria required for placement in the higher mark bands.

Candidates should also be encouraged to show evidence that the pre-production materials have been put to practical use as working planning documents e.g. by indicating changes and alterations made during the shooting process in the form of written annotations.

Centres should ensure that they read the Instructions to Teachers on the CCEA website and submit all documents as one single .pdf to help facilitate the moderation process.

A02b Director's Notebook

The Director's Notebook continues to be a more challenging area of the portfolio for some centres and candidates. Centre marking for this element tended again to be predominantly lenient this year. In the main, A02b requires broader photographic/filmic investigation beyond that which has been undertaken in preparation for the final film. Further primary experimentation beyond the preparation for the film itself, would enable candidates to show evidence of how they have explored a wider range of design considerations and creative approaches.

Although there was a positive increase in visual documentation this year, the majority of notebooks observed included the over-use of secondary images, rather than candidates' own purposeful first-hand visual planning. Although secondary images can be helpful to include as a comparison to a candidate's own work, it would be helpful if candidates labelled these clearly to distinguish them from their own primary experiments. The Director's Notebook should primarily contain purposeful first-hand evidence of candidates' attempts to try out the filmic techniques (perhaps in three or four 20 second exercises) which have been informed by the chosen influences and techniques they explored in their Illustrated Essay. It was clear that those candidates who evidently experimented with and planned for composition, lighting, mise-en-scene, editing and sound produced more competent and creative film productions. Stronger candidates also included some short commentary on the success of their trial exercises.

Animation portfolios might further benefit from including more evidence of character and set design and construction as well as evidence of experimentation with animation techniques.

There was a tendency by some candidates to include excessive research on directors, film movements etc. and/or excessive clip analysis. Please note that the Director's Notebook should not repeat or extend the analysis of visual influences already explored in the Illustrated Essay. Marks cannot be awarded within the Director's Notebook for this.

Contingency planning was mainly well evidenced by the majority of candidates, including the presentation of excerpts from call sheets, risk assessments, shooting schedules and prop lists.

A02a Narrative Film Sequence

Some centres produced highly stylised and expressive work, where others focused on more realist techniques. The quality of work produced often showed consideration of a wide range of themes and genres provoking a variety of intended audience responses. This presented evidence of a progressive approach to the teaching of this subject. There were also some fabulous examples of animations demonstrating high technical control and ability in a range of animation skills such as 2D, 3D and stop motion animation, and it was noted that the number of animations is steadily growing year on year.

In the stronger final products, evidence of effective use of multi-layered sound and detailed consideration of lighting for expressive purposes were demonstrated to enhance mood and meaning. In the lower level products an over-reliance on music was noted with absent or limited evidence of multi-layered sound. For a significant number of candidates, there were instances of some very beautiful and thoughtful cinematography where the production values had been very carefully considered leading to visually exciting and imaginative final films.

Although there were some outstanding examples of candidates using lighting in sophisticated and highly creative ways, cinematography is still an area that could be developed. In a number of cases the use of low-key lighting resulted in poor production values and very few of the films observed used colour grading successfully.

There were some outstanding examples of thoughtful consideration of mise-en-scene, especially in the design of special effects make-up, costume and set design, in addition to well considered and varied location choices. Age-appropriate actors, when used, continue to create much greater authenticity. However, there was still an evident over-reliance on home and/or school based locations in the work of lower achieving candidates who failed to consider how these places might be presented more effectively or innovatively.

Pacing/editing in the service of visual story-telling proved to be another challenging area of film language. Some candidates' live action work went over the 4 - 7½ minute time limit and although often the work was of a high standard, the pace, timing and audience impact was negatively affected.

AO1 Knowledge and Understanding of Film Language (whole portfolio)

The mark for this portfolio element is applied at the end of the marking process when the rest of the portfolio has been marked. It is used to award candidates' marks for the knowledge and understanding of film language, styles, practices, techniques, movements and contexts that they have been able to show across the full portfolio.

