

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

FILM STUDIES

H410

For first teaching in 2017

H410/02 Summer 2022 series

Contents

Introduction	3
Paper 1 series overview	4
Section A overview	5
Question 1*	5
Question 2*	7
Section B overview	9
Question 3*	10
Question 4*	11
Section C overview	12
Question 5*	13
Question 6*	14
Question 7*	15
Question 8*	16
Question 9*	17
Question 10*	18

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 are 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.

Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

To support student revision, advance information was published about the focus of exams for Summer 2022 assessments. Advance information was available for most GCSE, AS and A Level subjects, Core Maths, FSMQ, and Cambridge Nationals Information Technologies. You can find more information on our [website](#).

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Paper 1 series overview

This was only the second major live paper for the reformed specification, with very limited numbers in the autumn series of 2020 and 2021 following this issuing of CAGs and TAGs. So while centres have been delivering the qualification for a substantial period of time now, there is a gap between experience of teaching and experience gained from external assessment. The commentaries to each of the questions below is designed to help close that gap. The question commentaries are all designed to highlight what the features of the most effective responses were in combination with a reflection on the component parts of each of the questions and what examiners were looking for in candidates' responses.

The challenges of preparing students for this examination have been substantial - the fact that the overwhelming majority of students entered for this paper have been able to clearly articulate credible knowledge and understanding of the films studied is testament to the skills and professionalism of the colleagues delivering the specification - thank you.

All of the sections require detailed knowledge of the films studied and this needs to be frequent and explicit in candidate responses. It is imperative that centres teach the films in a fashion and create learning and assessment opportunities for their candidates to develop the skills needed to respond effectively. Candidates need to be able to discuss sequences and / or key characters from the films and be able to focus on either of these, depending on what questions they are answering. Centres need to guide candidates away from writing descriptive accounts of film studied in examinations as this will not be a way to secure marks in the higher bands. Besides such guidance, candidates need frequent opportunities to practice and develop the academic skills needed to construct effective responses to the type of questions they will face on this paper. While such opportunities may have been curtailed for this cohort, centres should do their utmost to make sure that the next cohort and beyond do have such opportunities.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they demonstrated good or better knowledge and understanding of the films studied • they demonstrated good or better knowledge and understanding of the micro-elements of film form and wider aspects of film language (narrative / genre) • they addressed all parts of the questions chosen and applied the material they had learnt to fit the demands of the questions • they were able to support points with evidence from the chosen films and in so doing construct a clear line of argument through their responses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relied on describing elements of the narratives of the films studied rather than seek to apply knowledge and understanding and analyse films and issues presented • did not fully engage with the entirety of the question (this was a pronounced issue on the performance questions in Section C) • wrote relatively brief responses which were not able to access the whole of the questions • ran out of time on the final response - a more widespread issue than in previous series (reformed and legacy specifications).

Section A overview

Regardless of which question candidates answered in this section, the majority of candidates had clear knowledge and understanding of the films studied. The majority of candidates were able to offer some direct textual evidence from the chosen films to the issue in the question. A significant minority were able to substantiate this textual evidence by recalling details from a range of sequences or scenes from chosen films. Knowledge of the micro-elements of film form was generally good in response to these questions. The majority of candidates started with their answer to this section and partly owing to this some relatively lengthy and at times some sophisticated answers emerged.

Question 1*

You should have studied **one** British film and **one** US film from the lists below.

British	US
<i>Pride</i> (2014). Directed by Matthew Warchus. UK	<i>Guardians of the Galaxy</i> (2014). Directed by James Gunn. USA
<i>Gone Too Far</i> (2013). Directed by Destiny Ekaragha. UK	<i>The Hunger Games</i> (2012). Directed by Gary Ross. USA
<i>Ex-Machina</i> (2014). Directed by Alex Garland. UK	<i>Star Wars: The Force Awakens</i> (2015). Directed by J.J. Abrams. USA
<i>The Angel's Share</i> (2012). Directed by Ken Loach. UK	<i>The Dark Knight Rises</i> (2012). Directed by Christopher Nolan. USA
<i>We Need to Talk About Kevin</i> (2011). Directed by Lynne Ramsay. UK	<i>Zootopia</i> (2016). Directed by Rich Moore, Jared Bush, Byron Howard. USA
<i>Skyfall</i> (2012). Directed by Sam Mendes. UK	<i>Jurassic World</i> (2015). Directed by Colin Trevorrow. USA

- 1*** Discuss the extent to which watching a film at home affects spectator response. In your answer you must include examples from **one British film** and **one US film** you have studied. **[35]**

Further to the Section A overview commentary above, all of those points manifested themselves in answer to Question 1. Out of the 2 questions in this section, the majority opted for this question, although a large number of candidates did attempt Question 2.

