

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

FILM STUDIES

H410

For first teaching in 2017

H410/01 Summer 2023 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 1 series overview

Candidates appeared to be well-prepared for this examination, with the majority answering the correct number of questions using the correct set films and addressing the questions with specific examples from the films they had studied. Few candidates displayed the misconception that questions were asking for lengthy exposition of theory. Many candidates appeared to have planned their responses to provide a structured answer to the question asked. More successful responses showed sophisticated knowledge and understanding by analysing many detailed examples from the films to illustrate a coherent overall argument. Less successful responses would not address the question, lack exemplification, show a weaker grasp of the micro elements, aesthetics or critical approaches, or digress into irrelevant material.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allocated time effectively • were clear on the distinctions between the different micro elements • gave specific and sufficiently detailed examples from the set films • launched straight into an answer to the question in their responses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spent too much time on questions 1 and 2 and ran out of time later in the paper • combined or confused micro elements, especially mise-en-scène, lighting and performance • wrote very generally about the set films, with irrelevant interpretation of audience response, unnecessary explanation of theory, or background facts about the films • wrote lengthy introductory paragraphs that might simply rephrase the question.

Section A overview

This section asks candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding of the micro elements of film form across all three eras of US film production.

Question 1 is a question that tests candidates' knowledge and understanding of any of the elements listed in the subject content under the micro elements of film form; in this case, non-verbal communication.

Question 2 asks for analysis using a micro element (or some aspect of a micro element) in one film.

Questions 3 and 4 ask for analysis and comparison of two films, with 10 of the 35 marks available allocated to this comparison. In both Questions 3 and 4 the comparison asked for was that between the aesthetics of the two films. Questions 3 and 4 appeared to be the most demanding across the paper, as some candidates found difficulty in analysing aesthetics.

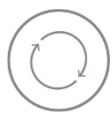
Misconception



Simply using the word 'aesthetics' or stating that something creates an aesthetic effect does not demonstrate application of knowledge and understanding of aesthetics. Less successful candidates often used the term 'aesthetic' when they were referring to themes, messages or genre conventions, and so did not adequately compare the aesthetics of the two films. More successful responses might discuss themes, messages and genres but would explicitly link these to the associated aesthetics of the films they cited.

Occasionally a candidate did not answer Question 2, perhaps thinking that these were either/or questions. Also occasionally, a candidate analysed a film from the wrong era in Questions 1, 2, 3 or 4, which limited the marks available.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should be advised to note physically which films they will be using when selecting which questions to answer at the beginning of the exam and to double-check that these are from the correct era in Section A and are the right choice between surrealist and German expressionist/French new wave film in Section B.

Question 1

You have studied **one** US film from **each** of the lists.
For Questions **1–4** write about the US films you have studied.

Silent Era	1930–1960	1961–1990
<i>Wings</i> (1927). Directed by William A. Wellman. USA	<i>Citizen Kane</i> (1941). Directed by Orson Welles. USA	<i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i> (1968). Directed by Stanley Kubrick. USA
<i>The Gold Rush</i> (1925). Directed by Charlie Chaplin. USA	<i>Singin' in the Rain</i> (1952). Directed by Gene Kelly/Stanley Donen. USA	<i>Raging Bull</i> (1980). Directed by Martin Scorsese. USA
<i>The Mark of Zorro</i> (1920). Directed by Fred Niblo/Theodore Reed. USA	<i>Stagecoach</i> (1939). Directed by John Ford. USA	<i>E. T.</i> (1982). Directed by Steven Spielberg. USA
<i>The General</i> (1926). Directed by Clyde Bruckman/ Buster Keaton. USA	<i>Vertigo</i> (1958). Directed by Alfred Hitchcock. USA	<i>Do the Right Thing</i> (1989). Directed by Spike Lee. USA
<i>Sunrise</i> (1927). Directed by F.W. Murnau. USA	<i>Double Indemnity</i> (1944). Directed by Billy Wilder. USA	<i>The Conversation</i> (1974). Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. USA
<i>The Wind</i> (1928). Directed by Victor Sjöström. USA	<i>All that Heaven Allows</i> (1955). Directed by Douglas Sirk. USA	<i>West Side Story</i> (1961). Directed by Jerome Robbins/ Robert Wise. USA

- 1** Explain how actors use non-verbal communication to create a performance in at least **two** examples from **one** film from **1930–1960** that you have studied. **[10]**

This question proved accessible for those candidates who had a clear understanding of the role of non-verbal communication as part of performance as a micro element. Some candidates struggled to demonstrate such understanding, instead discussing other micro elements such as cinematography, sound and mise-en-scène.

