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93303A



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SCHOLARSHIP EXEMPLAR



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Scholarship 2023 Media Studies

Time allowed: Three hours
Total score: 24

ANSWER BOOKLET

Check that the National Student Number (NSN) on your admission slip is the same as the number at the top of this page.

Answer all THREE questions from Question Booklet 93303Q, and write your answers in this booklet.

Begin your answer to Question One on page 3, your answer to Question Two on page 11, and your answer to Question Three on page 19.

If you need more room for any answer, use the extra space provided at the back of this booklet.

Check that this booklet has pages 2–28 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

Do not write in any cross-hatched area (see diagram). This area may be cut off when the booklet is marked.

YOU MUST HAND THIS BOOKLET TO THE SUPERVISOR AT THE END OF THE EXAMINATION.

Page 1

INSTRUCTIONS

Answer all **THREE** questions. Plan and write your answers below.

For EACH question:

- You should refer to a wide range of specific evidence to support your analysis.
- You may respond by agreeing or disagreeing with your chosen quotation or statement, OR by considering a variety of points of view.

Do NOT use the same material to answer more than one question.

QUESTION ONE: The relationship(s) between media and wider society

With reference to ONE of the quotations or statements below, **analyse the development** of a medium / media industry and / or the factors that shape it.

Quotations / statements (Choose ONE)

- "... reaching an audience with the right content in a personalised way is the challenge for media companies."
Esther Westra
- There should be regulation of social media because of its negative influence on the public good.
- "New Zealand is a country full of storytellers with rich, diverse stories waiting to be told, so we must act now to ensure that the entire industry is able and ready to tell them."
Glen Kyne
- "Streaming was built for yesterday's music business."
Mark Mulligan

SELECTED QUOTATION

Copy and paste the quotation you have chosen into the space below.

"... reaching an audience with the right content in a personalised way is the challenge for media companies." *Esther Westra*

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"... reaching an audience with the right content in a personalised way is the challenge for media companies." *Esther Westra*

It is interesting that Westra chooses to specify that media companies must reach an audience with the right content in a "personalised" way. While, of course, any company, media or not, does aim to reach an interested market, their target audience, to do so in a personalised way is an interesting angle to consider this angle from. Print media, especially when considering print journalism, may shudder in the face of personalisation - is this not an abandonment of journalistic ethics? Physical media as an industry is turning itself towards niches, evidently a need, but in the face of social media, is this a challenge?

ANSWER

Type your answer to **Question One** in the space below.

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Westra sentiment that media industries should attempt to reach the right audience in a personalised way is an agreeable one. Physical media as an industry is turning itself towards niches, evidently a need, but in the face of social media, is this a challenge?

Print media has already demonstrated itself to be favoring niche markets, as opposed to remaining a primary news source. In a report from Nielsen, 90% of daily newspapers in New Zealand record a decrease in sales in 2020 to 2021. This downturn is perhaps not unexpected, as print media has long been theorised to be a dying industry, especially in the digital media landscape created and relied upon by COVID. However, print magazines in fact saw the opposite effect. According to the same report, 85% of print magazines saw an increase in sales from 2020 to

2021. Of these magazines, the standouts were in fact niche interest magazines, including Fish & Game NZ, who doubled their sales from 2020 to 2021, and Rugby News who increased their sales by 50% in the same year. These statistics demonstrate that the weakness of print media is not in fact that inconvenience of the physical, tactile format, but of the content and release schedule. Social media allows for news to be released and consumed quickly, cheaply, and constantly, as opposed to the comparatively archaic morning news cycle of daily print media. Therefore, it is evident that the challenge for print media is in fact to find the right audience with the right content, as opposed to idealising and aiming to remain a primary source for information gathering. This shift from generic content to interest niches is however already observable when considering the dramatically increased sales of niche magazines, such as Fish & Game and Rugby News. These successes demonstrate the importance of print media finding the right audience, as Westra suggested, and reaching this audience.

