

**A LEVEL**

**Examiners' report**

# **FILM STUDIES**

**H410**

For first teaching in 2017

**H410/01 Summer 2022 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 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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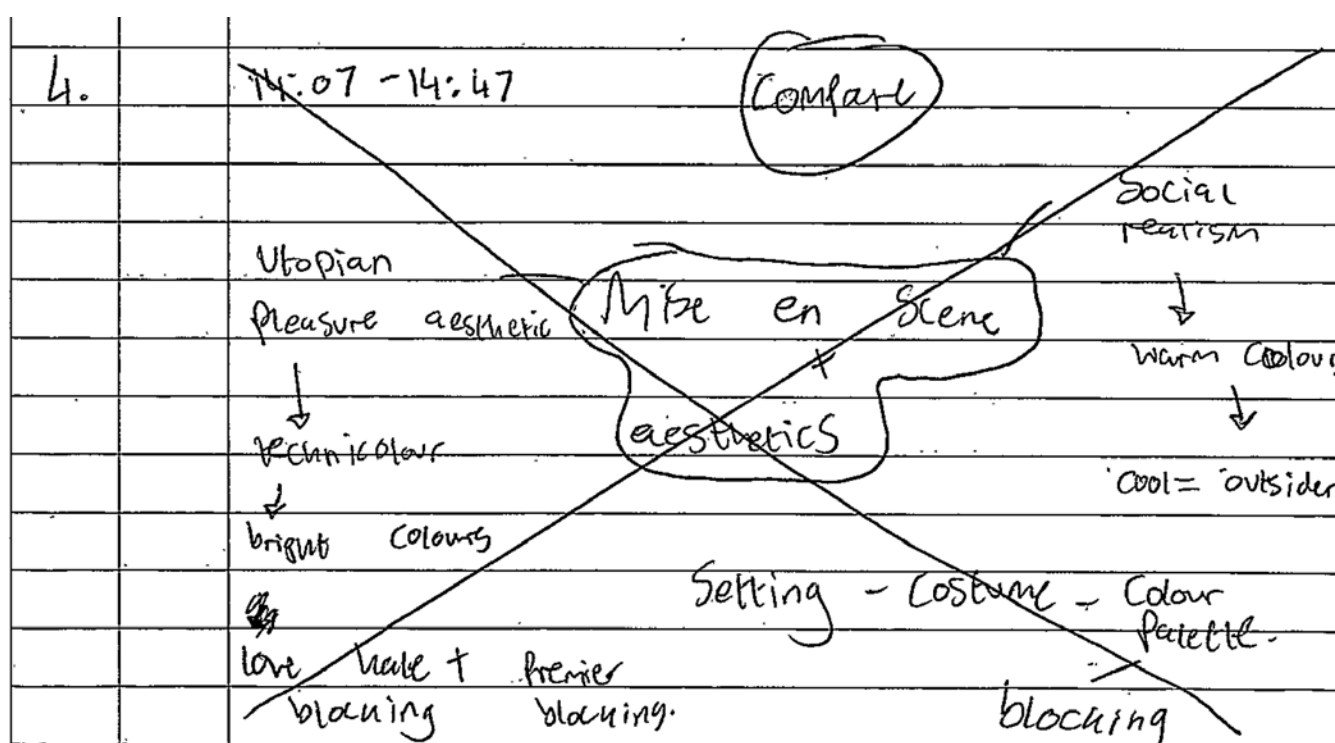
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## Paper 1 series overview

There appeared to be a wider range of responses in this series compared to 2019, with more very minimal and more very comprehensive responses. The overwhelming majority of candidates answered all the questions required, used the correct set films and applied knowledge and understanding of those films.

Weaker responses might make generalisations about the film(s) in question without detailed exemplification, or give very descriptive accounts of the film(s) or individual scenes without including analysis to answer the question. More successful responses hit the sweet spot of detailed exemplification within a framework that directly addressed the question. These more successful responses often laid out a plan of that framework in brief notes before answering the question.

### Exemplar 1



Exemplar 1 illustrates effective use of planning. Note that, although Technicolor counts as cinematography rather than mise-en-scène (the focus for Question 4), the candidate made this relevant by analysing how the Technicolor cinematography accentuated the use of colour in the mise-en-scène.