Exemplification in this question should demonstrate understanding of the element, so better responses focused on non-verbal communication as part of performance, often discussing use of facial expression, gesture, proxemics or other elements of body language. The quality of the response often depended on the detail the candidate could supply: less successful answers might state very generally that an actor 'smiles a lot' or describe actions; more successful answers went into detail about how the performance of one or more actors was constructed.

Note that the 'Explain' command word in this question demonstrates that it is testing knowledge and understanding of the micro element, so more successful candidates did not waste time with lengthy analysis of meaning, directors' intentions, audience interpretations, theory or other unnecessary material.

Misconception



Some candidates took 'non-verbal communication' to mean 'what happens when actors are not speaking' or to include any micro element that did not involve language, such as cinematography, sound and mise-en-scène.

Question 2

- 2 Analyse how editing is used to create meaning in at least **two** examples from **one** film from **the silent era** that you have studied. **[10]**

Most candidates were able to give two examples of editing. More successful responses gave detail of how and why specific shots were edited together, used accurate terminology in their description of the edits and chose their examples well to illustrate meaning. Some candidates found it harder to analyse the meaning of examples of continuity editing, though some very successful answers were able to do this. More candidates found expressive transitions easier to analyse. Similarly, the use of long takes, while acceptable as an example, were rarely well-analysed.

Some less successful responses discussed edits rather generally, such as 'used fast paced edits', 'used cutaways', where exemplification ranged from the less specific to extremely vague references to the film as a whole e.g. 'within the fight scene'.

Misconception



Some candidates incorrectly labelled nearly every cut they analysed as a 'jump cut'. Candidates should avoid using this term unless they are absolutely clear that the editing has consciously deviated from continuity editing (in one of the Section B films, for example).

Question 3*

- 3* Compare how mise-en-scène contributes to the aesthetics of **one** film from **1930–1960** and **one** film from **1961–1990** that you have studied.
Give detailed examples from both films. [35]

This was the more popular of the two optional comparison questions.

Most candidates were able to give some examples of mise-en-scène from their chosen films and most could make an attempt at comparison and contribution to aesthetics.

Many of the more successful responses worked through a list of aspects of mise-en-scène such as setting, props, costume, and make-up systematically, discussing both films in terms of each element and linking these carefully to a comparison of the films' aesthetics. These responses typically offered several detailed examples from each film.

Less successful responses provided less detail in their exemplification, did not compare the two films explicitly, lacked understanding of aesthetics, or had less of a focus on mise-en-scène. Some responses discussed other elements, such as performance, lighting and cinematography confidently but incorrectly stated that these formed part of mise-en-scène in the introduction to their answer.

Misconception



Some candidates explicitly stated that mise-en-scène included other micro elements such as performance, lighting and cinematography. Candidates should note the boundaries of mise-en-scène as described in the subject content of the specification (which may differ from those used in Media Studies).

