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91251



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Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Level 2 Media Studies 2023

91251 Demonstrate understanding of an aspect of a media genre

Credits: Four

Achievement	Achievement with Merit	Achievement with Excellence
Demonstrate understanding of an aspect of a media genre.	Demonstrate in-depth understanding of an aspect of a media genre.	Demonstrate critical understanding of an aspect of a media genre.

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 write an essay on ONE of the four statements in this booklet.

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 2–10 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

Do not write in any cross-hatched area (DO NOT WRITE). This area will be cut off when the booklet is marked.

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

Low Excellence

TOTAL 07

Page 1

INSTRUCTIONS

Choose ONE **media genre**.

Write an essay discussing the extent to which you agree or disagree with ONE of the statements below, in relation to an aspect of your chosen media genre.

STATEMENTS (Choose ONE)

1. There is always more than one reason a media genre has to change.
2. Media producers must be creative when recycling genre tropes*.
3. A media genre must appeal to audience tastes to remain profitable.
4. A media genre is successful when it satisfies audience expectations.

*trope a common or overused storytelling device

Media genre: Fantasy

Select your statement: 4. A media genre is successful when it satisfies audience expectations. ▾

PLANNING

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The aspect is TECHNOLOGY - think about how you would answer the question using that aspect

The fantasy genre proves how a genre must appeal to the tastes of its audience to remain profitable. The aspect of technologies and their use is part of the core of the genre and so the use of the

introduction - introduce question, genre, aspect, go over the 3 sections and hint at conclusion

genre + aspect - define what fantasy is, explain how technology is key, define the kinds of technology

P1 - pop culture of 80s was getting increasingly fantasy filled - examples and explanation - filmmakers catered to the populace's taste for adventure, childhood-esque tales, other worlds, escapism to a better place/better life - values through creating the first true fantasy films - which incorporated these kinds of stories - examples. To bring these sorts of stories to life, technologies were used - examples. The genre was really established at this time, and what made this new genre become popular and profitable was creating media products that appealed to what other media people were enjoying outside of the film industry and what ideas and issues were circulating society at the time. P2 - 2000s bringing fantasy back into the focus - films examples - based off books that were adored but tech wasn't there yet, once it was it was immediately an obvious profitable move to create films based off books that were already popular. Describe tech used. People had a taste for fantasy through the books, but like in the 80s the social climate may have contributed to the success of the films released due to desire for escapism from current troubles - 9/11 attacks. The films set the standard for technology use in films to follow.

P3 - from around the 2010s to the current day, the fantasy genre has been struggling to be successful both critically and commercially. Disney live action remakes - note maleficent and peter pan and wendy as one of first and one of most recent and then roger ebert reviews for both showing how over time they aren't getting better. COVID -19 lockdowns - less cinema-going - rise of streaming services = more TV. Difficult times = want for escapism = fantasy popular - many rewatching HP and LOTR in lockdown. This coupled with how fantasies are struggling with good

plots and the issue of spectacle over story led to fantasy TV series being produced that combined the more popular drama serialised plots with the technologies and visual aspects, thus eliminating the issues of spectacle over story and lack of good fantasy stories being left. This combining of different genre features into a new but cohesive whole which satisfies the tastes of the audience members while solving the issues that had developed for the genre allowed for the genre to continue to reap profits, with streaming service HBO gaining many more subscribers due to the popularity of game of thrones and many series getting extremely high ratings.

people expect amazing visuals and an immersive world and plot in fantasy - 80s set up these expectations, 2000s brought these into the modern age, current films fail to meet both of these expectations

the fantasy genre was only really established in 80s - stuff about that. This meant that the first films of their kind were relying on satisfying the genre expectations from different media forms - books and tabletop game - through translating these to a film format. The narratives and components of the books and game could be translated into film using technologies

same ideas around the 2000s films -

The NeverEnding Story Wolfgang Peterson 1984

Labyrinth Jim Henson 1986 \$93,000 internationally

The Princess Bride Rob Reiner 1987

Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone Chris Columbus 2001 \$705M internationally

The Lord of The Rings: The Fellowship of The Ring Peter Jackson 2001

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe Andrew Adamson 2005

Another overproduced summer spectacular released into a world which has too many action sequences and ostentatious creature displays are murky CGI soup ranging from calendar-art handsome to genuinely impressive

ESSAY

Type your essay in the space below. You should aim to write a concise essay of no more than 750–800 words. The quality of your writing is more important than the length of your essay. (The counter will change colour when you reach the recommended word count.)