Uses and gratifications theory, developed in the 1970s, states that audiences consume media for four different reasons: personal identity, surveillance, personal relationships, and diversion. As demonstrated by daily newspapers' slow decrease in sales, audiences seek physical media for surveillance, information gathering, less and less. However, magazines, rarely used for true information gathering, are experiencing an uptick in popularity likely because of the personal appeal magazines provide audiences. As demonstrated by niche magazines' increased sales, audiences prefer an appeal to their personal interests. Another question surrounding the increase in magazine sales is why, especially in an economic depression and cost of living crisis, do consumers spend an average of \$18 on niche magazines which do not serve to enlighten essential information, while opting for free digital news? Elle magazine is returning to print in 2024, demonstrating that Nielsen's magazine statistics are not a limited phenomenon, but a consistent trend. Here, an economic theory can enlighten this phenomenon. The lipstick theory is an economic theory that states in an economic downturn, sales for lipstick increase because individuals who can afford a larger luxury, yet still crave the consumer satisfaction, purchase an affordable luxury, such as lipstick. Print media is being treated by audiences as a small luxury, a way to indulge in their personal interest. This appeal to luxury absolutely appeals to the personalised aspect of print media, and further demonstrates how print media is necessarily adapting to meet the needs of consumers, and find the right audience. Furthermore, as demonstrated by Vogue's edition of Harry Styles, famously donning a dress, fulfills this need for personal identity by allowing fans of Styles to purchase the edition, making this physical media a piece of merchandise of sorts.

Further supporting the individuals' need to feed their personal identity with media that magazines provide, the tactile experience provided by magazines perhaps represents the individuals' mistrust in the institution. A benefit that physical media provides which digital media cannot is a tactile, irremovable experience. Magazines, and other print media, are a displayable, touchable, and permanent good purchased by the audience. Post COVID, in which so little control was had, and with the prominence of streaming services who hold control over digital media, individuals are yearning for a permanent media experience. This sentiment is stated well by director Christopher Nolan, "There is a danger these days that if things only exist in streaming version that they can just disappear, they come and they go." This idea represents a prominent consumer attitude in that while streamers such as Netflix, or Disney + hold an overwhelmingly large catalogue of films and TV, their business model includes holding these titles for limited times both because of limited licensing contracts, and because of the sense of scarcity and urgency to consume this media this practice holds. Consumers, in a post COVID market in which so little control was had, and in which these streaming services were relied on and therefore an inability to consume certain media types was experienced, this practice is not favoured by audiences. Director Guillermo del Toro also shared this sentiment, stating that "physical media is similar to Fahrenheit 451 now," referencing the classic dystopian novel in which audience access to media was extremely limited. By purchasing physical media, consumers can fight against this effect, and hold permanent media which institutions or companies such as streaming services, can never remove.

Though holding an established niche market, consumer profiles of audiences which purchase physical media are still overwhelmingly older. The Listener's readership, for example, averages ages 65-75. Therefore, if physical media is to attempt to remain relevant as older generations age out, and younger generations are socialised into digital landscapes, Westra is right in her sentiment that media industry's challenge is to appeal to the right audiences in a personalised way, with the right audiences being the youth. Currently, an older, niche market is appropriate, but as Vogue has seamlessly demonstrated, a utilisation of social media can ensure an established connection to younger audiences. Vogue Britain, with their November 2023 issue interviewed eight British icons, with a mix of older and younger celebrities. Exploiting this dual appeal to older and younger generations is the subject of both Kate and Isla Moss, mother and daughter of two different generations, yet both popular with their own demographics. While this in itself is a personalisation of media to the right audience, Vogue furthered this effect by doing short form interviews with their article subjects on TikTok. One of these subjects was Jodie Comer, who is particularly popular with younger generations because of her show Killing Eve, and whose responses to the question "what do you love about Britain?" went viral in their own right for Comer's witty responses. This evidently entertaining short form interview, produced on a youth oriented format such as TikTok, not only appeals to the younger generation, effectively increasing brand awareness and Vogue's reputation among this needed audience, but does not act to hinder physical Vogue's article. Older generations can still purchase the classic Vogue edition, while younger generations can be eased into this physical format.

Physical media is therefore a morphing industry, and while perhaps abandoning journalistic values in favour of the more commercially viable personal interest of audiences, this morph is necessary if the industry is to survive in a modern digital landscape.

Page 2

QUESTION TWO: Media production

With reference to ONE of the quotations or statements below, **demonstrate critical understanding of one medium and its production context**, including reference to your own production experience.

Quotations / statements (Choose ONE)

1. "Learn from mistakes. Yours and other people's." *Joko Anwar*
2. "The success of a production depends on the attention paid to detail." *David O. Selznick*
3. "Lean into your unique perspective, not away from it." *Catherine Gund*
4. "It's not where you take things from. It's where you take them to." *Jean-Luc Godard*

SELECTED QUOTATION

Copy and paste the quotation or statement you have chosen into the space below.

