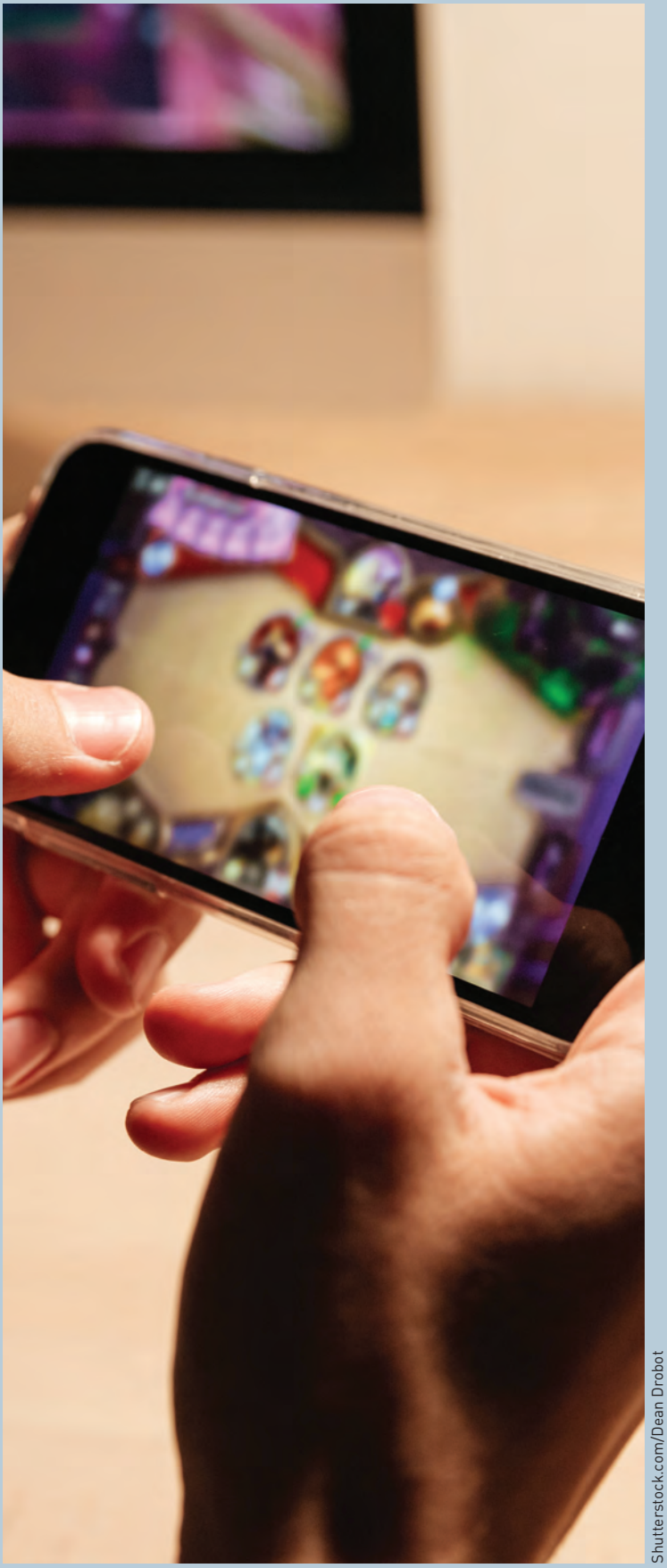
9

Making and responding – Story forms



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Part A: Production – for story

Figure 9.1 All the gear packed up and ready to film. Production is one of the most enjoyable aspects of Film, Television & New Media. Each production will boost your skills. The finished product will be something you will want to show your friends and family. It will also be a record of your school days long into the future.

CASTING AND DIRECTING ACTORS

Whatever the nature of your production, you are going to need actors, models or subjects, sometimes known as 'talent'. Call them what you will in the medium of your choice, but whatever you name them, you will need people to perform in front of a camera.

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Figure 9.2 Whatever your production, you are going to need actors. Casting the right people takes a lot of the pressure of directing off you. If the actors are right for the part, you can just let them find their own presence in the role.

Casting

Casting is said to be 75 per cent of the success of any film – at least, that is what the actors say. Scriptwriters say just three things make a film: the script, the script and the script. Whichever you believe, the acting is an important part of any audio visual production.

Many student productions do not spend enough time and care on the casting. If you get the casting right, the actor becomes the character and there is much less need for coaching input from the director. Following are some general suggestions for student productions:

1 **Cast adults in the roles of older people.** Where possible, it is best to cast age-appropriate actors. See if you can source them from family or friends outside the school. It is possible to get your school friends to play the part of a young gangster or a detective, but when maturity is called for, you need someone mature.
2 **Suit actors to their parts.** You have the whole school to choose from. You also have your outside contacts. There are so many different personality types and different physical types. You will be able to find someone who has in them the essential element that makes them suitable for the part.
3 **Cast actors who will turn up.** A big problem for student filmmakers is the actor no-show. If you are lucky, the no-show happens early in the production. If you are unlucky, the actor pulls out after the production is well underway. You may need to redo the whole thing. Try to avoid this at the casting stage by choosing people who are reliable.
4 **Have understudies.** Make sure that some of your minor actors are available to take a bigger role if there is a no-show from a key player.

Auditions/screen tests

School drama productions have auditions, so why not your media production? A social media advertising campaign could alert a lot of people to your audition. You could also put up posters around the school, or just distribute flyers among your friendship circle or within the drama department.

