



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY  
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

# **Assessment Report**

## **Scholarship, 2006**

### **Media Studies**

## Media Studies, Scholarship, 2006

### Commentary

Overall, the instructions were clear and the questions provided the candidates with the opportunity to test their subject knowledge and critical thinking skills. The majority of candidates chose to answer Questions One and Two, with less than 15% choosing Question Three.

Question One was most often done well when candidates demonstrated that control is not a one-way process, and that society has influence on the media as well as vice versa. Many effective responses were built around control as manipulation, rather than the more direct process that the term 'control' implies.

For example:

*'Censorship has an impact in manipulating audiences. It prohibits some texts, and limits access to others. This inevitably has an effect on the 'mind' of society, as those in control of the process impose their standards (widely held, usually) on everyone ... But on the other hand, audiences and society at large have been able to break free of this 'control' to an extent. Notice how standards of censorship have shifted over the years in response to changing values (the naked body doesn't shock or surprise any more), and one could argue that society at large has considerable influence over how censorship 'controls' in the long term.'*

However, many candidates overstated the scope of media control, with examples clearly not showing the kind of complete control they were arguing.

For example:

Stating that media control of the mind is absolute and complete, with examples given of how the news only shows certain kinds of stories that meet gatekeeper's requirements. This kind of bias does not necessarily control the mind, but it does control media consumption in a specific media context.

The question begged the candidate to define what they understood by 'control', as well as 'mind'.

In Question Two, few candidates grappled with the idea of 'complete' transformation. The kind of radical transformation Murdoch expresses is unusual. This appeared to challenge candidates. Furthermore, most candidates ignored a key verb in Murdoch's quote - 'think'. It would certainly have been productive for candidates to contemplate how media producers and audiences think about products at times of radical change.

For example:

How cheap semi-professional video production technology is broadening access to relatively high quality production and fragmenting audiences, changing how producers think about access to production, and audience viewing patterns.



Many candidates attempted to argue that developments in a medium that they have learned about were 'radical transformations' when viewed over a considerable period of time (for example-changes to the gangster movie genre from the 1930s to the 1990s). These were not usually convincing, given the requirements of the quote.

The specific focus on technology, despite the broader second instruction, may explain why so few candidates chose Question Three.

Some candidates had difficulty with developing arguments in response to the quotes and questions, indicating that they had prepared essays for the exam or recycled level three responses with little adaptation. Candidates generally appeared unable to interrogate quotes.

**The best-performing candidates:**

- understood the complexity of the subject and attempted to communicate this
- showed that there are no easy answers to the questions set
- argued for and against, and analysed a variety of viewpoints
- some took issue with the quote in their response
- showed consistently insightful analysis
- showed originality of thought at times
- were able to integrate a wide range of texts and contexts in their examination of the topic/issue
- grasped the question and quote forcefully
- wrote a coherent, powerfully argued and well-supported response.

**Other candidates:**

- failed to define key terms in the question, or show an understanding of those terms
- did not answer the questions
- did not respond to the quote effectively
- presented pre-prepared essays, or attempted to recycle level 3 essays without being able to make effective links to the question or quote
- made generalised statements that were not supported by evidence or examples
- presented inaccurate evidence
- made claims that were factually wrong or inaccurate
- did not provide a detailed examination of the topic
- drew unsupported or questionable conclusions
- described and explained rather than analysed, or analysed in an unconvincing way
- appeared not to have viewed or understood texts they discussed.