

PETER JACKSON
PRESENTS
A FILM BY NEILL BLOMKAMP



GCSE Film Studies Revision Guide

Paper 2: Section A

Name: _____



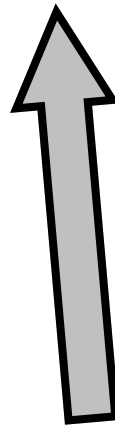
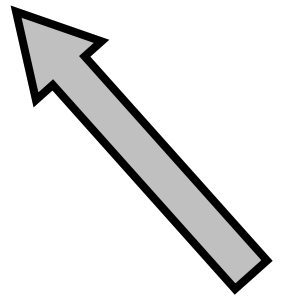
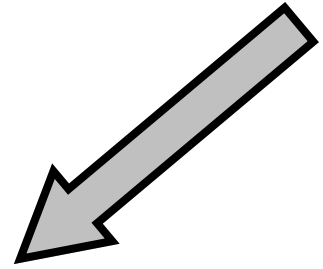
DISTRICT 9

YOU ARE NOT WELCOME HERE.

PETER JACKSON PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH TRISTAR PICTURES AND BLACK/RANSOM A WINDUST FILMS PRODUCTION A FILM BY NEILL BLOMKAMP DISTRICT 9 CASTING BY MICHELLE BECKER COSTUME DESIGNER CLYDE SHULTER EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS PHILIP REY AND TRENT DENLOCK PRODUCED BY PAUL HANSON ELLIOT FERNANDEZ WRITTEN BY DAVID LAZZARONI AND NEILL BLOMKAMP DIRECTED BY NEILL BLOMKAMP
QLD R RESTRICTED
IN THEATERS AUGUST 14 District9movie.com

grasp know think

What could I be asked about?



Key Words

* **apartheid** _____

Definition: _____

In a sentence: _____

* **allegory** _____

Definition: _____

In a sentence: _____

* **alienation** _____

Definition: _____

In a sentence: _____

* **justice** _____

Definition: _____

In a sentence: _____

* **migration** _____

Definition: _____

In a sentence: _____

* **segregation** _____

Definition: _____

In a sentence: _____

Key Words

* **internment camp** _____

Definition: _____

In a sentence: _____

* **alien** _____

Definition: _____

In a sentence: _____

* **refugee** _____

Definition: _____

In a sentence: _____

* **dehumanisation** _____

Definition: _____

In a sentence: _____

* **humanitarian** _____

Definition: _____

In a sentence: _____

* **interspecies assimilation** _____

Definition: _____

In a sentence: _____

* **exploitation** _____

Definition: _____

In a sentence: _____

* **Neill Blomkamp** _____

Definition: _____

In a sentence: _____

A reminder of context:

Historical

- * The treatment of the aliens is an obvious metaphor for the South African 'apartheid' system that functioned between 1948 and 1991.
- * This was a system of racial segregation and discrimination that treated black Africans as a lower class and prevented them from mixing with white South Africans socially or publicly. It also prevented black people from accessing housing, employment or educational opportunities.
- * Between 1960 and 1983 over 3.5 million non-white South Africans were forced to leave their homes and were 'resettled' in segregated neighbourhoods where poverty and crime were rife.
- * One of the most famous was the 'resettlement' of 60,000 non-white people from the Sophiatown area of Johannesburg (where District 9 is set). In the early hours of Feb 9th 1955, heavily armed police began forcibly evicting people, bulldozing their homes and moving their belongings 19km away to what would later become the township of Soweto.
- * It is this event that the start of the film is heavily referencing. One of the first legal acts of apartheid was to forbid marriage between black and white South Africans, and sexual contact between them was considered a taboo - this is referenced in the smear campaign accusing Wikus of contracting his infection from sex with the aliens.
- * The name District 9 is also a reference to an area called District 6 near Cape Town that was also the scene of a mass 'resettlement' in the 1960s.
- * One of the main languages of those dwelling there was Xhosa, which incorporates many vocal 'clicks', similar to the aliens in the film.
- * The 'Humans Only' signs used to promote the film are also a reference to the 'Whites Only' signs from the apartheid era.





Sophiatown

Sophiatown

What is Sophiatown?