Make sure you **respond only to your chosen statement** *throughout* your essay, and support your discussion with **evidence** from a range of media texts and / or other sources, which may include your own production experience.

B *I* U |   |  

The fantasy genre is a clear example of how satisfying the expectations an audience has will ensure the genre is successful. One of the components an audience expects to see in a fantasy film is otherworldly places, creatures and events, and so the aspect of technologies is core to satisfying this audience expectation and to properly addressing how a film proved successful or not. The expectations grew from through those the fantasy genre in other media established and were added to by each period of fantasy popularity. The expectations of the genre are now very clear but prove quite a challenge for filmmakers to always satisfy.

The Fantasy genre is a broad and popular genre with many subgenres and categories within it. One of the most prominent types of fantasies are high fantasies and their subtype portal fantasies. High fantasies are set within a world other than our own, with vast and varied landscapes populated by strange creatures. There is usually some form of class system or division with some form of ruling body - often royalty - and there is almost always magical forces at play. Plots generally involve a varied group of entertaining characters going on a quest where they make both friends and foes, encounter a range of the fantasy beings and traverse across the land. There is often fought conflict and grand battle sequences. Portal fantasies involve a character from our world finding a way into the fantastical one, and the audience is then brought along on their adventure. Fantasy's draw for audiences is partly how it allows full immersion into another world and therefore appeals to our desire for escapism. Filmmaking technologies are core in creating the world and beings of the fantasy that create this immersive quality, and the development of these technologies has shaped the genre over time. There are two forms of technologies - special effects (SFX) and visual effects (VFX). Special effects encompass the technologies that are physically present on set. Costuming, props, set, makeup, prosthetics, fake weather, pyrotechnics, puppetry and animatronics all fall under this category. Visual effects are used in post-production to create things that would be difficult, expensive or impossible to physically create. VFX includes CGI, motion capture/tracking and chroma keying/compositing (which involves the use of green screen to be able to replace parts of footage). The use of these two forms of technology defines the two biggest periods in the history of fantasy film, and using the vast array of complex technologies available to current-day filmmakers to their best advantage is a huge part of what makes a modern fantasy succeed or fail.

The first true fantasy films were created in the 1980s and were the great successes they were due to intelligent incorporation of the features of the other fantasy media present at the time. Fantasy elements had been present in films created throughout the 1900s but only in the 80s were films created which established the core conventions of high and portal fantasy. These fantasies were created due to what was prominent in the pop culture of the time. The books by J.R.R Tolkien which had been published in the 1960s had grown to popularity, particularly among the people involved in the counterculture movement. The relatively innocent and peaceful way of life led by the hobbits and the values of community, loyalty and courage held by the characters appealed to those opposing the vietnam war as well as those embracing the "hippie" lifestyle. The second primary influence of the 80s fantasies was the tabletop role-playing game Dungeons and Dragons that had been released in 1974 and that had grown in popularity with many youth at the time due to its escapist quality, otherworldly creatures and sense of adventure. Filmmakers recognised that films incorporating these elements could be popular and although there were a large number of films created there are three that stand as the best examples. The first is The NeverEnding Story directed by Wolfgang Peterson and released in 1984. This was followed by Jim Henson's Labyrinth in 1986 and 1987's The Princess Bride directed by Rob Reiner. These three films created their worlds using mostly SFX as the majority of the VFX technologies used today had not been developed yet. Puppetry was of course prominent in Labyrinth with it helmed by such a master puppeteer, along with elaborate sets and some early compositing to remove puppeteers from the "Fierys" sequence. Puppetry was also used in The NeverEnding Story (Falkor the luck dragon was the largest in the production) along with detailed sets (some involving mechanics) and elaborate costuming such as the Childlike Empress's royal attire. The Princess Bride worked with some arguably dangerous rudimentary pyrotechnics - in the Fire Swamp scene the only thing protecting lead actress Robin Wright was fire retardent fabric. Additionally, the Rodents Of Unusual Size were actors in detailed fur suits - impressive by the standards of the time. The films incorporated the adventurous feel, otherworldliness and childhood fable-like elements which appealed to the fans of the other fantasy media and so the expectations were set for future fantasy.