Candidates could very clearly demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the films and film form and offer some meaningful comparison and contrasts between the impact on spectator response of each of the selected films.

In debating the issue in the question, many candidates are able to articulate the key differences in viewing technology between cinema and home environments. Candidates who were able to make connections between moments from films and relate to the nature of the screen and / or sound technology were able to fully grasp the nature of the questions.

Assessment for learning



A significant number of candidates were content to take the view that cinema is good, home is bad and see home viewing as mostly meaning viewing on mobile devices. There was room to consider the technological set-ups which some people have access to at home via sound systems, large screen TVs or projectors, screen resolution enabled by viewing via games consoles. The viewing experience was romanticised and is open to critique in terms of the standards of social behaviour evident in cinemas.

Candidates should resist in labelling certain films as being inherently cinematic and other televisual - teachers should make sure that candidates are informed about distribution practices and how this impacts heavily on what types of films make it to the cinema at all and which films get to enjoy extended runs.

Exemplar 1

		<p>watching Guardians of the Galaxy at home would have a limited spectator response as scenes such as when Peter Quill's mother died ^{and his death in Skiffell} would not have as much of an impact on a small screen ^{at home} compared to on a big screen in cinema where the spectator is en</p>
		<p>encompassed in the film. However this can affect our private self which are people who carry their memories and experiences with them, as despite watch this scene in cinema could create more of a response from the spectator because of our private self, there might be more of an impact and response at home where a spectator might be more engaged with their private selves, and spectators with who have experienced loss recently, especially the death of a mother recently might feel more emotion towards this scene. On watching Guardians of the Galaxy the spectator may not feel the impact of powerful scenes such as when Peter Quill holds</p>

		an infinity Stone is and may not create a connection with the characters, especially in the introduction of Peter Quill, which would have more effect in cinema as the spectator will feel engaged in the film and can establish a connection with the character.
		watching In 'Skyfall' on the small screen at home it may not have as much of an effect

Exemplar 1 offers a good example of what a more successful student response for this question looked like. The response engages well with all aspects of the question. It is not a perfect response - there a number of marks which could have been scored by illustrates some of the good academic practice that was evident this series.

Question 2*

- 2* 'The development of digital film production and exhibition technologies opens up new possibilities for cinema.' Discuss this view in relation to examples from **one British film** and **one US film** you have studied. [35]

While a less popular choice than Question 1, a significant number of candidates attempted this question and many constructed thoughtful responses which made clear and insightful connections between production and exhibition technologies and the films studied with a particular focus on demonstrating understanding of how digital production and exhibition has had transformative effect on the production and exhibition of films.

Examples from *Ex Machina*, *Skyfall*, *Guardians of the Galaxy* and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* were well used to discuss issues pertaining to digital production - with much discussion focusing on the creation of digital effects and how that then contributes to the overall aesthetic of the chosen films.

Some candidates were able to continue this discussion onto how advances in digital production can be enhanced for spectators with digital exhibition - with some references to the expanding range of formats which cinema viewers can enjoy film - such as IMAX / SuperScreen and 4DX.

Assessment for learning



On first glance some of the UK films on the list may not necessarily lend themselves to a discussion of such issues, e.g. *The Angel's Share* and *Pride*. However, a route into such a discussion on this issue with those films is to consider the impact of the development of the Digital Cinema Network and the development of services such Curzon Home Cinema as public and private sector funded spaces for 'arthouse' films as well as the opportunities for independent productions offered by being streamed on services such as Amazon Prime Video or Netflix. All of these devices form part of the matrix of digital exhibition and there is plenty which can be said about the specs which these offer 'arthouse' film to spread their appeal beyond the traditional metropolitan arthouse audience base.