Sophiatown is a suburb of Johannesburg, Gauteng in South Africa. It was famous for the government trying to violently remove the black people from this area as they didn't want black people being too close to the city centre with white people as part of apartheid.



Sophiatown during apartheid

When apartheid began, the National Party became increasingly worried that the black people were getting too close to the white people in the city centres.

This caused them to create the law that blacks could be removed from Johannesburg, therefore meaning that black people would be removed from Sophiatown.

This law was enforced on the 9th February 1955 when 2,000 policemen came with guns and destroyed Sophiatown, removing 60,000 people from the suburb in the process.

The 60,000 people were moved to Meadowlands, Soweto where the houses had no water or electricity.

During this event, some Sophiatown residents protested by getting their own guns, but were still moved, all eventually by 1960.

This prompted the ANC, led by Nelson Mandela, to turn to strikes and boycotts in order to get their voice heard.

Sophiatown before apartheid

Before it became a suburb, Sophiatown was a farm near Johannesburg. It was brought by a man called Hermann Tobiansky who named it Sophiatown as his wife was called Sophia.

After Sophiatown was brought by Hermann Tobiansky, the area became white-only.

However, a sewage dump was built next to it so the white people moved and were replaced by black people who had moved to the cities during World War 1 in hope of getting employment but were moved to the slums by Johannesburg City Council, run by the National Party, in order to remove blacks from the city centres.

The suburb quickly became overpopulated with many people being forced to live in their gardens or build small houses out of metal sheets.



A reminder of context:

Social—Representation of the Other

- * The basis of many science fiction (and other genre) films is the conflict between the 'self' and 'other'. Most early sci-fi/horror films have very simplistic narratives in which humans fight an alien 'other', identifiable by its strange appearance, behaviour or values. Usually the humans defeat the 'other' and reassert the 'self' that the audience can identify with.
- * District 9 problematizes this relationship.
- * Though at first the 'Prawns' do seem completely alien in their appearance, with disgusting habits and incomprehensible language, we are soon encouraged to empathise with Christopher and his son.
- * After Wikus is infected, he begins to literally turn into the 'other'.
- * Aliens infecting and transforming a human is a staple of the horror genre - see John Carpenter's *The Thing* (1982). David Cronenberg's *The Fly* (1986) also addresses the horror of bodily transformation.
- * Yet, as an audience, we don't fear Wikus- instead, despite his mutated appearance, he becomes our point of identification and an unlikely hero. In fact, as his transformation continues, he becomes more heroic: first he escapes the lab, and then he bravely joins Christopher in an assault on MNU, and finally sacrifices himself so that Christopher and his son can escape.
- * At the same time, the other humans become more and more inhumane: the revelation of the labs where they experiment on the aliens and the single-minded pursuit of Wikus by Venter are good examples.

Things to consider:

How does Blomkamp present parallels between:

- ⇒ **The evictions of the aliens and perhaps the evictions of black people during apartheid?**
- ⇒ **The behaviours of both the whites and the aliens/blacks during their confrontations?**
- ⇒ **How the aliens/blacks are/were treated during apartheid by the whites?**
- ⇒ **How the aliens/blacks must have felt during the time?**
- ⇒ **How the aliens/blacks were taken advantage of (in D9- by mercenaries and Nigerians)?**
- ⇒ **How humans respond to and treat those they see as 'other' throughout history?**
- ⇒ **Conditions that aliens/blacks were forced to live in?**



Tzvetan Todorov

Structure of the events that make up a narrative

Equilibrium: _____

Disruption: _____

Progression: _____

Resolution: _____

New Equilibrium: _____



Vladimir Propp

Character functions that need to take place in a narrative

Hero: _____

Villain: _____

Princess: _____

Princess's father: _____

Helper: _____

Donor: _____

The despatcher: _____



1. The ordinary world: _____

2. The call to adventure: _____

3. Refusal of the call: _____

4. Meeting with the mentor: _____

5. Crossing the threshold to the special world: _____

6. Tests allies and enemies: _____

7. Approach to the inner-most cave: _____

8. The ordeal: _____

9. The reward: _____

10. The road back: _____

11. The resurrection: _____

12. Return with the elixir: _____



The stages of the hero's journey that make up a narrative

Christopher Vogler

Cinematography (including Lighting)

In one particular scene, Wikus tries to reason with an alien he is attempting to evict. The 'shantytown' shacks are far from the advanced technology we would expect of an alien race, and show the lack of power and status the 'Prawns' have on Earth. Despite the alien's size, his body language is defensive and his only weapon is a shovel (in contrast with the alien weaponry the humans fear and want for themselves). His skeletal body also suggests vulnerability rather than power. Wikus, though carrying a clipboard (symbolising his authority in the situation), is attempting to explain the situation rather than threatening the alien with a gun. This shows he has a more humane and less aggressive approach to the job of 'resettling' the aliens. However, an MNU helicopter hovers in the background, backing up Wikus with force if necessary.