This mark is intended to be applied holistically, taking into account the levels it achieves in each individual portfolio element and then agreeing a final, representative mark/level for the whole portfolio. A simple formula, used as a starting point, can help you find an average overall mark.

Add up the marks given to the other Assessment Objectives, i.e. AO3 (Illustrated Essay); AO2a (Script, Storyboard and Shot List); AO2b (Director's Notebook); and AO2a (Film) and divide by their total (110), then multiply by the total AO1 mark (x 10).

AO3: Level 3 (11)

AO2a: Level 4 (16)

AO2b: Level 2 (4)

AO2a: Level 3 (13/39)

Total: $70 \div 110 = 0.63 \times 10 = 6$ marks for AO1 (Level 3)

In summary, and as stated in previous reports, it is important for centres to continue to push concepts and ideas as much as high production values. In many cases candidates were able to illustrate a complex understanding not only of film aesthetics and other related art forms, but also of the possibilities film affords them in making a statement about the world and their experience of it. The current specification offers an effective platform for considering the recurring themes so many candidates engage with, e.g. mental instability, self harm, death (suicide, terminal illness, murder).

MIA continues to be a uniquely challenging and rewarding school subject, offering many different ways for candidates to gain both theoretical knowledge and practical and creative skills in everything from time management and teamwork to self-expression and the use of their imagination to complete complex creative tasks. Its challenges for candidates are considerable, ranging from the purely logistical to the management of highly emotive content over a prolonged period of time. However, considering the level stronger candidates continue to work at, it is very evident how the subject offers opportunities to reach remarkable visual, creative and conceptual standards. As a result, MIA promotes sophisticated visual literacy and communication, both of which play such a crucial role in active citizenship and cultural participation in our contemporary world.

Chief Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit A2 2 Advanced Critical Response

Overview

This online examination requires candidates to analyse unseen film clips, including a comparative analysis, and to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- Realism, Narrative and Visual Style (including the French New Wave, Italian Neorealism and Poetic Realism)

The examination also features a creative task based on a provided script stimulus which candidates must draft director's notes for, demonstrating knowledge and understanding of film style and the application of film language to the directing of a scene.

Supervising Examiner Comments

This examination seemed to stimulate a stronger level of engagement among candidates than in previous years. This was particularly evident in the responses to Questions 1, 3 and 4 where candidates emotionally engaged with the characters and their struggles and demonstrated levels of personal insight and independent thinking that have not been so prevalent in previous examinations. Candidates are showing more confidence in the analysis of mood and emotion and this is certainly improving their overall examination performance.

There was evidence of improvement on some of the basic errors in the application of film language highlighted in last year's Chief Examiner's report. However, the technique of the jump-cut is still being consistently misapplied by far too many candidates. In all four questions this year, there were examples of candidates wrongly describing rapid editing as jump-cutting. A lot of attention was devoted to this basic error in last year's Chief Examiner's report, but little appears to have changed. Editing is one of the areas of film language where candidates often struggle to provide a balanced analysis. This is now compounded by the inaccuracies in the use of the term jump-cut. Candidates need to be shown exactly what a jump-cut is to prevent them using the term as a default for describing fast cutting or abrasive editing.

Section A

Realism: Narrative and Visual Style

Question 1

Many candidates scored well in this question demonstrating a high level of engagement with this slow burning action sequence from the war genre. The majority of candidates showed good insight into the build-up of tension in the sequence, correctly identifying the change in pacing and variety of shot types, the use of diegetic sound only and the high key lighting. Generally, candidates provided good depth of analysis of camera technique and sound with editing and lighting requiring further development.

The ability to identify and discuss the creative purpose behind the use of documentary realist techniques such as hand-held camera, natural lighting and diegetic sound only was a critical factor in successfully answering this question. Most candidates did reference realism, but not always in an accurate manner. Some noted the influence of the French New Wave or Cinema Verite, while a number of candidates referenced Italian Neo-realism as in these two examples:

“The director gradually builds on the pace of editing as the scene goes on. Using slower, unobtrusive editing an Italian neo realism technique to help build realism, to set the scene and build suspense.”