### Misconception

? Some candidates relied heavily on importing theory into their responses, often from Media Studies, some of which is not part of the Film Studies subject content for this paper (e.g. uses and gratifications theory). This is not in itself an error, but it was rarely relevant to the question asked and often replaced the detailed analysis and exemplification needed to answer the question, so became self-penalising.

<b>Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:</b>	<b>Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• addressed the specific requirements of the questions</li><li>• gave specific and sufficiently detailed examples from the set films</li><li>• allocated time effectively</li><li>• were clear on the distinctions between the different micro elements and between micro elements and narrative</li><li>• applied their knowledge and understanding of the micro elements and/or narrative to the relevant films, applying theory where it helped analysis.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• wrote all-inclusive responses that only occasionally answered the question</li><li>• wrote very generally about the set films, perhaps with lengthy interpretation or explanation of theory or background facts about the films</li><li>• spent too much time on Questions 1 and 2.</li><li>• conflated micro elements, especially mise-en-scène and lighting and performance</li><li>• outlined their knowledge and understanding of the micro elements and/or narrative with lengthy exposition of theory.</li></ul>

## Section A overview

Very occasionally a candidate did not answer Question 2, perhaps thinking that these were either/or questions. Also very occasionally, a candidate analysed a film from the wrong era in Question 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.

Questions 3 and 4 appeared to be the most demanding across the paper as a whole, as many candidates struggled with the concept of aesthetics.

### Option overview

Question 4 was more popular than Question 3, but there was little difference in the quality of response to either question.

Some candidates wrote the wrong question number in the margin – answering Question 4 but labelling it as Question 3, for example. This did not affect the marking, as it was always clear which question was being attempted, but could have been deleterious if the candidate did not make clear which micro element and which films were to be analysed.

## Question 1

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

Silent Era	1930–1960	1961–1990
<i>Birth of a Nation</i> (1915). Directed by DW Griffith. 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 Charles 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 FW 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 different camera shots have been used to tell the story in a sequence from **one** film from **the silent era** that you have studied. **[10]**

Most candidates were able to describe at least two shots from their chosen film. More successful responses explained the story-telling in two series of shots with precise detail about the shot length, framing and composition, and shot-to-shot relationships. Less successful responses gave vague shot descriptions, such as 'establishing shot' or 'wide shot', often of only two shots, and either ignored the story-telling element or simply discussed the meaning of the shot.

*The Gold Rush* was the most popular film choice in this question, followed by *The General* and *Sunrise*.

## Question 2

- 2 Analyse how sound is used to create meaning in at least **two** examples from **one** film from **1930–1960** that you have studied. [10]

Again, most candidates were able to give two examples of the use of sound. More successful responses were precise in their description of the use of sound, preferably using contrasting examples (e.g. of diegetic sound and musical score) and analysed connotative meaning. Less successful responses were vague about the use of sound (e.g. 'a song') or to which part of the film they were referring, which limited the scope for analysis.

Some candidates analysed the musical components of the soundtrack, perhaps analysing the tone of the music, or how it might be used as a motif at different points in the film, or how changes in the music signalled significant moments in the narrative. Some candidates analysed the use of foley sound and sound effects, especially to signify off-screen events. Candidates were rewarded for analysing dialogue, but less successful responses might simply describe two examples of dialogue and explain how these drove the narrative, rather than analysing meaning. In all examples, it was the level of detail that was crucial in gaining marks.

*Vertigo*, *Singin' in the Rain* and *Double Indemnity* were, in that order, the most popular choices.



## Exemplar 2

2. Sound is used in Double Indemnity to create meaning through the use of its score and clever use of sound effects. For example, ~~During~~ during the ~~intro~~ <sup>video</sup> opening titlecard of the film there is ~~an~~ <sup>video image of</sup> ~~image of~~ Walter Neff walking towards the camera on crutches,

to accompany this is the funeral-like score, with which presents threatening undertones through its use of loud brass and drums, this music comes to be known as the theme for the murder, and so it becomes an effective setting piece for setting the tone of the film, it ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> disrupted by the loud diegetic sound of Neff's car but ~~appears once again as he~~ <sup>the</sup> its motif appears once again as he steps out of the car, limping him and the man ~~on~~ on crutches and creating mystery of what happened.