Introduction (0:00—0:08:14):

- ⇒ The camera style in this section is like a collage of different reportage (i.e. non-fiction) styles. It begins with the form of a corporate video. This is Wikus' introduction - which also establishes him as dedicated to his job, if a little too bumbling to be a conventional hero.
- ⇒ The style then swaps between expert/ eyewitness 'pieces to camera', 'found footage' (of the entry to the alien ship), news clips, amateur shots of the ship, and 'vox pops' with civilians. These serve to fill in the back-story and establish the 'alternate history' that the film is set in.
- ⇒ The clips of interviews with Wikus' family and colleagues also create 'enigmas' about what will befall him later (see Narrative).

Finding the fluid sequence (0:19:40—00:24:01):

- ⇒ As we are introduced to the alien characters - Christopher and his son - the camerawork changes. Instead of 'mockumentary', the cinematography becomes the more familiar style of 'narrative drama' featuring MS, CU and POV shots that encourage us to empathise with them.
- ⇒ However, the 'human' perspective is still shot using handheld or security footage at this point, symbolising Wikus' allegiance to MNU.
- ⇒ As the film - and his mutation - progresses, his scenes are increasingly shot the same way as the aliens in this sequence.
- ⇒ The 'documentary' feel is further enhanced by Wikus' spittle and the hand placed over the lens.
- ⇒ This 'lens splatter' effect is also used later during battle scenes to intensify the immersive quality of these action sequences.

Mise-en-scène

Introduction (0:00—0:08:14):

- The mise-en-scène, combined with shooting style and dialogue, creates a range of different emotional reactions. We begin with the bland corporate set of Wikus' office and backdrops of the experts that establish their jobs (TV screens, academic book shelf), but then shift to the spectacular (the saucer hovering Johannesburg). From there the 'look' of the film shifts to the increasingly squalid.
- The interior of the ship is familiar from other sci-fi films - particularly *Aliens* (1986): darkness punctured by the beams of human torches, alien symbols, slime - and this creates a sense of threat. However, when they appear, the beings themselves are not scary but pathetic, diseased and vulnerable.
- We then see them in the aid camps - drifting smoke, barbed wire, makeshift tents - and our emotions shift from pity to disgust (images of them squabbling, hacking at cow meat etc.)
- Following on, there are a series of 'Humans Only' signs, showing how the public opinion has shifted against the 'Prawns'. These images link to South Africa's past (see Historical Context). They also have contemporary resonance, being reminiscent of the refugee camps in Europe we see on news items about the ongoing migration crisis.

Finding the fluid sequence (0:19:40—00:24:01):

- The squalid conditions of the camp take on a different dimension in this sequence. Christopher, with his son and friend, is rummaging in a pile of trash; but rather than desperately searching for food, they are in fact looking for valuable technology.
- The fluid they find represents the narrative convention of 'the Elixir': a potion or object with magical properties that can aid the hero or repair the 'disruption' to normal life.
- Ironically, the fluid in the canister, though literally able to repair the mothership, is also the catalyst for the disruption in Wikus' story: he is infected and begins to mutate into a 'Prawn' himself.

Sound

Introduction (0:00—0:08:14):

- ◇ During this opening sequence, African chanting is mixed with heavy percussion. This establishes both the location (South Africa) and genre (sci-fi/action film).
- ◇ The dialogue serves to explain about the arrival of the aliens, and to introduce the discrimination they face from the humans. Again, this has parallels with the current migrant crisis (“We spend a lot of money on them...”, “Why don’t they just go home?”).
- ◇ The questions about why the spaceship stopped are also introduced, as well as the theory that a ‘command module’ fell to earth, which sets up events for later in the film.