“The use of naturalistic lighting works well with the Italian neo realism style of on location shooting.”

Those candidates who referenced the fly-on-the-wall aesthetic of documentary realism were more accurate in their analysis.

Many candidates failed to discuss the importance of POV camera technique in the sequence. This was disappointing since the director employs a complex use of POV camera technique offering the audience two opposing POVs – the viewpoint from the American soldiers looking out from the interior of their military vehicle and the point-of-view of the hidden enemy insurgents, looking out through the windows of the buildings. Only a minority of candidates analysed the many frame-within-a-frame compositions featured within the sequence.

Some candidates incorrectly identified aspects of the sequence as Poetic Realism, as in these two examples of candidates discussing the opening, high angle extended tracking shot;

“In this clip the director uses a slow panning shot to open is a slow exploration of space which is a common poetic realism technique, we are shown the calmness as demonstrated by the director, this would contrast with what was to come.”

“The shot is also a slightly long shot, and settles into the scene, creating a mood for the audience to respond to. This can also be viewed as poetic in terms of the slow exploration of the space.”

Question 2

Question 2 is where knowledge and understanding of Poetic Realism is tested in the A2 examination.

Question 2 this year presented candidates with a slow moving, atmospheric sequence featuring a number of poetic realist techniques. Many candidates were able to discuss the mystery surrounding Jesse James in relation to the use of poetic techniques such as time lapse photography and the role of nature, the blurring of shots and deliberate concealment of the main character, the voice-over and whimsical music. There was often excellent understanding of the character’s ambiguity.

Many candidates identified the dreamlike qualities of the sequence - the playing with time in the opening time lapse images and the feeling of nostalgia generated by the sepia tone imagery of the saloon scene. There was some excellent analysis of how cinematography is used to create mood and atmosphere:

“Cinematography: Gentle high key lighting of the sky showing the blues and calm like colours mixed in with the sunset reds and oranges that show some sort of emotion. These colours really create that feeling of a dream and a mystery as these colors in the sky are beautiful and nice to look at. The high key lighting mixes in with the blur creating a feeling that you are in a dream land.”

“Jesse himself is hidden in the shadows of low-key lighting, which in turn infers a darkness and mysterious nature within Jesse....Jesse and other figures are completely backlit by bright high-key light streaming in through windows. This again infers a sense of mystery to Jesse’s character, as perhaps his lack of clarity within this lighting is indicative of his enigmatic personality. Later on in the same scene, we see what could be perhaps described as chiaroscuro on Jesse’s face as he removes his jacket. The use of chiaroscuro can often hint at a sense of mystery and even hidden darkness within an individual, especially in the highly figurative film genre of poetic realism”.

The most successful responses did not attempt a chronological analysis of the sequence, but discussed moments of the sequence together such as the evocative images of the natural world that open and close the sequence. Here is an example of a candidate linking poetic imagery to the theme of mystery – both of character and the world itself.

“The opening of the sequence is a thoroughly thought out still of the sky from a canted angle and then from behind a house. The shot stares longingly at the sky as if into the heavens pondering the mystery of creation. Pairing this with the end shots of jesse james staring longingly up as his face fades into a shot of him looking at the beautifully lit sunset, it is a surreal view of the world. It is as if to say that the character of jesse james and his intentions are as mysterious as the heavens and their purpose.”

One weakness in this analysis is the candidate’s failure to use more specific film language terminology to identify the final image as a wide panoramic shot.

Such lack of depth of analysis of camera technique was the single biggest weakness in responses to Question 2. While the majority of candidates discussed the distortion effects of the camera technique and the blurring of the image at the edge of the frame, most candidates failed to discuss the tracking shot of Jesse James (from behind) and the wide shot at the end of the sequence.