Exemplar 1

3	<p>In Do the Right thing misc-en-scene contributes to the construction of an 80's New York aesthetic, Italian neo ^{realism} through the use of identifiable locations and ^{warm color} period ^{palette} costume whereas Double Indemnity uses it to create a dark, ^{moody} dark aesthetic that creates a follows the typical tropes of classic noir hollywood noir.</p> <p>In Do the Right Thing brightly coloured clothing, and stereotypical props are used to signify differing social groups. The motif of Buggin Out's sneakers is mentioned throughout when at first a white man runs over them we later see him brushing them with a toothbrush - highlighting the importance of different cultural trends within communities.</p> <p>In Double Indemnity though, costume is much different. Phyllis is dressed in slim fitting, flattering silhouettes to reinforce the femme fatale role and the classic noir trope. Walter is always in a suit and is seen smoking cigars or using wearing a fedora, reinforcing the gloomy aesthetic and sense of dread.</p> <p>Locations play a key part in both films, while in Double Indemnity we see various spaces and locations, moving from the grocery store to a train. In Do the Right thing, location is the same throughout and the same spaces like the pizzeria, Korean store and Mother Sisters fire window are reused revisited the whole time. Because it's filmed on an intersection ^{that} there all these communities share, we constantly get a sense of the mise en scene. The classic Brooklyn brownstone, the italians pizzeria and the three mens to bright red wall.</p>
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		<p>The three men act almost like a Greek chorus who are always seen in the back of shots while the vibrant red walls in the background signify heat, anger and cultural vibrancy because this area is ethnically diverse. There are also cultural flags hanging on large walls to signify identity and unity - the Jamaican flag is painted boldly, seen in the shot midground of the shot when Sal arrives. A poster of Mike Tyson is shown in a short duration scene, linking to famous black people as well as the moral question of 'is violence the answer'. Spike Lee was heavily influenced by Raging Bull for this film so the theme of boxing is prevalent. In Double Indemnity however, locations and spaces are used to highlight wealth, the overhanging sense of dread and inevitable fate these characters are trapped in. In the scene when Walter visits Phyllis' house for the first time, a wide establishing shot and a pan introduce the large 'spanish' styled house. Children are in the foreground playing catch, which leads to the element of games and trickery. Once inside the home a clear noir aesthetic is established through the venetian blinds creating shadows over Neff, the chiaroscuro of this scene is prevalent through the silhouettes cast on the walls. A low angle shot reveals Phyllis standing vulnerably at the top of a grand staircase, dressed only in a towel. Motivated spot lighting is used to emphasize ^{near} accentuate her facial features as she appears to look like some angel. The black and white colour scheme,</p>
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		<p>along with her elegant white dress contrasts with the colourful peppermint greens and yellows in <i>Do the Right Thing</i> that clearly establish culture. Costume in <i>Double Indemnity</i> is used to establish fake innocence, sexual experience and wealth. The anklet Phyllis wears also nods to the element of narcissism and sexual availability. In the scene of Wasters apartment, mise-en-scène is used to create a sense of loneliness and doom. With the lowkey lighting from the lamps, the minimalistic furniture and rain (creating pathetic fallacy) falling outside his window. The chiaroscuro in this scene heightens and as a shadow is cast on the wall following Neff as if representing his own guilty conscience and conflict. Alcoholic bottles are also spread around the apartment and it feels claustrophobic due to the lack of space and confined area. In <i>Do the Right Thing</i> however, when Mookie returns home we get a glimpse of his apartment. Which is brightly coloured, homey and culturally identifiable. Although it is a small space like Neff apartment we don't get near the same feeling of entrapment. Shadows are cast out from the saturated, natural light of the sun creating warmth within the room. A large fan is positioned in the foreground to reinforce the theme of high summer. This theme is also revisited in the ^a montage, of ^{a close up} a group of ^{of} men ^{'s} men's hands cracking open beer cans highlights the sense of community whereas <i>Double Indemnity</i> is out about individuality and existential fatalism.</p>
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This is an example of a solid Level 5 response that explicitly compares the aesthetics of the two films (though less successful on aesthetics for *Do the Right Thing*) and comprehensively analyses many detailed examples from both films. Comparison runs throughout the exemplification.

This candidate allocated time effectively, meaning that they reached Levels 4 and 5 in the mark scheme across all five of their responses. This exemplar shows how the candidate launches straight into an answer to the question at the beginning of the essay and offers a summary at the end, with the bulk of the response concentrating on quality and quantity of exemplification. This economical approach seems to have aided time allocation.

The references to lighting do usually refer to elements of mise-en-scène such as the venetian blinds or the motivated lighting within the sets, so were relevant.

Question 4*

4* Compare how cinematography (including lighting) contributes to the aesthetics of **one** film from **the silent era** and **one** film from **1961–1990** that you have studied.

Give detailed examples from both films.

[35]

This was the less popular of the two optional comparison questions.