- **Advantages.** Auditions give you the broadest talent pool. If you have abundance, you can pick and choose. Auditions also let you know who is committed enough to turn up. That is a good

indicator of their willingness to turn up for the production as well.

- **Disadvantages.** Auditions are often very public events. You may not want to make such a big splash.

You will need the following for your audition/screen test.

1 A camera and perhaps a monitor so that you can watch the performances and see how your actors look on screen.
2 Script 'sides' for the actors to read from. Script sides are cut-down versions of scenes that allow the potential actors to demonstrate their skill, but do not require them to read long and complex parts.
3 A quiet and easily accessible location.
4 A handout for each of the actors, giving them details of the shooting dates, the locations and a short summary of the production.

Remember, there is no such thing as a bad actor, only actors who are not right for the particular part. Make sure you are grateful and courteous to all of those who turn up for the audition.

Acting for a casting audition is really putting yourself on the line, and it takes a certain amount of courage. Let people know as soon as possible of the outcome of the audition.

Talent scouting

The most common method of casting for student productions involves approaching people directly and asking them to act in your film.

- **Advantages.** Approaching people directly is a much more discreet way of casting your production. You get to control who knows about it, and you don't have to deal with all comers.
- **Disadvantages.** The chances of someone turning out to be unreliable are somewhat increased if you have to ask them to act in the first place. You may also have to deal with their refusal if you approach them directly.

You may find the following helpful if you are approaching someone directly:

- a flyer or card for the production with an image or design that shows the concept at a single glance
- a story synopsis or treatment
- details of the shooting dates and locations.

Directing your actors

> 'The innate realism of photography makes us expect psychological realism from film actors, so [the director] will need to understand the craft of acting and even become something of a drama coach.'
>
> **Michael Rabiger**, director and editor

Having their faces projected all over a big screen on your school's premiere night is a risky thing for your actors. They are really quite brave to act for you. The first thing you should do for your actors is to make them feel safe. This means all your comments should be positive and encouraging. Your aim is to get the best out of them, and you cannot do this if you make them feel bad. Effective directing is solely focused on getting the best performances.

Your actors might fit into the following categories.

- **Drama students.** These people are trained and often quite experienced at performance. However, they might be more used to theatrical performances. Film performances need to be played down from stage performances because the camera is much closer.
- **Enthusiastic friends and family.** You may need to direct these people to just be natural in the role, without overacting or 'putting it on'. Try to get them to forget they are acting.

Figure 9.3 The director explains to the actor how she wants her to perform the scene. Good directing makes the actors feel safe from harsh criticism, but also gives them guidance about the role they have to play.

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- **Reluctant performers.** If you have cast these people well, then their natural qualities will be true to the character. Otherwise, you may have to get them to ramp things up a bit.

Acting basics for directors

There are some things about acting that all directors should know, says Michael Rabiger. One way to find out about them is to try acting out the script yourself. When you are preparing for the production, do not read your script at your study desk. Read it aloud, moving around as you think the actors will need to. That way you will have an idea of how to direct them.

A director helps their actors to achieve the following:

- **Focus.** Losing belief in what they are doing is the enemy of all actors. Actors have to stay in character and keep thinking their character's thoughts. If an actor loses focus, try getting them doing something real in the character's world, such as looking at their watch (in character) or handling a prop. This small shift can regain focus.
- **Interior monologue.** We all talk to ourselves in our heads. We talk inside our heads as our own voice, our own self, but the actors need to talk as the characters they are playing. If the actors talk to themselves as their characters, they become more believable.
- **Interior life.** Once the actors are talking to themselves as their characters, they can develop an interior life of feelings and reactions. This interior life becomes visible as things that they do: small mannerisms and actions that reflect the inner life. These are what the camera likes: small external signs of what a person is really feeling.
- **Objectives.** A character is interesting when we see them try to gain their objectives or have their needs met. Everyone has needs at every single moment of their lives. The job of the actor is to work out what their character's needs are in each line of dialogue and action. This will mean a lot of preparation for a good actor. They will have to go through each page of the script and work out what they think is their character's objective at that point.
- **Business.** These are all the real-world physical activities that the actor does that reveal their inner life. It could be fiddling with a prop on the table or searching for something in a room.

What to say to your actors: dos and don'ts

The following list of dos and don'ts for directors is based on lists prepared by a number of acting coaches and short-film makers.

- **Use action verbs.** Give an actor a description of how you want them to act by using action verbs. Most of these verbs contain an action and also an emotion. 'To accuse' is an action verb – however, it also has emotions associated with it. The emotions are held by the accuser and the accused. The verb 'accuse' also has a physical movement associated with it, such as a pointed finger.

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Figure 9.4 Many acting coaches advise directors to give their actors a 'playable' direction by expressing it as an action verb. 'To accuse' is an action verb that gives the actor an emotional base to come from. The interior emotion also suggests a bodily action – in this case an intense stare. An action verb also has a target: the other actor.

- **Never act it out or read it for them.** This is called giving a line reading. You are then just asking the actor to imitate you. Even if they are a good mimic, it will still look and sound fake. This is because it does not come from the actor's interior monologue and interior life. Try one of the following instead:
  - Ask the actor about how the character is feeling when they are in the scene.
  - Give the actor an action to do that will help them summon the mood.
- **Do remind actors about previous scenes.** Media productions are often shot out of sequence. To get your cast in the mood, you will need to remind them of where their character has just come from. Actors need to be oriented at the start of each scene.