There were many impressive examples of independent thinking by candidates on how the director uses a poetic visual style to portray the myth of the outlaw Jesse James, rather than the reality.

“In addition to this, we see that the light is soft and dream-like adding to the mystery in this story and adding to the feeling that it is a story or a legend.”

“At the beginning we see the time-lapse of the sky. This confuses the viewers for we know that time is passing but we are looking at the same thing. This increases the dreamy, poetic feeling of this film. Because, it feels like just daydreaming, you stare at one thing for too long as time flies away. This increases the mystery, because we as viewers are questioning it, is this all a dream or is at true story.”

“The clip fades from the time lapse of clouds which uses a natural colour scheme, to a tracking shot of Jesse where the colours completely juxtapose the scheme of the previous clip. This adds to the sense of mystery as the audience is moves from the use of a more realist colour scheme and lighting, to a far more stylised appearance with a colour scheme that poetically gives the impression of old photographs. This furthers the idea that we are looking back on the character’s life and legacy, and what we are being shown is not a reality.”

Study of Poetic Realism does allow for more open, interpretative and personal responses so candidates should approach Question 2 in this spirit. Comprehensive responses in which candidates analyse all of the key areas of film language and engage confidently with mood, atmosphere and emotion will be rewarded with a high mark. Responses which engage at a much deeper level with the mood and meaning of the sequence (for example, commenting on visual metaphors) and analyse visual style in key moments of the sequence (rather than attempting a comprehensive analysis of all the key areas of film language) will also be awarded marks at the higher end of the mark range.

Here is an example of a candidate demonstrating a high level of insight into the mood of mystery and the theme of the anonymity of the outlaw figure, while analysing camera technique, cinematography and sound.

“The directors air of mystery around the character of Jesse James is composed of anonymity and seclusivity. This is first suggested by the mysterious and peculiar soundtrack, with a bizarre and wonderous soundtrack. The xylophone, amongst other key intruments, are pondering, introspective and soft sounding- this externalises the air of mystery around

Jesse James, as the soundtrack almost sonically pontificates over the entire existence of this elusive and mysterious character.

This air of mystery reaches its zenith through the use of cinematography. The character that comes onto frame (00:17), presumably Jesse James, is placed in center framing. This use of framing silhouettes James to the audience, portraying him as a spectre of a character visually. He is secluded, mysterious, and anonymous to both the audience and the world around him. Jesse becomes "unrecognised". On screen, we are able to depict very little from this character. This shadow of a man arguably contrasts the lively colour of the 'wild west' setting, looming over the setting. A visual juxtaposition is created here, as Jesse faces away from the camera, he is just as anonymous to the larger world around him. By framing Jesse in this way, the director effectively poetically creates an air of mystery around him, as he eludes both the world around him, and the audience observing him concurrently.

This is only reiterated by the camera technique, as the blurred edges of the frame manipulate the visuals of the clip. This visual distortion through the lens, seen through the clip, generates an air of total control of his own mystery, in regards to Jesse- he is capable of controlling his own identity to others, which is reflected visually through the camera technique."

Section B

Creative Exercise

Question 3

This highly atmospheric dystopian sequence with echoes of the Mad Max and Terminator movies generated a high level of engagement from the majority of candidates. Candidates approached their answers in varying ways, some working methodically through the script providing clear and detailed instructions for each paragraph. Others gave a more general overview of each area of film language which tended to leave the response underdeveloped. In some responses, the techniques proposed were quite predictable and simply illustrated candidates' awareness of the five areas of film language. The more successful responses illustrated an awareness of the need for coherence of visual style and creative purpose. Candidates should be encouraged to emphasise style and creative purpose over a mere description of film language.

To illustrate the contrasting approaches by candidates, here is an example of a candidate applying film language in almost forensic detail to the script.

"1) Long shot at angle eye level angle, stationary camera, using natural lighting, showing the highway as the bus drives along it with the clouds showing an burnt out cars and no one else around also on the road. Slow paced and match on action editing. Diegetic sound- noise of bus.