Section B overview

The vast majority of candidates were able to demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding of their chosen documentary and make sustained connections to relevant theoretical elements as determined by the question. Regardless of the question chosen, the majority of candidates were able to articulate theoretical concepts pertaining to documentary films - deriving from the work of Nichols, Pennebaker and Grierson mainly. This theoretical articulation was generally suitably mapped to relevant textual examples from the chosen film.

Assessment for learning



On some occasions, a small minority of candidates started to address elements of other documentary films beyond ones on the set list. While this not innately harmful, such writing doesn't fall within the remit of the mark scheme and thus candidates should avoid this to prioritise time to write about the set film.

Question 3*

You should have studied **one** documentary film from the list below.

Documentary
<i>Stories We Tell</i> (2013). Directed by Sarah Polley
<i>Searching For Sugarman</i> (2012). Directed by Malik Bendjelloul
<i>5 Broken Cameras</i> (2011). Directed by Emad Burnat, Guy Davidi
<i>The Act Of Killing</i> (2012). Directed by Joshua Oppenheimer
<i>Man On Wire</i> (2008). Directed by James Marsh
<i>Citizenfour</i> (2014). Directed by Laura Poitras

- 3*** Discuss how the documentary film you have studied uses the micro-elements of film form to construct representations of reality.

[35]

The vast majority of candidates who attempted this question had clear knowledge and understanding of their chosen film and as such were clearly able to explore and analyse examples of the chosen film with reference to a range of micro-elements of film form. The majority of candidates were able to discuss specific elements of mise-en-scene, cinematography and some aspects of the use of sound to demonstrate their understanding of the constructed nature of the representations of reality offered in documentary films.

One of the features of better responses was the ability to integrate discussions about micro-elements directly to the construction of reality. In doing so, such candidates clearly demonstrated their ability to apply their learning to the nature of the question chosen.

Responses which did not consistently feature this type of integration - and the ones who did not feature this at all - performed less successfully as a result. Some candidates who used a listing approach of mostly describing the events of the chosen film, could only be assessed as a limited response to the question, at best.

Question 4*

- 4*** 'The theories developed by documentary film makers Grierson and Pennebaker continue to influence contemporary documentary films.' Discuss this view in relation to examples from the documentary film you have studied. **[35]**

A less popular choice than Question 3, but nevertheless a choice for a significant number of candidates. Where candidates chose this question, they mostly could demonstrate a very clear knowledge and understanding of the ideas of Grierson and Pennebaker and could apply these to the film studied.

The surest route to constructing an effective response to this question was by connecting examples from the film studied to discrete elements to the ideas or works of Grierson and Pennebaker. Where this was done with accurate reference to the ideas of Grierson and Pennebaker and accurate and relevant use of examples from the chosen film, then candidates could achieve marks which correspond to good or better.

The main features of less effective responses to this question were either focusing too much on Grierson and Pennebaker and crowding out time and space for a discussion of their chosen film, or responses which had only limited reference and discussion to Grierson and Pennebaker. There needs to be a balancing act of employing theoretical ideas in conjunction with film examples.

Section C overview

The questions in Section C on this paper featured a different approach to such questions from previous papers. There was a deliberate switch to questions which were generic to each of the themes to aid the demand of the questions and the paper overall. This meant that in this paper's Section C there were only effectively 2 questions versus the six featured in previous iterations.

Overall, effective responses were marked out by the ability to juggle the balls of analysing the chosen films in line with the theme, offering meaningful comparisons between them and an explicit focus on the issue in each of the two questions.

On the whole, the narrative questions (Question 5/7/9) were better answered than the performance questions (Question 6/8/10). The evidence from the papers suggests there is a clear gap in knowledge between what candidates have been prepared for on narrative and on performance. The majority of candidates opted for performance questions - but this was not an easier option than the narrative question.

Misconception



As the majority of candidates answered the exam paper in order, they answered Section C last, a significant number of candidates were unable to fully complete their responses to these questions. This highlights very clearly the need for students to build up their capacities in this regard through sustained practice. The challenges in teaching this particular cohort have been substantial due to centre closures, but this remains a key issue for the next emanation cohort.

