Christopher Nolan is an intelligent and sophisticated director who has created many award-winning films in his relatively short career. Some characteristics of his directorial style are; camera work with specific use of close-up's and cutting, lighting /colour to symbolise characters and use of sound to create tension and anticipation in the audience. I have chosen Nolan's 2008 masterpiece *The Dark Knight* and the highly-acclaimed *Inception* 2010 to study and analyse. Each film has scenes that incorporate all of Nolan's described characteristics and that help to give me a clear understanding of Nolan's directorial style. Nolan also uses these techniques to match how a modern audience views text presented in the media, due to the post 9/11 western world that we now live in, to give his viewers greater understanding of what is happening in his films.

Nolan uses camera work in both *The Dark Knight* and *Inception* to create tension within the audience and to emphasise characters' expressions and emotions to the viewers, leaving us in no doubt what each character is feeling. This allows the audience to understand each character more effectively and as a result it challenges us to think about how we might feel in the same situation.

A scene, in *The Dark Knight*, that Nolan uses effective camera work to enhance the audiences' view of the characters is the 'interview' scene that features Batman, Joker and Commissioner Gordon. When the scene starts, Nolan uses a high angled-long shot to show the Joker sitting alone in darkness. However, as the scene continues Nolan uses many close-ups on the faces of each character as they converse. When the close-ups are on the Joker, the audience gets a vivid depiction of all his gruesome make-up and sickly smiles. These close-ups make the audience nervous and worried because he looks so horrific whereas when the close-ups are on Gordon or Batman, expressions of numbness and confusion are evident on those characters' faces. Nolan is making the audience empathise with the 'good' characters — Gordon and Batman — and this is very effective because we feel as horrified and numb as they do when faced with the Joker. Further on in the scene, Nolan uses point-of-view shots from both the Joker's and Batman's perspectives to show to the audience what each character is seeing and as a result the audience gets a 'feel' for what the characters' are experiencing. For example, there is a sequence of shots involving both a low-angled Joker's POV shot on Batman and a high-angle Batman POV shot on Joker. In the first shot, the effect Nolan creates is that Batman is a very powerful and menacing character because the camera angle makes him look so big because it is low down. We as the audience empathise with the Joker because we can see from his perspective how he is being stood over like a naughty child by this menacing 'bigger' person. In the second of the two shots, the audience are presented with the Batman's perspective. The high angle allows Nolan to create the effect that Joker is insignificant and small and the Batman POV part of the shot shows the audience how he is seemingly in control of the situation because his enemy is so unassuming. This creates a juxtaposition that the audience picks up on because even though the camera work gives the impression that Batman is in total control — high-angled shots on Joker, Batman being the dominant force — the actual truth is that the Joker is the one in control.(1) This scene is very symbolic of the rest of the film because the struggle that is being played out here between the two characters is the same as their struggles throughout the film. Throughout the film the Joker tries to prove that the people of Gotham are all as evil and corrupt as he is whereas Batman presents the opposite view and fights for the people of Gotham in the belief that they are a good society. Nolan presents the audience with many scenes that are similar to this one. One example of this is when the Joker has two boats sitting in the harbour that are rigged to blow … **[The paragraph continues with a detailed description and interpretation of another scene in the film]**

A scene in *Inception* that Nolan uses prominent camera work to challenge the audience's perception of the characters comes where Ariadne meets Cobb's wife Mal for the first time. In this scene, director Nolan effectively uses close-up's, cutting and over-the-shoulder POV shots to create tension and put emphasis on the characters' expressions and emotions and, as a result, the audience gets feelings of anxiety and nervousness that replicate what the characters in the film are feeling. For example, the first shot in the scene is a POV shot based on what Ariadne can see — a room that is all messy and in disarray. The

feeling that this creates in the audience is one of uncertainty and anxiety because we are unsure what is going to happen next. The following shot is a close-up of Ariadne's face which depicts emotions that are the same as those that the audience is feeling — anxiety, worry and nervousness….(2) **[The detailed description of the camera work in the scene continues]**…The shot then cuts back to a low-angled Ariadne-POV shot on Mal, which gives the impression that Cobb's wife is very big and menacing which gives negative connotations to the audience about what she may do to Ariadne. Nolan then cuts back to an over-the-shoulder, POV shot (from Mal's perspective) of Ariadne and this shot creates the effect that the audience are looking at a diminutive and weak character in Ariadne. From this shot it appears as if the schoolyard bully (Mal) is about to take advantage of a smaller and more vulnerable child (Ariadne) and the audience feels compelled to fear for the safety of Ariadne as Mal moves towards her. Nolan is very ingenious as he plays on the audiences' moral values as he gives the impression that a smaller person is being taken advantage of and, therefore, we as good members of society feel an obligation to want to help and support the weaker person that is in strife. These feelings in the audience come as a result of the numerous close-up's and POV shots that Nolan presents us with which almost force the audience to empathise with the characters, and then react with what we would do if put in the same situation in real life. This scene is also critical to the rest of the film because here the audience finally is presented with Cobb's background and how this influences some of the decisions he makes. As a result of this scene, the audience knows that Cobb made a promise to his wife Mal to 'come back for her' so the two of them 'could be together'… **[the student explores the significance of the scene to the rest of the film in more detail]**….

Christopher Nolan follows the new 'rules' in terms of camera work in the media when filming these two scenes. He is a part of the society we live in and therefore has knowledge of how information is presented in the normal world. In days gone by it would have been acceptable for directors to film violent scenes in a less intrusive manner where the audience does not see fully what is happening but can make accurate assumptions about what had happened. In today's world, the audience has a much larger appetite for seeing the 'full picture' thanks to the numerous reality TV shows and disaster footage specials that show emotion on the screen in vivid detail. Nolan had to keep up with the trend and make his films suited to what the audience demanded which is more intense violence and raw emotion portrayed through our TV screens. In *The Dark Knight* and *Inception* Nolan does just that with obvious close up's on the faces of the characters to showcase exactly what emotions they are feeling — Authority figures such as Cobb in *Inception* or Gordon in *The Dark Knight* are now shown to be human, and 'heroes' like Batman are shown to have doubts whereas previously they would just save society, no questions asked. Nolan is altering his directorial style to match the way that society wants to watch films now and because of this, is providing more appealing movies to the modern 'western' world. (3)