Finding the fluid sequence (0:19:40—00:24:01):

- ◇ Wikus’ direct-to-camera dialogue shows that though he isn’t a typical hero, he is dedicated to his job. He may be prejudiced against the ‘Prawns’ but he is knowledgeable about their behaviour and can understand their language.
- ◇ There is very quiet music during the scenes focusing on the aliens, which encourages us to empathise with them.
- ◇ When Wikus is sprayed with the fluid, there is a high-pitched whine that initially sounds like feedback on the ‘documentary’ camera following him - but which later intensifies each time his mutation progresses.

Editing

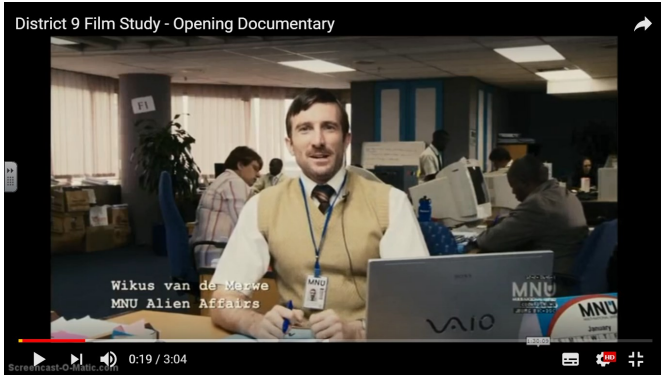
Introduction (0:00—0:08:14):

- * A number of features are used to establish the film as a 'mockumentary': the MNU logo in the corner (which also establishes that the corporation has their own version of events, different to Wikus' experience later in the film), the 'by-lines' for the experts.
- * All the different film formats are assembled as if this is a documentary that has been made after the events in the plot, and manage to both efficiently orient the viewer and create verisimilitude (the feeling of 'truth').

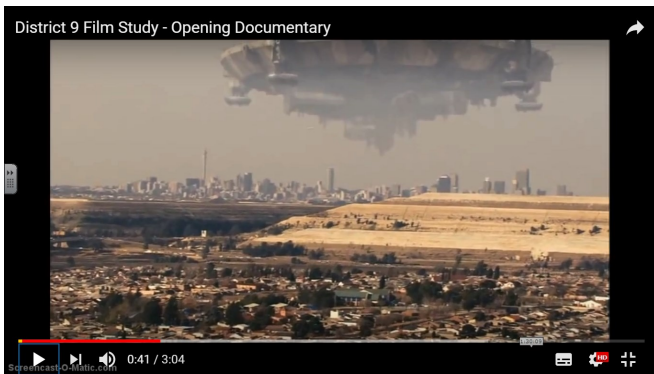
Finding the fluid sequence (0:19:40—00:24:01):

- * In this sequence we cut between the 'mockumentary' and 'narrative drama' styles to show us the alien and human perspective on events.
- * As Wikus transforms, there are more and more scenes shot in the latter style, but there are still 'mockumentary' elements intercut to show the 'official' (i.e. MNU) version of events.

Key Sequence Analysis: The Opening Documentary



Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?



Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?



Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?



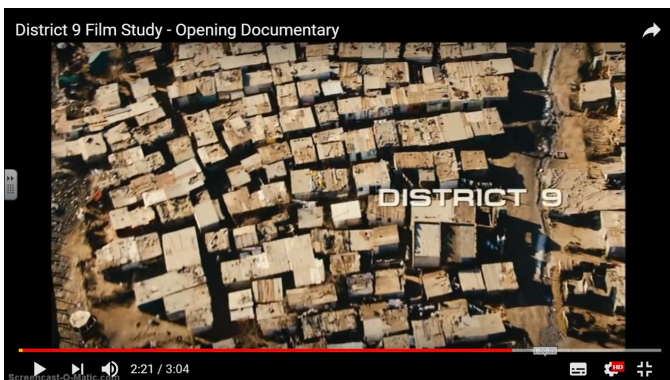
Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?



Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?