"Lean into your unique perspective, not away from it." Catherine Gund

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
"Lean into your unique perspective, not away from it." *Catherine Gund*
- my unique kiwi journalistic perspective is what carries my writing - nolan quote.

Though evidently valuing the personal voice allowed through my unique perspective, I also am aware of the lack of trust a 17 year old, limitedly experienced individual such as myself inspires. Therefore, I did not disengage from the institutional voice wholly, but

Within journalism, a regularly people facing job where personality and the ability to relate to a subject can make or break an interview. I believe this skill a necessary one to be successful within the industry.

ANSWER

Type your answer to **Question Two** in the space below.

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Though journalism, particularly New Zealand journalism, tends to shun the bias of the individual, and favour the institutional voice, I find that the best of writing is willingly shaped by one's own unique experiences. In my construction of a feature article this year, I faced the struggle of maintaining integrity and striving for objectivity with the hope of creating a unique, stand out article. I found that while my production process was intrinsically and wholeheartedly influenced by my unique perspective, this influence was overwhelmingly advantageous, and improved the overall quality of my work.

My article, titled "Rhys Darby on Hollywood's Writers Strikes" was first ideated in May of 2023, during which the Hollywood writers strikes were in fresh and full force. Even here my unique perspective was necessary; I leaned into the personal interest I felt for this event, and drew from it my angle. To appeal to a New Zealand audience, my angle was a focus on whether these strikes will influence New Zealand media productions and New Zealand audiences, and if so, why? Why was I, a Kiwi teenager, interested by this event? My unique perspective was further necessary during pre production when gathering my interviewees. I decided that an individual who has experienced both kiwi and Hollywood film culture would be best to inform my story, as I could understand both Hollywood's conflict first hand, and appeal to a kiwi reader. An ambitious individual, I reached out to Rhys Darby, a notable kiwi actor and comedian who has worked alongside Taika Waititi in *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*, *Our Flag Means Death*, in addition to Hollywood blockbuster *Jumanji*, and the classic comedy *Flight of the Conchords*. I felt as though this was a perfect blend of kiwi and Hollywood perspective. After finding Darby's publicist details online, I pitched both myself and my idea. A story is only as good as its writer, and as such I took care to present myself well, and here my unique experience was necessary to do so. When pitching the idea, I leaned into the fact that I am a high school student who

has previous journalistic experience interning, facts which were unique to my situation and ensures that I convincingly explained why I am suited to interview Darby and write this article. To pull in my business knowledge, which in itself feeds my unique perspective, I thought it pertinent to consider myself a marketable product in which I must pitch and sell in order to gain this interview. Therefore, to lean away from the unique fact that I am young, a factor which in many cases feeds the con list of my journalistic skill, and try to parade myself as a seasoned professional would be to ignore the unique perspective on and access to angles this gives me. In the end, the fact that I am young yet willing was convincing to Darby's publicist, and I successfully gained the interview.

Within New Zealand journalism there is a growing debate regarding whether New Zealand media relies too heavily on the institutional voice. New Zealand journalism very evidently favours a tone of writing which abandons the first person perspective, and instead steadys itself on a platform of facts, often with limited discussion. This in itself, in my opinion, is the shortfall of New Zealand media. My belief is that this so heavily relied on style of writing creates uninteresting and monotonous news cycles. I used my unique perspective to form this opinion, and to lean away from such and mimic the industry standard would, in my opinion, produce a lesser quality article. Therefore, when drafting and writing my article, I took inspiration from "new journalism" a style of journalism which emerged in 1970s America, championed by journalists such as Capote. This style of journalism brings narrative techniques into non-fiction, and utilises the first perspective. In particular Eve Babitz and Joan Didion, two new journalists who I enjoy personally and prolifically not only served as a formal inspiration, but have inevitably informed my perspective and my style simply through my consumption of their work. This influence can be seen in my article when I choose to include personal pronouns, sharing how I myself support the writers strike who are "fighting the good fight" but still hear and share in the audiences "quiet whispers of 'what will happen to my telly?'" While, yes a departure from journalistic objectivity was made here, I felt this personal interjection was not only necessary to fully explain the attitudes and opinions surrounding this issue, but also made my article more interesting as a whole. If we consider audiences for the vast majority had a kneejerk reactionary rejection of AI, it is clear audiences value the creator behind a piece of work, and by acknowledging the writer behind the screen as opposed to naively pretending an impossibly objective journo wrote the work, I believe the article is improved. Furthermore, I believe in journalism it is important to acknowledge the fact that because an inherently biased human is behind articles, a truly objective voice. New Zealand consumers enjoy the institutional voice is because of the facade of objectivity it provides, and the comfort in the media the audience can then experience, however, this blind trust in the institutional voice and in media is, as proven by history repeatedly, dangerous. Therefore, an acknowledgment of the personal voice and of individuals unique perspective is in fact a strength for both my article, and for New Zealand journalism as a whole.