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- **Be constructive.** Do not say, 'Ethan, you are waving your arms about like a madman.' Whatever you are thinking privately, let this come out as something like, '*Keep the same strong intensity, Ethan, but express it more with your eyes than your hands.*'
- **Give permission to fail.** Always let your actors know that there can be another take. 'Freedom to fail' is one of the most powerful tools a director can use. This takes the pressure off the actors and they often give better performances as a result. In the same way, lines do not have to be word for word. Pressure to get the lines right can also be very destructive.
- **Build your own authority.** Make sure the actors know that you are the only one commenting on their performance. Do not let other crew make careless comments. There is too much chance they will say something off-putting or insulting.
- **Do not let it be bad.** If a performance was not good enough, have the courage to ask them to do it again. You can try the following to help break a stalemate:
  - Ask the actor to play it in completely the opposite way. For example, a tragic scene could be played as a comedy. After that, come back and play it straight again. The change of rhythm may have given it new energy.
  - Ask the actor to do something physical. Often making a physical action will bring out the meaning of the lines in a better way.
- **Do not let them act alone in a crowd.** If an actor is uptight, they often over-learn their lines and deliver them by rote, like chanting. They are not responding to the other actor, but simply delivering their lines on cue and acting as a lone individual. Instead, they should be reacting to what other characters are saying. The actor needs to draw their reactions from the other characters and react at the moment that something happens, just as in real life. This comes from their interior monologue and interior life as the character.

Figure 9.5 It is good to start each scene with a briefing from the director. Have the actors discuss your pre-production and listen to the way you see things. Also remind the actors of what scene their character has just come from. This is especially necessary in film production, where scenes are shot out of order.

9.1 ACTIVITIES

1 **Construct** a flyer or social media advertisement that you can use to approach actors and potential crew.
Explain in the flyer a story synopsis of your film.
Symbolise some imagery to illustrate it.

2 Take some photographs of people you might use as potential actors and include them in a document.
Explain what it is about each person you have photographed that would suit the role you have in mind. Provide **additional information** about the physical and personality attributes that allow them to take on the part of the character.

3 Form a small group and appoint one person as director or acting coach. Select a scene from an existing script. Have the remainder of the group act out the scene and then ask the acting coach to **give feedback** using the guidelines listed in this section.
Explain (as acting coach) how the actors could have played the scene, giving **additional information** that will help actors **clarify** the requirements of their performance. Now try the scene again.

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SHOOTING STORY-BASED PRODUCTIONS

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Figure 9.6 The whole purpose of the production stage is to collect the raw materials. This means sufficient coverage and sufficient variety in types of shots.

Coverage

When you are filming, you will need to take the needs of the editor into account. It is very common for problems to arise in editing because there is insufficient coverage. Sometimes extra scenes are needed, or the order of scenes is changed. This often requires extra footage.

The following techniques may be helpful for providing the editor with sufficient footage:

- **Master shot.** Film a continuous master shot of important scenes so that there is complete footage of the whole scene in long shot with minimal camera movement.
- **Establishing shot.** Begin with a clear establishing shot that sets the characters within the scene. This could be accomplished with your master shot or you may have to take an additional shot.
- **Focus on talking characters.** Dialogue usually drives action, so collect shots of each character as they deliver their lines.
- **Reaction shots.** Sometimes editing requires reaction shots. How people respond to dialogue can be just as interesting as the dialogue itself. Collect shots of other characters' faces as the lines are delivered.
- **Noddies.** In news and documentaries, a reaction shot is often called a 'noddy' – so-called because they frequently show the reporter nodding in response to the comments by the interviewee. Noddies are often inserted between questions as a way of hiding cuts. Only nods are acceptable because journalists are professionally discouraged from over-reaction as it distracts from the interviewee. A noddy is filmed after the interview, when the interviewee has gone away. To provide accurate eye-levels, an assistant holds something (such as a pen) at the approximate height that the interviewee's eyes were at. The reporter then makes eye contact with that object.
- **Cutaways.** This is a shot of something other than the main action, which can be inserted to hide a jump cut or to condense action. These shots are therefore cuts away from the main action to something related but different.

The take

Once you have planned and set up everything, you are ready for the take.

A take is a continuous recording of a scene or shot and begins with the following calls made by the assistant director (AD):

1. *First positions* means everyone should get ready and finalise their preparations.
2. *Sound* begins the sound recording if there is a separate sound recorder.
3. *Turnover* or *Camera* is the signal to begin camera recording. The AD announces the scene and takes numbers. They hold up the clapperboard or slate with the numbers written in clear view of the camera. The clapperboard should be shot in close-up so that the scene numbers appear on the file thumbnails during editing. The camera operator calls *Mark it* once this is achieved. (Note: As film is expensive, often the clapper loader announces the slate number and take before the film rolls.)
4. *Action* is called when the camera has framed the actors and the scene is ready to begin.
5. *Cut* is called at the finish of the scene. It is traditional to wait a few seconds after the end of the last line to allow room for any necessary trimming required in the editing process

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Figure 9.7 There is a calling protocol around the use of the clapperboard or slate at the start of a take. Shooting the clapperboard in close-up at the start of each take means that it will appear in the file thumbnails, making it easier to keep track of various takes in the editing stage.