~~Another example~~

Another example ~~for~~ is seen during the murder of Mr Dietrichson, the ~~music~~ <sup>non-diegetic</sup> music which accompanies this scene grows louder as Mr Dietrichson becomes more confused ~~in~~ through his dialogue, ~~just~~ as Phyllis presses the horn it interrupts the music, these <sup>3 horns</sup> are slow and deliberately done to build tension, climaxing in the sound of Mr Dietrichson being strangled, due to the ~~strict~~ laws put in place by the Hays Code, no murder was to be shown, however, the ~~sound of~~ sound of the strangling works better than a visual ~~at~~, as it allows us to imagine how terrible the murder really is as an audience.

Exemplar 2 is a response to Question 2 that gained full marks.

### Question 3\*

- 3\*** Compare how performance 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]**

Most candidates were able to give some examples of performance from their chosen films. Better responses discussed one or more of casting (to type or countertype), facial expression, vocal delivery, body language, proxemics and 'choreography'. Many of the best responses worked through such a list 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. They did not deploy theories of acting but focused on how characterisation is shown by the actor with the director's support, either alone on screen or in interaction with other characters.

Less successful responses tended to description of the events in their chosen examples, with little emphasis on performance, or gave examples of performance that were more perfunctory.

Answers needed to explicitly compare the aesthetics of the two films to reach the higher mark bands. A fairly high proportion of responses included some comparison, but not of aesthetics, or discussed aesthetics but did not compare the two films.

## Question 4\*

- 4\* 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]

Most candidates were able to give examples of mise-en-scène from their chosen films. Better responses discussed setting, props, costume, make-up and blocking. Many of the best responses worked through such a list 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. Less successful responses tended to discuss other elements, such as performance, lighting and cinematography, alongside less of a focus on mise-en-scène, and/or provided less detail in their exemplification.

Answers needed to explicitly compare the aesthetics of the two films to reach the higher mark bands. A fairly high proportion of responses included some comparison, but not of aesthetics, or discussed aesthetics but did not compare the two films.

### 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 in Media Studies specifications).

### Assessment for learning

#### Clarifying aesthetics

Questions 3 and 4 required candidates to be able to both identify and compare the aesthetics of the two films. Candidates need to be able to distinguish between a film's aesthetics and its message, theme, representations or genre (as any of the latter should not replace the former, even though they may be related). Candidates should be able to offer a comparison of the overall aesthetics of any combination of two films. This comparison is usually less clear where candidates discuss the different aesthetics of each scene they analyse, which is why the whole film comparison is so useful as 10 of the 35 marks available for Questions 3 and 4 are for comparison.

The aesthetics of each film were often stated quite simply in very successful responses. Examples from this series included: a bright Hollywood, or utopian, or nostalgic aesthetic for *Singin' in the Rain*; a doomed film noir aesthetic for *Double Indemnity*; a brutal aesthetic for *Raging Bull*; a hot, brooding or oppressive aesthetic for *Do the Right Thing*; a cold aesthetic for *2001*; a warm sentimentality or magical aesthetic for *ET*. What made the responses successful was their detail in analysing how different examples of the required micro element contributed to the stated aesthetic.

The discussion of film aesthetics is necessarily interpretive, so this should not be considered a canonical list but simply a suggestion of what worked well for candidates at this level. Any reasonable interpretation and comparison of aesthetics will be rewarded.

## Section B overview

Candidates seemed more secure in their grasp of this section compared to Section A, although some appeared to run out of time. To avoid this some scripts started with this section, or with both the 35 mark questions on the paper.

### Option overview

Question 7 was more popular than Question 6, perhaps because Question 6 specified some scenes to be analysed.

### Question 5

You should have studied **both** of the **experimental surrealist films** below:

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

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

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

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 the use of micro elements of film indicates an auteur approach in **either** the German expressionist **or** the French new wave film you have studied. **[15]**

Most candidates were able to analyse one or two micro elements of film and the majority were able to discuss how these indicated an auteur approach in terms of the individual director or in terms of the movement as a whole. More successful responses covered more micro elements in more detail where less successful responses might only discuss one element fleetingly. The latter often spent much time outlining the contextual background to German expressionism or the French new wave in a way that was seldom made relevant to the question, which in this case did not reference context. Brief references to overall aims of the French new wave did, at times, aid analysis of the unusual use of micro elements, but detailed discussion of the state of Germany following the First World War used time that would have been better spent answering the question.