Conclusively, my perspective, unique to any others, injected life and interesting discussion into my article, which would otherwise be lost in a world of monotonous, objective voices. In future I aim to continue this tact when continuing my journalistic career, while of course abiding by the necessary ethics of journalism, I do not wish my work to be considered any less ethical than any seasoned journalist simply because I acknowledge the writer behind the screen.

Page 3

QUESTION THREE: The close reading of media texts

With reference to ONE of the quotations or statements below, **analyse media texts (from any medium)** that you have read closely.

Quotations / statements (Choose ONE)


1. "I think it is very important that films [or other mediums] make people look at what they've forgotten." *Spike Lee*
2. "Film provides an opportunity to marry the power of ideas with the power of images." *Steven Bochco*
3. "I just want to tell good stories in ways that will shine a light on lives rarely seen on screen [or other mediums], because stories can push humanity forward." *Nia DaCosta*
4. "Truly creative things happen when one thinks differently, yet nobody wants to think differently." *Shonda Rhimes*

SELECTED QUOTATION

Copy and paste the quotation or statement you have chosen into the space below.

"Truly creative things happen when one thinks differently, yet nobody wants to think differently." Shonda Rhimes

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Greta gerwig - lady bird 2017





"Truly creative things happen when one thinks differently, yet nobody wants to think differently." *Shonda Rhimes*
greta appeals to the niches. Think UNVIERSALAPPEAL - gerwig detests the universal appeal , i think. And this is a way of thinking different;y, of leaning into you unique perspective instead of trying to appease all. It is evident that in fact audiences yearn for variation. They do not want a repeat of the same - barbie proves that audiences arent dumb, and to treat them as such is a failing.

P2 Little women -

The main criticism of Greta Gerwig, yet also this directors greatest strength, is her focussing on niche market and neglect of universally appealling films. Gerwig, one of 2023's most ntoable director and a proven

ANSWER

Type your answer to **Question Three** in the space below.

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While of course, creative things happen when a director steps out of the box, thinks creatively, but this is not necessarily a rare phenomom. Greta Gerwig, cemented in only a three film slate as a great and notable female director, demonstrates a consistant bravery to think differently, and to produce beautifully unqiue films. What is unqiue about these films, however, is the subtlety of Gerwigs creative demonstrations.

Though a relatively standrad film slate at first glance, Gerwigs films demonstrate that while diverse thinking is of course necessray, this is not necessarily presented in a wholeheartedly different label. Gerwigs first debut film, Lady Bird (2017), is a not unfamiliar coming of age, semi autobiographical 90 minute film about a lower class, caucasian American teenage girl. Similarly, Little Women (2019), Gerwigs second film is the fourth of Little Women's film adaptions, and such a beloved story is not necessarily a dangerous creative risk. However, Gerwig's adaption, while leaving Alcott's key story intact, has created a completely unique film in terms of tone, and of ideas. A notable way Gerwig acheived this is through expanding the character of Amy's story. Gerwig created a monologue for Amy, played by Florence Pugh, which was not within the original book in which Amy describes marriage as "an economic proposition," a testament to both Pughs acting and Gerwigs directing, the scene is covered in a muted blue tone, with calm camera work which rarely shifts. This presents Amys sentiment not as an outburst of anger at women's social position in Civil War era America, but a silent resolution, a smart assessment. The core of Little Women is not changed here, Amy's decisions remain the same, but an entire layer of insight is revealed by this one, simple scene.

The cause of this scene is Gerwig's direction, and of her modern perspective on this issue. Perhaps the fear conveyed by Rhimes' statement that "no one wants to" think differently is understandable in this instance; who would dare to place such a modern lens and insight on such a beloved period piece? Gerwig here challenges the expectations of a period piece to ignore modern commentary, and from it creates a critically acclaimed film, evidently popular with audiences based on the film's cult internet following.