Most candidates were able to give some examples of cinematography from their chosen films, often with more of a focus on lighting, and most could make an attempt at comparison and contribution to aesthetics. Compared to Question 3, there appeared to be fewer middle level responses and more that reached either the higher or the lower mark bands.

More successful answers could give detailed examples of use of different shots and use of expressionist or naturalistic lighting and analyse and compare their contribution to the aesthetics of the two films.

Less successful answers wrote very generally about the cinematography – for example, ‘there are a lot of wide shots’ – and gave lots of examples of what happened in the shots, rather than analysing the cinematography.

Section B overview

Section B requires candidates to analyse one or both of the two-set experimental surrealist films and the set German expressionist or French new wave film they have studied.

The shorter Question 5 and the longer optional Questions 6 and 7 can be about either of the two sets of films. In this component, Question 5 asked about one surrealist film, which caused confusion for a small number of candidates who wrote about their German expressionist or French new wave film instead, then wrote about the wrong film again in Questions 6 or 7. Otherwise, this question was generally answered well.

Questions 6 and 7 require candidates to analyse using critical approaches. This is worth 10 of the 35 marks available for these questions. In Question 6, the critical approach was that of conceptions of film narrative. In Question 7, the critical approach was that of the claims of naturalism and realism as against the expressive. Both questions were generally answered well.

Question 5

You have studied **both** of the experimental surrealist films in the list:

Un Chien Andalou (1929). Directed by Luis Buñuel. France.

L'Age D'or (1930). Directed by Luis Buñuel. France.

You have also studied **one** film from the table:

German expressionist	French new wave
<i>The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari</i> (1920). Directed by Robert Wiene. Germany	<i>The 400 Blows</i> (1959). Directed by François Truffaut. France
<i>Nosferatu</i> (1922). Directed by F.W. Murnau. Germany	<i>À Bout de Souffle</i> (1960). Directed by Jean-Luc Godard. France
<i>Metropolis</i> (1927). Directed by Fritz Lang. Germany	<i>Cléo from 5 to 7</i> (1962). Directed by Agnès Varda. France

- 5 Analyse how **one** experimental surrealist film you have studied uses micro elements to create narrative ambiguity. [15]

Un Chien Andalou was the most common film choice for this question, though some candidates mistakenly wrote about both surrealist films.

Candidates appeared to have little difficulty with the narrative ambiguity aspect of the question. Top level responses usually discussed more than one micro element and made analysing this exemplification the focus of the answer. The most commonly used micro elements were editing and mise-en-scène. Lower-level responses wasted a lot of time explaining surrealism and Freudianism and lacked detail in the exemplification or discussed the narrative of the film without focus on use of micro elements (often with some irrelevant reference to narrative theory).

Question 6*

- 6* Discuss whether the distinctiveness of the German expressionist **or** French new wave film you have studied is derived more from its aesthetics or from its narrative structure. [35]

This was the more popular of the two optional questions.

The great majority of candidates seemed able to confidently approach all three elements of the question: distinctiveness, aesthetics and narrative. The main difference in these responses was the extent to which they tackled narrative structure, the quality and quantity of exemplification and the sophistication of the overall argument. Some successful responses argued that the aesthetics and the narrative reinforced each other so could not be separated.

Unlike Question 7, there is no 'why' component to this question, so lengthy pre-prepared exposition of the aims of the French new wave or German expressionism was usually self-penalising as it wasted time, though short references to the overall movement to help explain the distinctiveness, aesthetics or narrative structure were sometimes useful.

Some less successful responses ignored narrative structure or simply discussed the representations in the narrative; were very generalised, discussing the film as a whole with no examples; or were very short as the candidate appeared to run out of time.

Question 7*

- 7* Discuss how and why the German expressionist **or** French new wave film you have studied balances naturalism, realism and the expressive. [35]

This was the less popular of the two optional questions.

There were several successful approaches to this question, depending on the film chosen. French new wave films were most often discussed in terms of the use of micro elements to balance naturalism and the expressive, and the realism of the narrative (especially in discussing *The 400 Blows*). German expressionist films might be discussed in terms of largely rejecting naturalism and realism in favour of the expressive – but even here many answers pointed out some naturalistic elements. Other responses argued that the expressionism of the earlier films, in reflecting the difficult post-war social context of production, created a sense of realism.