2) Medium shot at eye level angle, stationary camera, low key lighting. Girl driving with one hand and other hand on the gun. The girl is wearing ripped jeans and a dark top. Slow paced and match on action editing. Diegetic sound- noise of vehicle and radio.

3) Extreme close up, eye level angle, stationary camera, low key lighting. Showing the electric counter on camera. Slow pace and cross cutting editing. Diegetic sound- noise of vehicle and radio.

4) Close up, eye level angle, stationary camera, low key lighting. Dystopia's eyes looking at Dillon. Slow pace and cross cutting editing. Diegetic sound- noise of vehicle and radio.

5) Medium shot, high level angle, stationary camera, low key lighting. Dillon cowering on back seat. Slow pace and continuity editing. Diegetic sound- noise of vehicle, radio.

6) *Point of view, low level angle, stationary camera, low key lighting. Dillon's point view as Dystopia speaks, loud thud and Dystopia shooting the roof. Faster pace and continuity editing. Diegetic sound- noise of thud, gun shot, radio and vehicle. Dialogue-Dystopia.*

7) *Medium shot, birds eye view, tracking, low key lighting. Showing robot flinch when bullet hits. Faster pace and match on action editing. Diegetic sound- gun shot and vehicle.*

8) *Extreme close up, eye level angle, camera stationary. Speed counter increasing. Fast pace and match on action editing. Diegetic sound- car screeching. "*

In contrast to this integrated approach, the following candidate chooses to discuss each area of film language separately but is careful to comment on the creative purpose and emotional impact of each technique.

"For the introduction of the Battle Bus at the start of the scene, I would place the camera low to the ground, close beside where the Bus whizzes past. I would also have the camera pan to follow the bus as it speeds away. By placing the camera close to the bus, this allows the sense of its speed to be exaggerated, immediately increasing the excitement and thrill of the scene.

I would then use a low flying, top-down drone shot following the Bus as it races through the highway. This gives the audience a thrilling feeling of moving just as fast as the bus. Placing the audience as an observer flying over head, emulates a top-down view of video games, allowing them to feel in control of the bus as it moves, which sets them up to feel a connection to the characters introduced inside the bus.

For shots on the inside of the bus, I would use harsh, low-key, moving light sources, shone into the bus from outside. This conveys to the audience the speed with which the bus is passing objects outside it, raising their excitement. It would also create a dynamic, frantically changing pattern of light inside the bus, reflecting the frantic inner mental states of the protagonists, and generating a visceral sense of tension.

I would use mise-en-scene to heighten the feelings of tension and threat associated with the robot spiders. I would design them to have no rounded edges, but made up of a complex set of connections of smaller, sharper parts. This would create a real sense of danger, particularly due to the futuristic design that audiences would not be familiar with in daily life, raising the tension tremendously.

I would also use a glossy black metal for the spider's body, as this would create a powerful colour contrast with their bright red eyes. The audience would associate this black and red colour scheme with danger and anger, raising the tension as the spider bears down on the protagonists."

The most successful responses demonstrated a balance between the five areas of film language. The areas of film language that received the least attention by candidates were editing, lighting and sound. Most candidates engaged well with the main characters and their battle with the robot and many took a creative approach to characterisation and mise-en-scene, as in this example.

"For mise-en-scene, I would primarily detail the battlebus, further using it to characterise its inhabitants. It would ideally be designed as a typically American yellow schoolbus, but painted black, armed with sharp barbs and other weapons, and reflect signs of damage, amongst wear-and-tear. The battlebus, in itself, should be considered the third character within the scene, and should equally be as fleshed out. This once again reflects the characters who inhabit the battlebus, to an almost Homeric extent, matching and visually describing their personalities before we encounter these characters first hand. Similarly, the characters should both have equally as detailed costume designs, with the same amount of detail that inhabits the battlebus, for example, to reflect Dillon's youth, she would be wearing pigtails, often a symbol for youth, whereas Dystopia would be scarred and worn, reflecting

her experience within this world, despite still being a “young woman”. This set and character design would endear the audience to these characters, and would subsequently raise tension and suspense if their livelihood was to be threatened.”