The commentaries to each of the six questions in this section are generic - the comments are the same for Questions 5, 7 and 9 and likewise, generic comments for Questions 6, 8 and 10.

Question 5*

Theme: Family and Home

You should have studied **three** films from your chosen theme. One film should be from the **US Independent** list, one film should be from the **Non-US English Language** list and one film should be from the **Non-European Non-English Language** list below.

US Independent	Non-US English Language	Non-European Non-English Language
<i>Moonrise Kingdom</i> (2012). Directed by Wes Anderson. USA	<i>Room</i> (2015). Directed by Lenny Abrahamson. Canada/Ireland	<i>A Separation</i> (2011). Directed by Asghar Farhadi. Iran
<i>The Tree of Life</i> (2011). Directed by Terrence Malick. USA	<i>Animal Kingdom</i> (2010). Directed by David Michod. Australia	<i>Our Little Sister</i> (2015). Directed by Hirokazu Koreeda. Japan

- 5* How far does narrative structure influence the key messages about 'family and home' communicated by the films you have studied? You must draw comparisons between the **three** films you have studied in your answer. **[35]**

Question 5/7/9 was less popular than the other available question - possibly because it looked like it contained a more demanding theoretical knowledge base. However, this was not the case as care is taken to make sure comparability of demand between questions and across different papers. Teachers are advised to take note of this point when guiding their students on question section and response construction. The features of effective responses to this question were being able to juggle the competing demands of the question - textual analysis, with comparisons between and across the three films with a focus on the critical issue in the question - in this instance, narrative.

Where narrative was discussed effectively it was because there was engagement and use of theoretical concepts stemming from the works of Propp, Todorov, Levi-Strauss, Field, Campbell or Vogler. Within the time constraints of the exam, it was not at all expected that all or indeed most of the ideas of such writers would be effectively utilised - but some needed to be in order to construct a response which meaningfully engaged with the question.

Less successful responses to this question were marked by a limited or minimal engagement with such theoretical concepts. This meant that responses were more generically inclined textual analysts and comparisons of the film in relation to the chosen theme. Answering the question set is, as ever, a vital academic skill, and candidates self-penalise by not doing so.

Question 6*

- 6* Discuss how the films you have studied use performance to shape the spectator's response to the idea of 'family and home'. You must draw comparisons between the **three** films you have studied in your answer. [35]

Responses to Questions 6, 8 and 10 proved to be the most challenging to assess on this paper this series. As noted above, candidates do have a considerable academic challenge with the questions in this section - having to textually analyse three films, offers comparisons between those films and focus on the critical issue in the question. The majority of candidates who answered this question did have secure knowledge and understanding of the chosen films, and many could offer comparisons between the three films to some extent. However, a common limitation to answers to these questions was on the truncated nature of the knowledge and understanding of performance. Teachers are advised to carefully refer to page 15 of the specification to note the various bullet points that it is expected that candidates will know about performance. The point made in the commentary to the other question in this section regards demand between questions applies here - what perhaps may have appeared the easier question of the two available was not.

The most effective responses to this question were ones that compared the three films in some detail, offering suitable examples from the chosen films and could make some accurate intervention into discussion elements of performance. Such discussion generally centred on facial expressions or body language. However, as page 15 in the specification identifies, there is more which needs to be presented in a discussion centring on performance.

The less effective responses to this question were ones which were unable to meaningfully (if at all) engage with the issue of performance. This left such candidates reliant on film analysis and comparison, and where either one of these was insecure, that meant that responses were assessed as minimal or at best, limited.

As the more popular choice of the two questions in this section, a significant number of candidates were unable to fully complete their response owing to time management issues which further hampered the effectiveness of responses.

Question 7*

Theme: Outsiders

You should have studied **three** films from your chosen theme. One film should be from the **US Independent** list, one film should be from the **Non-US English Language** list and one film should be from the **Non-European Non-English Language** list below.