How many takes?

The short answer to the question of how many takes is 'however many it takes'. Digital video means that once the actors and crew are assembled, the costs of production are relatively low. You will only be restricted by people's personal schedules.

Often the first take is the most lively and spontaneous. However, later takes can benefit from the extra practice. It is a good idea to have at least two takes that the editor can work with. If possible, these two should offer slightly different performances. Perhaps the actors can vary their pace or say things in a slightly different way. This allows the editor more room to manoeuvre in post-production.

Avoiding jump cuts – 30-degree rule

Editing requires cutting between lots of different shots of a character or scene. Camera operators in the production stage need to keep in mind that good editing avoids jump cuts by using the 30-degree rule.

- **Jump cuts.** A jump cut occurs when a cut is made from one shot to another of the same subject without any real change in camera position or shot size. It is called a 'jump cut' because the result is usually a perceptible jump that breaks the sense of continuity (see Chapter 2).
- **30-degree rule.** Classical Hollywood editing style suggests that the camera should be moved at least 30 degrees away from its previous position when shooting the same subject to avoid a jump cut and appear seamless. Some editors also demand that the camera should change shot size as well – for example, from a mid-shot to a close-up. The essential idea is to avoid the two shots looking similar to each other.

Vox pops

If you are making a documentary, you may be tempted to include vox pops. The term 'vox pop' comes from the Latin phrase *vox populi* meaning 'voice of the people'. Vox pops are quick reaction comments from people in the street. Like the opinions of ordinary people, they are useful as a group reaction. Therefore, they are tightly edited to just a few quick words from each person.

A vox pop is not a legitimate survey. Even so, the professional standards of journalism demand that the weight of opinions the audience sees on screen should be broadly representative of those actually expressed when people were asked.

Locations

There are three main locations used in shooting: indoors, outdoors and studio. Each has its own characteristics. Before you begin shooting, you are advised to do a reconnaissance or 'recce' (pronounced *rekky*). It can be a good idea to take test shots with a smartphone so that you have an idea of what problems might occur on the day.

Indoor shooting

Indoor shooting requires care with the following:

- **Space for shooting.** The camera needs to be far enough back to take in the action.
- **Lighting.** Is there sufficient light, and can adequate power be brought into the rooms to run video lights? Windows can be both useful and a problem. A window can be a light source, but if it is behind the subject of the shot it creates a problem with **backlighting**.
- **Sound.** Some rooms can have problems with sound bouncing around. Clap your hands together to see if there is an echo. Overcoming echoes requires bringing in a lot of sound-absorbent material. Blankets, doonas, cushions and the like can all help reduce sound reflection. It can also be a good idea to record a 'room-tone' track. This is a soundtrack of the room with no one talking. It might capture, for example, the sounds of fans, insects or refrigerators. A room-tone track is usually about 30 seconds to a minute long. It can be used to cover total silences and gaps created in editing. (See also 'atmos track' in outdoor locations.)
- ***Mise en scène*.** Indoor locations can allow a more careful attention to *mise en scène*. Arranging furniture and background objects is all part of set dressing. Do not just accept the location exactly as it is. You can improve the *mise en scène* by being artful.

Outdoor locations

Outdoor locations pose challenges as well. You will need to consider the following.

- **Backgrounds.** You will need to check what else may be included in the framing. Outdoor

settings are much less controlled, and there may be distractions that can come into shot.

- **The public.** Passers-by can cause problems by coming into shot, or by heckling.
- **Security.** Theft is much more likely in public spaces. You will need to have someone monitor the unused equipment and cases. Alternatively, use cable ties to lock them to some available fixtures.
- **Equipment leftovers.** It can be easy to accidentally leave camera cases or spare tripods in shot when shooting outdoors.
- **Lighting.** Outdoor locations can also pose lighting problems. Harsh midday sun can cast sharp shadows on actors' faces. Shade under trees can create dark areas. Light can be directed into areas of shadow with reflector boards.
- **Sound.** Recording dialogue can be more difficult in outdoor locations. Boom poles and directional mikes can make it easier. However, there is a lot more uncontrolled sound outdoors. It can also be a good idea to record an 'atmos track'. An **atmos track** (or atmosphere track) is a recording of the natural sounds of the location. It is often placed under dubbed dialogue.

Studio locations

Studios used in productions by FTVNM students vary in size. Some may just be a room with a small green screen in one corner. (A green screen is used as a background upon which other images are overlaid electronically in post-production editing programs.) Other studios may be larger and have specially fitted equipment. Studio filming requires consideration of the following:

- **Green screen reflection.** The paint used on many green screens is highly reflective and can cast a greenish tinge over the actors. Various fixes are available for this in post-production. However, adequate lighting (particularly backlighting) can reduce the problem.
- **Clothing choices.** While green screen and blue screen colours are chosen because they are the most removed from the tones of human skin, green or blue clothing will cause problems.
- **Sound.** Many school-based studios have problems with echo. This is because there is often very little absorbent material such as curtaining, furniture or set stands. Often unwanted sound can be transferred from other parts of the school. Air-conditioning systems can also cause noise problems.

Courtesy Wubishet Leckenby

Figure 9.8 Many large high schools have studios. A studio can create a more controlled filming environment. However, it can also come with particular problems depending on how and where the studio is constructed. One of the most common problems is intrusive sound from other sources outside the studio.