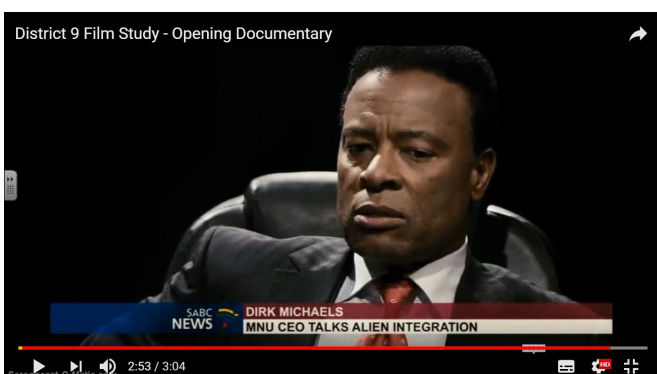
Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?



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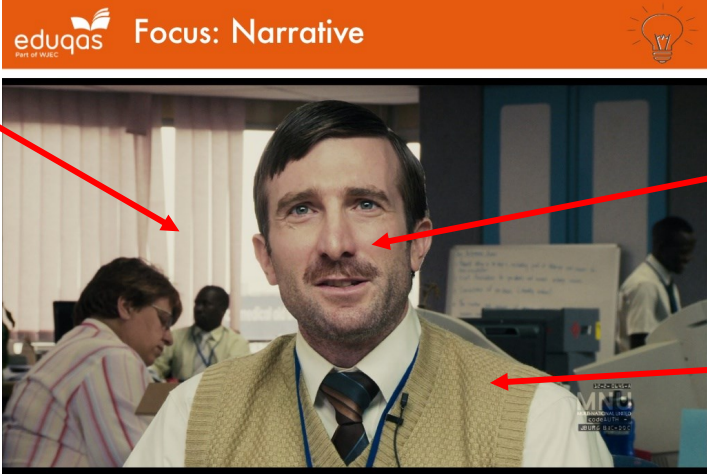
Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?



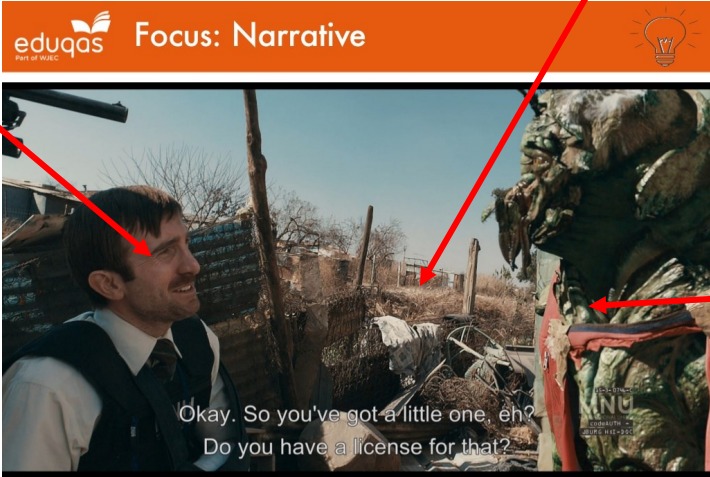
Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?

Order the shots chronologically

How does **mise en scene** establish the **narrative's** development?



District 9 (2009) Dir. Neil Blomkamp



District 9 (2009) Dir. Neil Blomkamp



District 9 (2009) Dir. Neil Blomkamp



District 9 (2009) Dir. Neil Blomkamp



District 9 (2009) Dir. Neil Blomkamp



District 9 (2009) Dir. Neil Blomkamp

Key concepts:

How does *District 9* explore 'alienation'?

Narrative: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Mise en scene: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Cinematography: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
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How does *District 9* explore 'justice'?

Narrative: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Mise en scene: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Cinematography: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
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How does *District 9* explore 'segregation'?

Narrative: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Mise en scene: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Cinematography: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
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Key Sequence Analysis: Firing The Weapons



Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?



Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?



Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?



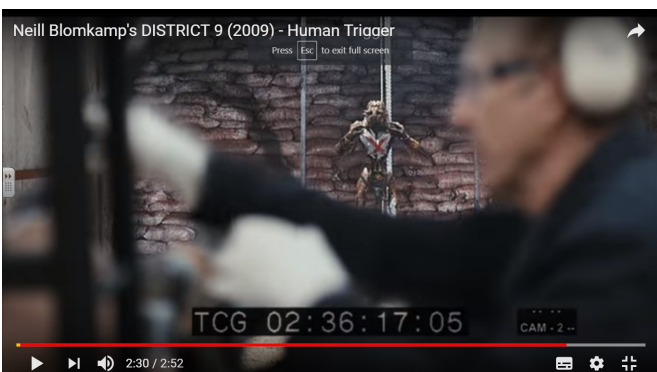
Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?



Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?



Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?



Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?



Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?



Mise en scene? Camera? Sound? Editing?

Exam Practice

Paper 2– Section A

Answer all questions.

Section A: Global English language film (produced outside US)

Answer question 1 on one of the following films:

- *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (Noyce, Australia, 2002)
- *Slumdog Millionaire* (Boyle, UK, 2008)
- *District 9* (Blomkamp, South Africa, 2009)
- *An Education* (Scherfig, UK, 2009)
- *Song of the Sea* (Moore, Eire, 2014).

1. (a) What do you understand by the social context of a film? [2]
- (b) Briefly describe the main social context of your chosen film. [3]
- (c) Explore how the narrative of your chosen film reflects its social context.

In your answer, you should consider:

- how key characters reflect the social context
- how the social context is built into the narrative
- at least one example from the film's narrative which demonstrates its social context. [15]

1. (a) What do you understand by the social context of the film? [2]

[2]

Question 1 (a)

Band/marks	AO1 Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of elements of film
2 marks	Good understanding of social context which is likely to include reference to how key aspects of society or its structure are reflected in a film, mainly through its narrative.
1 mark	Basic understanding of social context which may include reference to basic sense that society in general terms will be reflected in a film.
0 marks	No response attempted or no response worthy of credit.

All valid alternative responses must be credited.

1. (b) Briefly describe the main social context of your chosen film?

[3]

Question 1 (b)

Band/marks	AO1 Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of elements of film
3 marks	Describes the main social context in an excellent way, demonstrating a very clear understanding of social context.
2 marks	Describes one social context effectively although its importance is not clear, demonstrating a reasonably clear understanding of social context.
1 mark	Describes one social context in a basic way, possibly with some inaccuracies demonstrating a basic understanding of social context.
0 marks	No response attempted or no relevant response/response worthy of credit.

All valid alternative responses must be credited.

Question 1 (c)

Band	AO1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of elements of film	AO2 Apply knowledge and understanding of elements of film, including to analyse films
5	5 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent demonstration of knowledge and understanding of elements of film. 	9-10 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies an excellent knowledge and understanding of social context, including to analyse films Uses excellent points to develop a highly coherent point of view in response to the question, demonstrating an excellent knowledge and understanding of subject-specific terminology.
4	4 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good demonstration of knowledge and understanding of elements of film. 	7-8 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies a good knowledge and understanding of social context, including to analyse films Uses good points to develop a coherent point of view in response to the question, demonstrating a good knowledge and understanding of subject-specific terminology.
3	3 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfactory demonstration of knowledge and understanding of elements of film. 	5-6 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of social context, including to analyse films Uses satisfactory points to develop a reasonably coherent point of view in response to the question, demonstrating a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of subject-specific terminology.
2	2 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic demonstration of knowledge and understanding of elements of film. 	3-4 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies basic knowledge and understanding of social context, including to analyse films Uses basic points to indicate an emerging point of view in response to the question, demonstrating a basic knowledge and understanding of subject-specific terminology.
1	1 mark <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited demonstration of knowledge and understanding of elements of film. 	1-2 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies limited knowledge and understanding of social context, including to analyse films Uses limited points to indicate a limited point of view in response to the question, demonstrating a limited knowledge and understanding of subject-specific terminology.
	0 marks No response attempted or no response worthy of credit.	

Candidates may refer to the social context of the narrative or of the production or both.

Candidates are likely to consider:

- key features of the social context, such as social class, differences between rich and poor, ethnic divisions, divisions between those with power and those without, major issues prominent in the relevant society
- how key characters reflect aspects of the social context
- how key features of the narrative reflect the social context
- at least one example from the narrative which demonstrates social context (which need not be a single sequence)

Discussion of at least one example will provide candidates with an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of the social context's influence on the film in a specific way.

If a candidate has not correctly identified a plausible social context of the film in question 1 (a), examiners must assess 1 (c) to establish whether any incidental, relevant points are made which can be credited.

All valid alternative responses must be credited.