US Independent	Non-US English Language	Non-European Non-English Language
<i>A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night</i> (2014). Directed by Ana Lily Amirpour. USA	<i>The Babadook</i> (2014). Directed by Jennifer Kent. Australia	<i>Yojimbo (The Bodyguard)</i> (1961). Directed by Akira Kurosawa, Japan
<i>Elephant</i> (2003). Directed by Gus Van Sant. USA	<i>The Piano</i> (1993). Directed by Jane Campion. New Zealand	<i>Y Tu Mama Tambien</i> (2001). Directed by Alfonso Cuarón. Mexico

7* How far does narrative structure influence the key messages about 'outsiders' communicated by the films you have studied? You must draw comparisons between the **three** films you have studied in your answer.

[35]

As previously stated, Questions 5, 7 and 9 were less popular than the other available questions - possibly because it looked like it contained a more demanding theoretical knowledge base - however, this was not the case, care is taken to make sure comparability of demand between questions and across different papers. Teachers are asked to take note of this point when guiding their students on question section and response construction. The features of effective responses to this question were being able to juggle the competing demands of the question - textual analysis, with comparisons between and across the three films with a focus on the critical issue in the question - in this instance, narrative.

Where narrative was discussed effectively it was because there was engagement and use of theoretical concepts stemming from the works of Propp, Todorov, Levi-Strauss, Field, Campbell or Vogler. Within the time constraints of the exam, it was not at all expected that all or indeed most of the ideas of such writers would be effectively utilised - but some needed to be in order to construct a response which meaningfully engaged with the question.

Less successful responses to this question were marked by a limited or minimal engagement with such theoretical concepts. This meant that responses were more generically inclined textual analysts and comparisons of the film in relation to the chosen theme. Answering the question set is, as ever, a vital academic skill, and candidates self-penalise by not doing so.

Question 8*

- 8*** Discuss how the films you have studied use performance to shape the spectator's response to the idea of 'outsiders'. You must draw comparisons between the **three** films you have studied in your answer. **[35]**

As previously stated, responses to Questions 6, 8 and 10 proved to be the most challenging to assess on this paper this series. As noted above, candidates do have a considerable academic challenge with the questions in this section - having to textually analyse three films, offer comparisons between those films and focus on the critical issue in the question. The majority of candidates who answered this question did have secure knowledge and understanding of the chosen films, and many could offer comparisons between the three films to some extent. However, a common limitation to answers to these questions was on the truncated nature of the knowledge and understanding of performance. Teachers are advised to carefully refer to page 15 of the specification to note the various bullet points that it is expected that candidates will know about performance. The point made in the commentary to the other question in this section regards demand between questions applies here - what perhaps may have appeared the easier question of the two available was not.

The most effective responses to this question were ones that compared the three films in some detail, offering suitable examples from the chosen films and could make some accurate intervention into discussion elements of performance. Such discussion generally centred on facial expressions or body language. However, as page 15 in the specification identifies, there is more which needs to be presented in a discussion centring on performance.

The less effective responses to this question were ones which were unable to meaningfully (if at all) engage with the issue of performance. This left such candidates reliant on film analysis and comparison, and where either one of these was insecure, that meant that responses were assessed as minimal or at best, limited.

As the more popular choice of the two questions in this section, a significant number of candidates were unable to fully complete their response owing to time management issues which further hampered the effectiveness of responses.

Question 9*

Theme: Conflict

You should have studied **three** films from your chosen theme. One film should be from the **US Independent** list, one film should be from the **Non-US English Language** list and one film should be from the **Non-European Non-English Language** list below.

US Independent	Non-US English Language	Non-European Non-English Language
<i>The Hurt Locker</i> (2008). Directed by Kathryn Bigelow. USA	<i>District 9</i> (2009). Directed by Neil Blomkamp. South Africa	<i>Battle of Algiers</i> (1965). Directed by Gilo Pontecorvo. Algeria
<i>Whiplash</i> (2015). Directed by Damien Chazelle. USA	<i>Mad Max</i> (1979). Directed by George Miller. Australia	<i>The Grandmaster</i> (2013). Directed by Wong Kar-Wai. China

- 9* How far does narrative structure influence the key messages about 'conflict' communicated by the films you have studied? You must draw comparisons between the **three** films you have studied in your answer.