Recording sound

Good sound will give your production a professional touch. Take the same care with your sound as you do with your visual footage.

All sound recorded on set or on location is called production sound. It includes dialogue, natural sound from the environment and any other sounds made as the actors perform.

Other sounds can be added in the post-production process, but live production sound is always the most realistic.

Microphones

Microphones (often shortened to 'mikes') are a means of converting sound into an electrical or digital signal. Microphones are often categorised

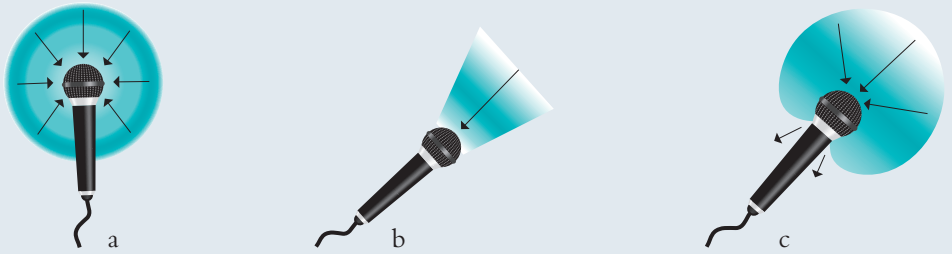

Figure 9.9 (a) An omni-directional microphone can pick up sound from every direction. Its directional sensitivity is roughly spherical in shape. It is good for picking up general sounds from all around, but not so good if you just want to focus on one sound. (b) Uni-directional microphones pick up sound from one direction only – the front. Uni-directional mikes are good for blocking out all other sounds except the one you are focusing on. They are not good if you want to pick up from multiple sound sources or collect ambient/atmospheric sound. (c) Cardioid microphones pick up sound in a pattern that is roughly heart-shaped (hence the name). They are a good general-use microphone, but they are not as effective when there are many sources of unwanted sound.

according to the directions from which they can pick up sound. Different directions have different purposes.

Omni-directional microphones

The prefix *omni* means 'every', so these microphones have a spherical pattern of sensitivity. They can pick up sound from every direction more or less equally. Omni-directional microphones are good for recording situations where several actors are delivering dialogue standing close together in a quiet environment. They are also good for recording atmospheric or ambient sound from all around.

However, omni-directional microphones are not good for picking out the sound of one person's voice when there is a lot of surrounding sound. For example, a reporter on the side of a busy freeway would not use an omni-directional microphone because the sound of traffic would be at least as loud as their voice and the microphone would not 'reject' any of the freeway sound.

Uni-directional microphones

The prefix *uni* means 'single' or 'one'. A uni-directional microphone picks up sound in one direction only – from the front. Uni-directional microphones are good in situations where you need to focus on one sound source to the exclusion of all others. This could be when a character is talking and you need to focus only on them. A uni-directional microphone can also be used to cut out traffic sounds or other loud noises near where someone is speaking.

Uni-directional microphones are not good where there are multiple sound sources (unless you are recording them shot by shot). They do not work well if several people are speaking unless you move the microphone towards each one as they speak.

Cardioid microphones

The word cardioid means 'shaped like a heart'. A cardioid microphone collects sound in a restricted pattern that is like an upside-down heart. It is a kind of uni-directional microphone, but with a broader pick-up area. Cardioid microphones are a good compromise between omni- and uni-directional mikes. They are good for general use.

Figure 9.10 (a) Road case and microphones suitable for FTVNM students to borrow. Good sound can make all the difference to your productions. (b) Sennheiser MK 816 microphone and a selection of wind baffles – from top: a 'zeppelin', a 'dead cat' and a 'windsock'. (c) Sennheiser MKH 816 and 416 microphones. These have a super cardioid recording pattern.

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Techniques for audio recording

- **Using headphones.** It is advisable to use headphones when recording sound so that you can hear what the microphone is picking up. This will also prevent a situation where cables may be accidently unplugged and no sound is recorded. The headphones will allow you to pick up problems. Select headphones with closed ear pads so that you do not hear sound from outside or leak delayed sound back onto the location.
- **Sound levels.** Switch on the sound level display so that you can see sound is being recorded at adequate levels. This will also serve to warn you if the sound accidentally stops recording while you are filming a scene.

Figure 9.11 Use the sound levels display function on the camera so that you know you are definitely recording and that your sound levels are appropriate.

- **Placing microphones.** The position of the microphone depends on the needs of the camera. The most important position for the microphone is out of view. Beyond that, a microphone is ideally placed between 30 centimetres and 1 metre away from the person speaking. It can be placed above or below the level of the mouth. Placing it level with the mouth can cause explosive breathy sounds.
- **Atmos track.** An atmos track is a recording of the natural ambient sound of the location. It might include leaves rustling, traffic or birds. For an indoor location, the atmos track (sometimes called a room-tone track) is a soundtrack of the room with no one talking – just the silence of the room but with the same number of people in it as when you were recording the dialogue and action. An atmos track is usually two or three minutes long in case it needs to be placed under dubbed dialogue.
- **Recording narration.** A voice-over track should not have any accidental sounds in the background, nor should it contain any echo. Unless you have access to a soundproof studio, the best place to record a voice-over track is inside a car. This is because the interior is sealed and there are lots of absorbent surfaces, such as seat covers and carpets. If you cannot record inside a car, then use a small room. Choose a room that has carpets, curtains and plenty of furniture. You can also build a small enclosure around the microphone and your narrator's head and shoulders. Blankets and cushions are good materials to use.