There were also examples of creative thinking around realism in the treatment of lighting, as in this example:

“I would use natural lighting for the outside shots of a sunny deserted location which seems warm. I would use natural lighting as I would want to create realism even in a futuristic world. I would use chairascuro lighting for the inside of the bus with it completely darkened with no lights on but only light coming from the front windscreen and the roof of the bus when the robot destroys it, I would do this to create fear and shock.”

Unconventional editing techniques, such as the freeze-frame or slow motion, were also explored by some candidates. Last year’s Chief Examiner’s report highlighted the treatment of sound as an area where candidates could clearly improve by applying more creative thinking to how diegetic and non-diegetic sound, including a specified musical soundtrack, might be applied to add emotion and drama to the scene.

Here is an example of a candidate giving careful consideration to the type of soundtrack that will evoke maximum tension and suspense.

“I would utilise sound to appropriately create tension, suspense, and excitement. For example, when the Robot attacks, and Dystopia is made aware of this, I would indulge an electric guitar focused soundtrack, accompanied by heavy drums. This hard rock, or extensively metal soundtrack, would aptly emphasise the excitement of the scene, thoroughly dismissing the peace that preceded it, substituting it for an embrace of chaos. With this soundtrack considered, I would also then create a chaotic soundscape fo diegetic sound, such as the buzz of the saw, the acceleration of the battlebus, and the weapon being fired- through all of which, many more sounds are active. This chaotic soundscape would drastically create tension and suspense, as it individually details all of the concurrent dangers and threats to the characters at once, arguably enforcing the audience to be caught up in the raw chaos of the scene.”

Section C

Comparative Analysis

Question 4

There was an impressive level of emotional engagement by the majority of candidates to this question, demonstrating insight into and empathy with the complex inner and outer struggles of the two main characters, as they wandered through contemporary cityscapes.

Most candidates grasped the similarity of the theme of both sequences and were able to confidently discuss the emotions, fears and feelings of isolation experienced by both characters. The majority of candidates were able to identify at least some of the key comparisons (voice-over narration, abrupt editing and unconventional editing) and differences (lighting, sound) between the two sequences and provide an analysis of considerable depth.

The most successful candidates provided a balanced response by dealing with each area of film language separately and ending with a summative overview. The less competent answers were unstructured and unbalanced, commenting on each sequence separately without making any comparative analysis.

Only a minority of candidates discussed the formalist or realist features of both sequences, including the influence of Soviet Montage on the editing style of Sequence 1 or the playing with time in Sequence 2 through the poetic realist techniques of slow motion and shifting focus.

There was evidence of lack of precision in the use of film language by some candidates and basic inaccuracy, particularly with regard to the technique of jump-cutting. The technique of jump-cutting is used in Sequence 2 in a subtle manner, but many candidates wrongly identified the frenetic editing of Sequence 1 as jump-cutting, as in this example:

“Jumpcuts are used throughout both clips as a way to build tension as they come very suddenly and can make the audience jump. The jump cuts in the second clip are more sudden and poetic while the jump cuts in the first clip are more punctuated and visible.”

As well as distinguishing between diegetic and non-diegetic sound, candidates need to be more precise in their analysis of the emotional quality of the musical score. The phrase “an intense, non-diegetic score” is now becoming an increasingly common way of describing the musical soundtrack, but this is too generalised a comment to merit reward in the higher mark bands.

Candidates should be careful when distinguishing between documentary realism or Cinema Verite and Poetic Realism. Some candidates wrongly described some techniques employed in described Sequence 1 as examples of Poetic Realism. Sequence 2 was much more obviously an example of Poetic Realism and many candidates were able to identify and confidently discuss at least some of the techniques of Poetic Realism employed in Sequence 2.