All the films - apart from Varda's - were commonly cited.

## Question 6\*

- 6\* How far do the opening scenes of the **two** experimental surrealist films you have studied start a narrative chain of cause and effect that is developed throughout the film? Analyse specific examples from both films. [35]

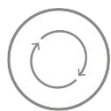
Most candidates were able to discuss some aspect of the narrative structure of both films and relatively few did not cite examples from both.

More successful responses followed the invitation in the question to discuss the opening scenes of both films, clearly understood the concept of a narrative chain of cause and effect, and gave multiple specific and detailed examples from both films of how the narrative did or did not create a chain of cause and effect.

Less successful responses might not understand the concept of a narrative chain – often contradicting themselves. Some lower performance responses discussed the background of surrealism or Freud's theories at great length at the expense of exemplification from the films. Others gave examples of individual scenes from the films without any sense of (lack of) narrative connection, or might be vague in their exemplification and not discuss the opening scenes.

Answers that argued that there wasn't a clear narrative chain found this argument easier to evidence. Those who attempted to argue for a narrative chain often suggested that the same themes occurring throughout the film – usually based on an idiosyncratic interpretation of these themes – constituted a chain of cause and effect. While this is a valid approach, it was seldom as successful as analysing narrative disjunction.

### Assessment for learning



One simple and successful approach to this question was to examine and exemplify a short list of the various forms of the narrative disjunctions found in the two films: causal (lack of effect), temporal (jumps in time), geographical (jumps in space), and narrative (jumps in plotlines).

## Question 7\*

- 7\* How and why do the **two** experimental surrealist films you have studied refuse to offer narrative resolution? Analyse specific examples from both films. [35]

Most candidates were able to discuss some aspect of the narrative structure of both films and understood the concept of narrative resolution; relatively few did not cite examples from both.

More successful responses followed the invitation in the question to discuss the closing scenes of both films and gave multiple examples from both films of how scenes refused narrative resolution. They used knowledge and understanding of surrealism to address the 'why' part of the question but did this briefly enough for the response to emphasise exemplification.

Less successful responses might discuss the background of surrealism or Freud's theories at great length at the expense of exemplification from the films, might give examples of individual scenes from the films without any sense of (lack of) narrative resolution, or might be vague in their exemplification.

Answers that argued that there wasn't a clear narrative resolution found this argument easier to evidence. Those who attempted to argue for narrative resolution often suggested that the narrative suggested by the scorpion documentary (often interested as a metaphor for class warfare) was 'resolved' by the shocking anti-Christianity of the final scene. This may be a valid argument, but it led to rather contorted essays that were often less successful than the simpler approach that saw the films as following an anti-narrative 'dream logic'.

### Misconception



For Question 6 or 7 some candidates started their response with a lengthy discussion of the history of surrealism and/or Freud's theories and/or a detailed outline of theories of narrative. This distracted from the required focus on answering the specifics of the question. Narrative theory is relevant but should be applied rather than outlined.

At the other extreme, some candidates expressed at considerable length their annoyance at the lack of 'sense' of surrealist film or the absence of resolution, rather than explaining what the director's intentions might have been and evaluating their impact.



Exemplar 3

	Both <i>un chien Andalou</i> (1929) and <i>L'Age D'or</i> (1930) by Luis Buñuel refuse to offer narrative resolution through the use of open endings and disjointed narratives.
	The narrative of <i>un chien Andalou</i> was <del>the first</del> said to have come to Luis Buñuel in a dream, which explains the slightly disjointed narrative which subverts the audiences expectations of continuity and invisibility of form. The film opens with <del>one</del> a man and a woman and in the next sequence switches to two completely different people, depriving the audience of the <del>attractive</del> resolution to the narrative involving the original two characters. Another example

Exemplar 3 - a response which gained Level 5 in the mark scheme - gets straight to the point with a short introduction leading straight to exemplification.

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