9.2 ACTIVITIES

Demonstrate your learning by creating a narrative video.
Structure a short narrative video. **Sequence** audio and visual elements to systematically reveal to the audience the key features of the story type you have chosen.

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SHOOTING DIALOGUE FOR STORY-BASED VIDEOS

Scenes involving dialogue are fundamental to most productions in television and film. Shooting and editing these scenes well is crucial to the success of your video.

Alamy Stock Photo/Rob Francis

Figure 9.12 The sound recordist holds the boom pole and microphone just above the characters and out of the frame of the camera. This can become a feat of endurance depending on how long the take is, and how heavy the microphone and pole are. In a single-camera shoot, a master shot will be recorded first and then each character will be shot in mid-shot or close-up as the scene is repeated.

Shooting dialogue

The traditional way to shoot a scene with dialogue between characters is called the master scene technique. It is also known as the shot/reverse-shot technique. This technique involves three basic shot categories:

- a master shot
- individual shots of each person, which are used for shot/reverse-shot editing
- cutaway shots.

Preparing to work using master scene technique will require you to begin with an analysis of the scene goals and elements. Once you understand these, you can shoot the three basic categories of footage.

1 Scene elements and goals

The first step in the process is to analyse or break down the scene into its core filmic elements. These filmic elements are the people and objects that are most important in the scene. For example, if a conversation is between a man and a woman, then there are just two filmic elements. Perhaps the conversation becomes an argument. If you add a letter and a knife used to open the letter, then there are four filmic elements that will need to be individually shot. When the video is edited, these elements can be cut together to tell the story in the most dramatic and exciting way.

Each scene has a particular dramatic purpose in the narrative. You will need to determine the goal of the scene you are shooting. Once you know this, you can decide where the high points of emotion or intense drama are. Directors traditionally place their close-up shots at these high points.

2 Master shot

The master shot is a continuous shooting of the whole scene, showing all the elements as they appear together. Usually the master shot is some kind of long shot, depending on the amount of space required around the characters. It should show the characters in the scene, and the space they have around them.

The master shot has three main purposes.

1 To act as an establishing shot, because it shows all the characters in the setting or landscape. After the establishing shot, the shots can move progressively closer to their subjects.
2 To provide coverage, since it is usually shot continuously from beginning to end of the scene. This means it can provide a back-up if any of the other shots do not work for some reason, allowing the editor to cut back to the master shot to hide any problems.
3 To provide the basic soundtrack. It is possible to cut to the soundtracks from the closer shots if required, but the master shot provides the baseline.

Figure 9.13 Students shooting the master shot of a dialogue scene with four elements – two characters, a letter and a knife used to open the letter. The beginning of the master shot can be used as an establishing shot to open the scene.

The master shot also determines the side of the line of action (180-degree line) that all other shots will be filmed from. The closer shots of characters (the shot/reverse-shot sequences) will need to remain on the same side of the line as the master shot, unless special techniques are used to allow a change.

3 Shot/reverse-shot

After the master shot, the director then re-stages the scene several more times using a variety of closer shots such as medium shots and close-ups. Medium shots do not convey as much intensity and emotion as close-ups, so the close-ups will be used at the high points of the scene. Close-ups may also be used to show objects when they become significant. The director refers to the marked-up script, which shows the pivotal moments when the close-ups are required.

The shot/reverse-shot technique is often used in conversation when a character makes a comment and the director wants to show the impact on the other character. This is called a reaction shot.

At other times, reverse shots may be used to position the audience in the space inhabited by the characters. These kinds of shots could involve both characters. For example, a medium shot or close-up may also show part of the shoulder of the other person. This allows the audience to see the characters in relation to each other. This type of shot is called an over-the-shoulder shot, a two-shot or occasionally (because it is not a cleanly framed shot of a single character) a dirty single.

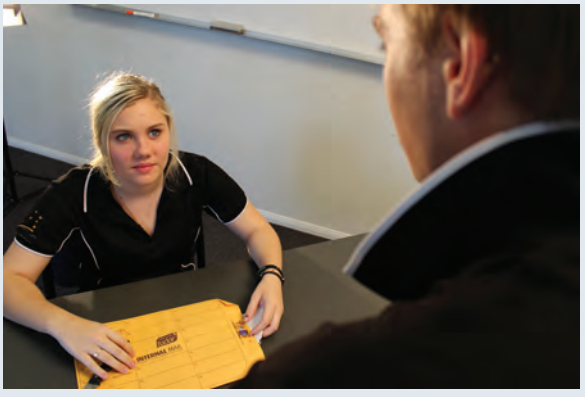

Figure 9.14 An over-the-shoulder shot (two-shot or dirty single) can be used to show the characters in relation to each other. These shots help to position the audience in the space.

4 Matching eyelines

Master shot technique requires the scene to be shot several times with the single camera focused on each of the different characters or objects. Often the other characters are present for the re-staging, but sometimes they are not.

Courtesy Matt Nettheim

Figure 9.15 Shooting *The Tracker* (2002) on location in Arkaroola in South Australia's remote outback. Note the use of light-reflecting Grifflon to soften the harsh direct sunlight on the actor's face.