The following candidate discusses how the playing with time is used to convey character psychology and emotion.

“Both clips reduce the horizontal plane of time, to explore the inner vertical psychology of their characters. This is key to poetic realist directors, such as Wong Kar Wai. Within the first clip, the director slows time as the child stands upon the bridge. This allows the audience to fully explore the child's fear of the bridge, as the child hyperfocuses on all of the weakness of the bridge. Thus, that fear is reflected and instilled within the audience. Within the second clip, on the other hand, the slowing of time is much more painful to witness. As time slows, the audience is granted more time to notice and study the characters suffering, becoming almost unbearable as she becomes subject to her own epilepsy. We see each second of this stretched and elongated. This both reflects the characters suffering and invokes the audience's sympathy for the character. Thus, both clips slow time to show two emotions, respectively- the first being one of pure, raw, childhood fear, and the other being one of suffering and inescapability.”

There were some fine examples of independent thinking and personal reflections by candidates within their comparative analysis. This candidate shows impressive insight into how camera technique and cinematography are used to convey the inner emotional landscapes of both characters.

“Both directors also make use of cinematography in the sequences to generate a tense and overwhelming mood. In sequence 1 the boy always appears to be in focus while everything around him appears to be blurry. This shows how his condition has put him in a world of his own and everything around him is moving at a different pace to him. It shows how he may lack understanding on how to comply with the norm and is finding everything too overwhelming and tense.

Likewise, in sequence 2 the camera goes in and out of focus in certain surroundings. Though, even the girl is sometimes blurred too. This shows how her sight is effected by her epilepsy and she cannot cope with the hustle and bustle of movement and light surrounding her. It makes it seem like she is feeling faint and could have a fit at any given moment. This shows how she is finding everything overwhelming and the experience intense. The lighting in the first sequence is naturalistic. It is outdoors and the sky is dull and cloudy which gives it this dark mood and a mild low key lighting to it. It is not an intense lighting. This shows how the world appears boring and mundane to the boy. In contrast in sequence 2 the lighting is very

unnaturalistic, with the underground being lit with these neon, white lights which intensifies the whole experience. The shots of the lights over her head tend to be blurred, showing how they are affecting her vision and disrupting her comfort.”

Some candidates identified common elements in both sequences that each director employs to evoke a range of different feelings and emotions. The following candidate identifies a striking visual metaphor common to both sequences.

“Both directors use cinematic metaphors to describe the feelings and mood of their characters, both taking the form of vehicles, used to describe two radically different emotions. Within the first clip, this is the emergency services (00:35), who stand out within the montage due to their abrupt noise. Some may argue that these vehicles are a metaphor for the child’s sensory overload. The ambulance is reckless and loud, howling within its short presence on frame, arguably reflecting the child’s suffering within the clip, externalising his need to escape and be free of this chaos-ridden scene. Yet, he is prevented from doing so, as the listing continues.

On the other hand, the second clip uses the London Underground train as a metaphor (00:58) for the protagonist’s oncoming epileptic fit. Just like the train, it is approaching rapidly, and she is powerless to prevent it. This is qualified by the previous passing train (00:38), arguably a reflection on the fact that her association with epilepsy is inescapable, and always oncoming. The train will arrive, stop, and leave, just as her onset epileptic fit will pass. Yet, in the moment, she cannot escape this metaphorical prognosis. Thus, the first clip uses the visual and sonic metaphor to describe to the audience the child’s feeling of being overloaded with information, externalising his desire to escape. Contrastingly, the second director uses the train as a metaphor to describe to the audience her inescapable epileptic fit. Comparatively, this generates a mood of fear and of unique experience within the audience.”

The stylisation and the emotional depth and complexity of the characters in Question 2 and Question 4 offered opportunities for independent thinking and original interpretation by candidates. More candidates should be encouraged to do so as this is an important feature of the A2 examination.

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