Gerwig has said of the comedy within *Barbie*, "some of those jokes I put in for two or seven people." Gerwig makes it clear her favouritism of niche audiences, niche jokes, and niche interests, and her willingness to interject this favouritism into her films. It is clear when viewing the subtle variances from audience expectations Gerwig includes in her film slate that Gerwig does not aim to create "universally appealing" films. A criticism of *Lady Bird* is what is described to be a "wholly selfish" main character of *Lady Bird*, quite literally named *Lady Bird* - a name she chose to "give herself," who pushes away her friends, insensitively rejects her family's money issues, and even rejects the name given to her by her parents. *Lady Bird*'s privilege is not ignored in the film, as Gerwig ironically addresses in a scene in which *Lady Bird* gets upset, to which her boyfriend responds that "you know people are dying in the middle east right now?" in an attempt to invalidate *Lady Bird*'s outrage. While Kyle, the boyfriend, is right, he mirrors film criticism of *Lady Bird*, that the issues within the film are so trivial, while "actual" conflicts rage outside of this teenage girl's life. However, as demonstrated by Gerwig's favouritism of the niche, *Lady Bird* is not a film created to appeal to society's conflicts, but as a representation of Gerwig's experiences. Both *Lady Bird* and Gerwig grew up in Sacramento, California, attending a Catholic high school, and simply in creating this biographical parallel, Gerwig stages her stance in the debate between the need for "universal appeal" versus creating truthful, yet immoral films. This in itself is an example of Gerwig "thinking differently," of ignoring the dominant expectation of her and her film, and creating a wholly creative and truthful film.

A unique aspect of the cultural phenomenon "*Barbie*" (2023), directed by Gerwig, is the inability to categorise this film into a genre. If you Google *Barbie* (2023), you will be greeted with a list of no less than 15 genres of which *Barbie* borrows elements. Most recurrently, *Barbie* is listed to exhibit elements of sci-fi, adventure, comedy, romance, fantasy. All wildly different genres. Here, Gerwig is demonstrating her ability to think differently, to shatter the confines of genre placed upon her. Not only does Gerwig create an incredibly creative movie as a result, she also demonstrates audiences' desire for the same. Holding a \$162 million opening box office weekend, the highest from a female director, *Barbie* is evidently beloved by audiences. Genre is beloved because of the comfort of organisation it provides. However, genre is arguably a dying categorisation. In fact, the replacement for such categories is seemingly directors. With entire directors' slates being available on streaming services, as opposed to a single work previously in theatres, the ability to directly connect with directors and form communities surrounding and discussing directors, as demonstrated by Martin Scorsese's TikToks, and Guillermo del Toro's Twitter, audiences have a greater than ever connection and access to directors. Therefore, as genre becomes predictable and with widely popular films such as *Barbie* defying genre as a result, directors are apparently becoming a genre within themselves. Gerwig is an example of this, with consistent themes explored in her films such as mother and daughter relationships and class struggles. Gerwig's film slate is characterised less so by her prominent film techniques, but by the discussions she generates. These discussions and this notoriety is a product, undeniably, of Gerwig's unique thinking and creativity. As a young and influential director, perhaps the future of film is shaped in Gerwig's shape, and Rhimes' claim that 'nobody wants to' think differently anymore will be disproved.

Scholarship

Subject: Media Studies

Standard: 93303

Total score: 15

Q	Score	Marker commentary
1	5	The candidate selected Question One, statement 1 and demonstrated a good knowledge of the print / magazine industry. They attempted to engage with the question throughout their response and used a diverse range of media texts in their arguments. There is an understanding of the way the print industry has personalised and controlled the experience for its target audience, by comparing it to different media industries. They provided a useful analysis on legacy media's use of social media to capture a younger demographic.
2	5	The candidate selected Question Two, statement 3 and discussed their feature article and production process, in regard to their unique perspective. They provided a critical evaluation of the creative process in an insightful manner, describing how they used narrative techniques pioneered by Didion and Capote to provide an engaging and journalistic style. They offered some convincing knowledge gained from their production experience in a coherent argument.
3	5	The candidate selected Question Three, statement 4 and provided convincing knowledge across a range of film texts, in particular the work of Greta Gerwig. They offered some insightful, perceptive analysis on Little Women, Lady Bird, and Barbie in a coherent argument. They attempted to integrate the question into their response.