The fantasies created in the next period of popularity were successful through satisfying the audience's expectations established by the 80s films along with the components taken from their literary plot sources, all along with making the best use of great developments in technologies. Fantasy went through a relative lull over the 90s but had a resurgence in the early 2000s. This was led by the release of the first instalments in two of the most successful fantasy franchises of all time. Harry Potter and The Philosophers Stone directed by Chris Columbus and Peter Jackson's The Lord of The Rings: The Fellowship of The Ring were both released in 2001. These were joined by the first instalment in the Chronicles of Narnia Trilogy in 2005 with Andrew Adamson's The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe. These three films took fantasy stories that were already beloved and along with using the newly developed VFX technologies alongside the SFX used previously they satisfied the expectations audiences had both from knowing the books and from the previous fantasy film successes. They were monetary successes - for one example, the first film in the Harry Potter series made \$705 million internationally. Audiences expected awe-inspiring places as described in the books - the beautiful landscapes of The Shire and mysterious architecture of Hogwarts and Diagon Alley - as well as the magical occurrences such as flying and fantastical beasts. CGI was used to create much of the locations in all three films, green screen for flight sequences such as the Quidditch Match in the first Harry Potter film and motion capture when creating beings that still needed expression and speaking such as Smaug the dragon or the many beasts of Narnia, and also in Voldemort's face. The films set the gold standard in technology use and are what most people now think of in terms of high and portal fantasy - solidifying audience expectations of the genre and becoming some of the most lucrative films of all time.

When watching a fantasy, the audience expects an engaging story set in another world with interesting characters and settings that are otherworldly yet feel real. It is clear how both the technologies and the story are equally important to the audience when looking at fantasies created from around the 2010s until now. Films created have been largely unsuccessful and this is clearly due to filmmakers struggling to satisfy these two key audience expectations. Since the biggest releases of the 2000s, filmmakers have been wary of creating fantasy films as they are an extremely risky choice in terms of genre - the technologies are expensive and so more money is needed to be made for the film to be a monetary success. The technologies have been continued to be refined and so now it is taken as given that a fantasy film created will be visually impressive. What has proven more difficult is creating a narrative that the audience will be invested in - the majority of the most popular fantasy books had already been produced and fairytales and mythology had been all but exhausted by the film industry. The story being engaging is key in the audience being drawn into the film and without a well developed and cohesive plot and characters the technologies do not really have a resounding impact, however impressive they may be. Disney was the main purveyor in this period, with live action adaptations of hits from their animated catalog continuing to be produced - but with relatively little success. They were always visually impressive, but the stories were lacking and in response audiences were unsatisfied. Two reviews from the acclaimed Roger Ebert website show this clearly, with one of the first adaptations receiving extremely similar feedback to one released very recently. 2014's Maleficent (directed by Robert Stromberg) is called "another overproduced summer spectacular released into a world that has too many" while Richard Lowery's 2023 Peter and Wendy's visuals are described as ranging from "calendar-art handsome to genuinely impressive" however the story lacked heart and intensity. While fantasy continues to fail in the cinema, fantasy television is on a dramatic rise. The COVID-19 lockdowns resulted in cinemas not having as much business and people turning to their televisions for entertainment. Streaming services had been on the rise and now with people stuck at home many turned to serialised dramas. Others rewatched their favorite films from the past, including the Harry Potter film series and the Peter Jackson's Tolkien adaptations. The industry took note and combined the two to create a new media product that satisfied audience expectations effectively: several fantasy TV series. The visuals created with technologies and the dramatic, complex serialised narratives worked together to ensure audiences got what they wanted in terms of engagement in the story and immersive fantasy worlds. HBO's Game of Thrones is the most prominent with hundreds of reviews in the eight to ten star range on IMDB, but House of The Dragon, The Witcher and The Lord of The Rings: The Rings of Power all were successful both in terms of streams, subscriptions and critical response. This shows how industry creatives have to work innovatively to continue to provide media that satisfies the audience's expectations for the fantasy genre and therefore proves successful both with audiences and critics.

1724 WORDS / 800 RECOMMENDED

Excellence

Subject: Media Studies

Standard: 91251

Total score: 07

Q	Grade score	Marker commentary
1 (4)	E7	<p>The candidate provided a well-written essay that demonstrated individual thinking by directly addressing statement 4: "A media genre is successful when it satisfies audience expectations" and drawing conclusions. There is some insight into the fantasy genre and the role that technology plays in satisfying audience expectations.</p> <p>The last two paragraphs are strong, discussing the demands of the audience, and the challenge for industry creatives to continuously work innovatively to meet the expectations of the audience.</p>