

91099



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

2



SUPERVISOR'S USE ONLY

Level 2 English, 2013

91099 Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence

9.30 am Tuesday 12 November 2013
Credits: Four

Achievement	Achievement with Merit	Achievement with Excellence
Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence.	Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s) convincingly, supported by evidence.	Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s) perceptively, supported by evidence.

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

You should answer **ONE** of the essay questions in this booklet.

Check that this booklet has pages 2–12 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

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

Excellence

TOTAL

8

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Q1: Analyse how symbolism was used to highlight the purpose of the visual or oral text(s).

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Begin your visual or oral text(s) essay here:

Charlie Brooker's dystopic TV episode "Fifteen Million Merits" is a disturbing elegy of humanity encased in a digital world. It warns us of the loss of meaningful connection, the erosion of individuality and the general dehumanization that accompanies overindulgence in technology. To this end, Brooker masterfully uses symbolism in his description of setting, in ^{his use of an} ~~an~~ ^{acute} modern context and in his camerawork and cinematography.

The setting of "Fifteen Million Merits" is replete with potent symbolism. The dystopia is an electronic wonderland where citizens spend their days engrossed in digital media and entertainment. Its walls gleam white and silver; its TV screens are smooth and black; its furniture is crafted from brushed aluminium fashioned into a minimalist Bauhaus style not unlike Apple products. This symbolism serves several purposes. Firstly, it turns the setting into a temple of materialism - everything looks good. Secondly, it betrays the fact that a reduction of humanity has taken place: the dystopia's ~~whitewashed~~ white, clean walls are just as ordinary and whitewashed as its citizens' lives. Thirdly, the harsh white glow of the place accentuates a sense of artificiality. Bing - the episode's main character - lives in a bedroom with flat-screen TVs for walls; this symbolizes the ~~to~~ ubiquity of

television and the values it espouses. Symbolism is obvious in costumes: everyone wears grey with no room for individuality. Colour is dated out in broadcasts of "Hot Shots", an X-Factor-esque reality show that conjures the impression of a homogenous grey-clad sea of people standing in awe before a stage of a select few superstars, whose individuality and talent have ironically been converted into entertainment fodder for the masses. To complete the scene of dehumanisation, each person is made to cycle ~~on an~~ all day on an exercise bicycle connected to a power grid. Humans have literally been degraded to units of power production. Each of these symbolic elements betray a sorry state of humanity where meaningful connection ~~has been lost~~ and individuality have been lost under a crushing layer of technology.

Much of Brooker's symbolism is acutely attuned to a modern day context; it is as if Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" were written today. Scenes often contain tropes or archetypes typical of the internet, social media and gaming. When Bing wakes up in his TV-clad bedroom each morning he is met by a screen that reads "Logging in" before displaying his online "avatar", his accumulation of "Merits" (a digital currency) and a "history" list of places he has recently visited. Bing navigates the motion-interfaces of his futuristic setting with movements reminiscent of smartphone finger gestures. To open a door, Bing needs only "swipe to unlock". After Bing purchases an apple from a vending machine, a screen pops up to inform him that customers who purchased apples also enjoyed bananas and oranges - a direct reference to the recommendation services of websites such as iTunes and Amazon. In a style redolent of gaming, a leaderboard of "top citizens" is proudly

displayed on screens around Bing's neighborhood. By necessarily including ~~symbolism~~ ^{symbolic elements} ~~to~~ that are a pastiche of the ~~contemporary~~ modern digital world, Brooker reminds audiences of the nature of the genre of dystopia. Current trends in society are cherry-picked and amplified in a grim vision of the future to prove how they could result in humanity's undoing. ~~At the~~ Viewers are simultaneously stirred to recognize these trends in their lives and address them immediately, so as to avoid the onset of the dystopic future. In this sense, perhaps viewers will draw parallels between the TV episode and their own lives. Perhaps, like Bing, they spend too much time engrossed in digital media to the detriment of connecting ~~to~~ with others face-to-face. The use of symbolism acclimated to a contemporary context thus makes "Fifteen Million Merits" relatable to the lives of its viewers, therefore making its brand of anti-tech didacticism relevant to their lifestyles.

"Fifteen Million Merits" conveys most of its symbolism within camerawork and cinematography. The film begins with a close-up on Bing's face as he wakes up in the morning. In the background, the walls of his bedroom begin to glow white. We then cut to an exposition shot of his bedroom where a cartoonish ~~landscape~~ sunrise landscape complete with growing roosters is shown on the TVs that are the room's walls. The cartoon depiction of rolling hills and a mellow morning sun accentuates the artificiality of the mis-en-scene and suggests that ~~a~~ genuine connections to nature have been lost in ~~the~~ the technological dystopia. The rest of the scene's ~~cinematography~~ ^{cinematography} ~~is~~ taken from an exposition shot of Bing's room from a ~~side~~ ceiling corner, a technique ~~or~~ that evokes ~~an~~ Orwellian tones of surveillance and paints technology in a negative light.

It is also symbolically. Our birds-eye observation of Big is also symbolically analogous to watching a rat scurry about in an experimental maze. It is as if Big is trapped and guided on by messages of the media like a mouse would be with the promise of food. This, of course, creates a materialistic and manipulative air about technology. The scenes that follow involve a series of intercutting between scenes depicting ordinary life: getting dressed, eating breakfast, brushing your teeth. These shots are repeated multiple times in the film to evoke a sense of mundanity that has come about as a result of overreliance on technology.

In conclusion, "Fifteen Million Merits" utilizes deft symbolism in its depiction of its setting, in pastiches of modern digital life and in cinematography to construct an ominous future where humanity has been suppressed by technology.

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This script establishes a perceptive analysis and argument that a complex set of symbols provides a 'disturbing elegy of humanity encased in a digital world.'

While individual symbols are not analysed in depth, the purpose of each set of symbols is analysed perceptively. For example, 'it turns the setting into a temple of materialism...it betrays the fact that a reduction of humanity has taken place.'

The analysis of symbols is linked to the wider world; 'Current trends in society are cherry-picked and amplified in a grim vision...'

Techniques of film/TV are integrated into the discussion. An appreciation of the director's craft is foregrounded. The script is an integrated piece of perceptive writing.