There were some much less successful responses where naturalism was equated with an interest in nature, or where the discussion of realism was limited to how 'realistic' some of the film content could be considered. Another common reason for lower marks was candidates running out of time.

Exemplar 2

In François Truffaut's "Les quatre cents coups" (1959), he effectively balances realism, naturalism & the expressive through his use of cinematography, symbolism, and documentary-style techniques.

Naturalism & realism aim to portray media in a way that reflects every-day life. Therefore, it is sometimes similar to documentaries in style as they allow for life to play out in natural ways. Truffaut, as a member of the French New Wave movement, was heavily inspired by the Italian Neo-realist movement, especially by Italian filmmaker Roberto Rossellini of whom he used to be the assistant. Therefore, there are clear moments in this film where we see this influence. For example, near the end of the film, we see a moment of day-to-day life in the juvenile detention centre that Antoine is kept at. Here, Truffaut opts to use a telephoto lens ~~as a~~ ^{which is} less often used in documentary films, that allows him to record the children playing football as they naturally would, likely without the knowledge they are being observed. This is particularly effective at creating a realist atmosphere because the boys ~~where~~ ^{know} they are being watched, they would have behaved as they normally would in day-to-day life. This therefore adds to the sense of realism in the film as we know that the children's behaviour is authentic. In this scene, there is a moment where the football goes out of play, & the camera-men have to move quickly to keep up with the game. This therefore adds to the sense of authenticity of this shot as

it shows these events as playing out in real-time / even though the camera man is aware of what is going to happen. This is in line with the ideas of Neorealism & Naturalism as it suggests that the events haven't been staged. Specifically for the camera, Truffaut highlights the film's sense of realism. * = something he uses earlier on in the film when showing a break-in at Antoine's school which he is punished by staying inside.

However, Truffaut also adopts expressionist elements in his work, especially through his use of symbolism & camera angles/levels. A crucial scene for this is when Antoine books off school with his friend René (based off events from Truffaut's life, hence having a "basis" in reality and so this ~~scene~~ ^{scene} does also involve realistic/naturalistic elements). At one point in this scene, we see Antoine visit a kiosk & go on a ride called "The Rotor". Although at first you may assume that this is a naturalistic/realistic scene due to utilising improvisation to create naturalistic-style acting, Truffaut's choice of ride had some clear symbolism, an element of film more associated with the expressionist movement. ~~Throughout~~ Throughout the film, there is a visual motif of vertical lines/bars, hence suggesting a sense of imprisonment or acting as a foreshadowing for Antoine's delinquency later on in the film. Whilst Antoine rides on the Rotor, whilst there is a sense of freedom due to its intense speed & ~~Antoine's~~ Jean-Pierre L  aud's facial expressions conveying joy,

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Footsteps & the sound of nature around him, e.g. bird song etc, there is an uncanny similarity between Antoine running down a road with evenly-spaced trees, & ~~the film~~ running through a ~~course~~. This is ~~the~~ again an example of how Truffaut incorporates his love of the cinema into the visuals of the film, ~~the~~ utilising symbolism.

Overall, it is clear that Truffaut uses both realist, naturalistic & expressionist elements in "Les quatre cents coups", as an attempt to rebel against the tradition of quality which didn't appeal to ~~the~~ any of these ~~stages~~ in film, therefore all three of these styles have clearly influenced this film.

This is an example of a successful Level 5 response that uses analysis of three detailed examples to demonstrate the candidate's understanding of the critical approach required by the question. Realism and naturalism are not clearly distinguished, but their use alongside the expressive is well-exemplified.

This candidate allocated time effectively, meaning that they reached Level 5 in the mark scheme across all five of their answers. This exemplar shows how the candidate summarises the answer to the question at the beginning of the essay, addresses the 'why' element of the question without over-lengthy exposition of the aims of the French new wave, and offers a brief summary at the end, with the bulk of the response concentrating on quality and quantity of exemplification. This economical approach seems to have aided time allocation.

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