There are two important factors to consider when matching eyelines:

1 **Sightlines.** The direction and focus of the actor's eyes must be accurately lined up to precisely where the audience believes the other partner in the conversation is situated. You can help the actor do this by holding something at the point where the other actor's eyes would have been. Or you can use one of the crew as a stand-in.
2 **Camera angle and placement.** The camera angle or camera placement should reflect the approximate height or place at which the audience expects the other character to be. For example, if one character is a lot taller than the other (or is standing while one is seated), the height of the camera should be adjusted to reflect this.

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Figure 9.16 Students matching eyelines in a dialogue scene. Camera placement and angle should approximately match the eyeline of the character whose point of view we are seeing. When matching eyelines between characters, the height of the camera may be adjusted to reflect the position or height of the other character.

5 Cutaways

Cutaways are shots from within the scene that cut away to something other than the characters themselves. A cutaway could be to an object that has significance in the scene, or to other non-specific characters, such as a group of bystanders.

Cutaways have the following functions.

- **Highlighting significance.** Cutting away to an object in a scene can suggest that it is going to be important. For example, cutting away to a knife lying on the table may foreshadow its involvement later in the action.
- **Adding detail.** A cutaway can add details to the action. For example, a cutaway to a clock can add tension and provide the audience with additional information about time pressures.
- **Patching edits.** Cutaways are extremely useful for covering gaps in continuity or for compressing time. They can also be used to hide the jumps when sections of dialogue are cut out.

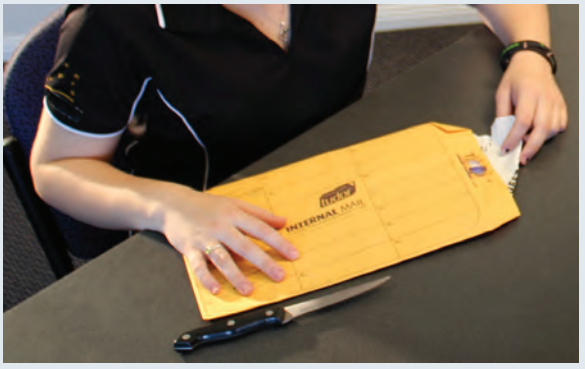

Figure 9.17 A cutaway to an envelope and a knife that will be significant later in the scene.

Editing dialogue

Dialogue is one of the main building blocks of storytelling in film or television. Both fictional narratives and documentaries rely on dialogue, and sometimes also narration.

- **Cutaways.** Shots away from the main action (such as reaction shots) can be used to condense long dialogue passages. Use three shots to do this.
  - Show the person speaking.
  - Cut away to the person listening. Let the speaker finish their sentence while the audience is distracted by the reactions of the person listening. Then get rid of all the dialogue you wanted to condense.
  - Cut back to the original person speaking but beginning with the new section of dialogue.
- **Overlapping dialogue.** It can be boring to just show one person talking and then cutting to another. A good technique is to cut to the second person while the first person is still talking. Let the first person's sentence finish while focused on the second, then allow the second person to respond. When overlapping dialogue is used at the end of a scene, **J-cut** and **L-cut** techniques can be used.
- **Reaction shots.** If you were observing people talking, you would dart your attention from one to the other from time to time. Try to estimate just when you would do that yourself, and that is probably when your audience would want to glance at the other person.
- **Progress the action.** Dialogue needs to progress the action or the story. Get rid of everything that doesn't do that, even if you like it.
- **Genre.** Cut dialogue according to genre. Some genres, such as romantic comedy, are very

dependent on dialogue. Others, such as action movies, have quite sparse dialogue.

- **Cut in the pauses.** People make small pauses all through their speech. Use these to your advantage if you want to condense the dialogue. Cut on the small pauses and quickly move to another part of the dialogue. Using the space between words allows you to move things along more quickly.

Screen geography

Screen geography is the layout and direction of the action within the frame, and the point of view of the camera as it films. When editing and filming, attention must be paid to screen geography so that the movement within each frame matches that in the next frame. A car chase in which one car is following another must have the shots of each car moving in the same direction. If the leading car is moving from left to right of the frame, then the following car must use the same screen geography. This sounds easy, but if the camera has the wrong point of view, it can accidentally show a car moving in the opposite direction.

When simultaneous time is shown, it is common for the action in the two parallel locations to move in opposite directions. This suggests that the two sources of movement will converge at some point. Consider the classic simultaneous time situation of a car and a speeding train racing toward a level crossing. Ideally the car will move in one direction across the frame, the train in the opposite.

The 180-degree rule – 'crossing the line'

According to the 180-degree rule, an imaginary line exists called the axis of action. Imagine two people in conversation – the imaginary axis of action can be considered as a line between them. perhaps the line of eye contact. If you are filming these two people talking, you should always place the camera on the same side of the imaginary line. It can be moved to any position to show one person, then the other, but it should always stay on the same side of the line. Crossing to the other side will disrupt the screen geography, as a character will appear to be facing the wrong way.

Crossing the line can be done effectively if there is a neutral shot in between. This could be an overhead shot or a shot directly down the axis of action. After a neutral shot, it is acceptable to cross the line and film from the other side.