[35]

As previously stated, Questions 5, 7 and 9 were less popular than the other available question - possibly because it looked like it contained a more demanding theoretical knowledge base - however, this was not the case, care is taken to make sure comparability of demand between questions and across different papers. Teachers are asked to take note of this point when guiding their students on question section ad response construction. The features of effective responses to this question were being able to juggle the competing demands of the question - textual analysis, with comparisons between and across the three films with a focus on the critical issue in the question - in this instance, narrative.

Where narrative was discussed effectively it was because there was engagement and use of theoretical concepts stemming from the works of Propp, Todorov, Levi-Strauss, Field, Campbell or Vogler. Within the time constraints of the exam, it was not at all expected that all or indeed most of the ideas of such writers would be effectively utilised - but some needed to be in order to construct a response which meaningfully engaged with the question.

Less successful responses to this question were marked by a limited or minimal engagement with such theoretical concepts. This meant that responses were more generically inclined textual analysts and comparisons of the film in relation to the chosen theme. Answering the question set is, as ever, a vital academic skill, and candidates self-penalise by not doing so.

Question 10*

10* Discuss how the films you have studied use performance to shape the spectator's response to the idea of 'conflict'. You must draw comparisons between the **three** films you have studied in your answer. **[35]**

As previously stated, responses to Questions 6, 8 and 10 proved to be the most challenging to assess on this paper this series. As noted above, candidates do have a considerable academic challenge with the questions in this section - having to textually analyse three films, offers comparisons between those films and focus on the critical issue in the question. The majority of candidates who answered this question did have secure knowledge and understanding of the chosen films, and many could offer comparisons between the three films to some extent. However, a common limitation to answers to these questions was on the truncated nature of the knowledge and understanding of performance. Teachers are advised to carefully refer to page 15 of the specification to note the various bullet points that it is expected that candidates will know about performance. The point made in the commentary to the other question in this section regards demand between questions applies here - what perhaps may have appeared the easier question of the two available was not.

The most effective responses to this question were ones that compared the three films in some detail, offering suitable examples from the chosen films and could make some accurate intervention into discussion elements of performance. Such discussion generally centred on facial expressions or body language. However, as page 15 in the specification identifies, there is more which needs to be presented in a discussion centring on performance.

The less effective responses to this question were ones which were unable to meaningfully (if at all) engage with the issue of performance. This left such candidates reliant on film analysis and comparison, and where either one of these was insecure, that meant that responses were assessed as minimal or at best, limited.

As the more popular choice of the two questions in this section, a significant number of candidates were unable to fully complete their response owing to time management issues which further hampered the effectiveness of responses.

Exemplar 2

10	<p>Performance is used to shape the spectators response to the idea of conflict ^{as a theme} in particularly similar ways, "District 9" and "Battle of Algiers".</p> <p>make use of a relatively similar formula, that being a war between two sides, although a difference occurs with the fact that "Battle of Algiers" is based on historical events, whereas "District 9" is more science-fiction based, despite some factual accuracy regarding discrimination.</p> <p>"Hlidask" chooses to centre its conflict solely between pairs of characters, a fact that is presented to the viewer rather blatantly in the scenes in which the central protagonist is practicing with his drum kit, regardless of whether or not his arguably verbally abusive teacher is present in the room with him. He is dragged to the point where he feels like he is being forced to play, which is portrayed very accurately through enraged expressions and words, but on top of that, the scene in which the main character's hands begin to flow bleed.</p>
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⑩	<p>cont</p> <p>"District 9" and "Battle of Algiers" both use characters of significantly young ages to portray the severity of their respective conflicts. The innocent presentation and performance of these characters makes for more impactful communication of the theme towards the audience. the Children are used in "Battle of Algiers" to portray an impact that is designed to be seen as emotional, but not inherently sentimental, whereas "District 9" uses one of the central protagonist's sons to convey both of those factors, precisely by indicating to the spectator that the this character is of great importance to another. To conclude, the use of younger characters in these is capable of shaping the viewer's response to conflict in all three films by representing the exact things that those characters shouldn't need to be exposed to: violence and agony.</p>
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Exemplar 2 illustrates the points made about the performance questions with special regard to truncated ability to meaningfully discuss any aspect of performance. As detailed in the commentaries, this is an impediment on the overall effectiveness of the response. This exemplar is characteristic of the overall issue.

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