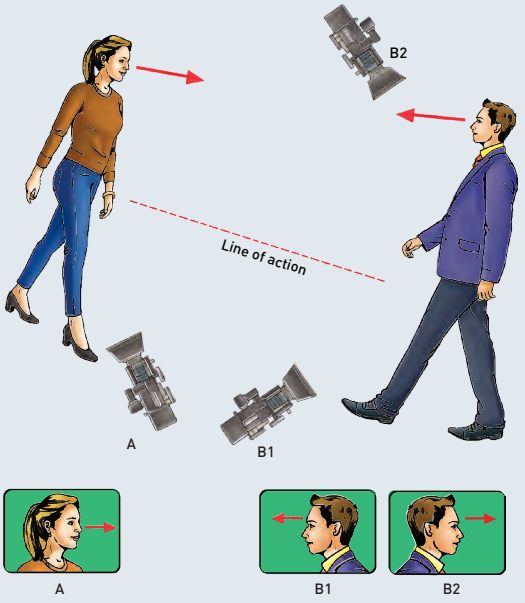

Figure 9.18 Screen geography requires that the camera stay on the same side of the dotted line whenever its position is changed. The line can be crossed, but only if a neutral shot is inserted between the two positions. For instance, the camera can be in the positions A or B1. Position B2 will see a character suddenly flip and face the other way.

9.3 ACTIVITIES

1 View the museum scene in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958).
Analyse the scene for its construction, using master scene technique, breaking down the scene into the **constituent parts** of classic use of the technique. **Consider** how many elements there are. List them, and then **interpret** the role they play as part of the whole sequence.
Explain how Hitchcock uses the elements to create associations in the minds of the audience.

2 **Structure** two short video sequences demonstrating your understanding of the 180-degree rule (crossing the line). Shoot and edit one sequence without crossing the line. Shoot and edit another sequence correctly crossing the line using one of the available techniques.

3 **Synthesise** your own dialogue scene using master scene technique, **solving creative** and **technical** issues as you use the different filming and editing techniques. Include other scene elements as well as the main characters, **combining** them into a polished moving-image media product.

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POST-PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES

Now that you have the raw materials from the production stage, it is time to take the project through to post-production. Post-production is often just referred to as 'post'. One of two things will happen in post:

- your hard work will pay off, *or*
- your production mistakes will come back to haunt you, and you will need to find solutions fast.

The editing process

The basic steps involved in digital editing have been established over many years. Similar processes existed for traditional film editing and linear video editing.

1 Establish the project folder

You will need to set up a project folder to store all your production files. Ideally, this is kept on the local hard drive of the computer you are using to edit. This is because it will be much faster for the files to operate if they are based locally rather than on a USB or remote server. Check to see that you are not saving the folder to a network drive. Video files are too big to travel efficiently over a school network. You will soon clog up the drive and be unable to edit.

Laptop users can label the folder by the project name and save locally.

Shared edit suite users will need to clearly label the folder with your name(s). Save the folder to the local drive.

2 Gather your media

Import all the production files you have into the project folder. The following steps will help you to organise your files and folder:

1. Make a back-up of all the raw files immediately. Store this on a separate drive that you can keep in a safe place.
2. Rename the camera files. Label all the production files in a logical way. The name should tell you what they are at a glance.
3. Create sub-folders to categorise your media. Use whatever sorting system is useful to you. A simple system is to sort by scenes. Some editors use the following system of folder names:
   - video files
   - audio files
   - assets (such as titles, sub-titles and various effects)
   - final exports.

3 Log your footage

Ideally you should view all footage and make a record of what is there. This is called logging. Naturally you will just want to start editing straight away. However, the logging process is a good way of seeing what is there and what is missing. Logging also lets you check for faults. It shows you the material you cannot use. Going over the footage also helps to stimulate new ideas. Getting all the images into your head is part of the imaginative process.

A video log is usually a written document with several columns giving descriptions of the shots and the action they portray. Suggested format and headings are shown in Table 9.1.

4 Make an edit decision list (EDL)

An edit decision list (EDL) is a written document that is based on the video log. An EDL puts the shots in the order in which they will appear and gives an indication of titles and transitions.

An EDL is a planning document often with three columns indicating the shot number, description and type of edit.

Table 9.1 A video log is a good way to get all the shots into your head and thereby helps creative problem-solving to occur when you need it to.

FILE NAME	SHOT NUMBER	SHOT SIZE	ACTORS	ACTION	NOTES

Table 9.2 A simple layout for an edit decision list.

SHOT NUMBER	SHOT DESCRIPTION	TYPE OF EDIT

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5 Begin constructing your story

Editing is a process of shaping and constructing a story. Place the clips on the timeline in the order of the edit decision list. A rough cut can be made first, and then you can refine it later.

Most editors cut for story first and then cut for time. The most important thing is to tell the story as it should be told. You can trim it back later on to meet the time requirements.

6 Add titles

An important part of the editing process is the creation of titles and credits. The opening title design sets the tone for the whole production. Titles within the story can be an important way of helping the audience to understand complex events. Credits are a way of acknowledging all the people who helped. They also let your teachers know what roles you undertook.

7 Mix audio

Adding music and sound effects to your dialogue tracks is one of the later stages of editing. Layering these under the main dialogue track requires some skill. You will need to adjust the levels to make sure that the dialogue is not being drowned out. Adjusting the tone and level of a soundtrack is called 'sweetening'.

8 Add effects

Digital editing systems are capable of a vast range of effects. Many students also use specialised programs to create more complex effects.

9 Export

Export your finished production in the format required for assessment. You may like to make a second export using a higher definition format as well. Save back-up copies of your export. If you are working in a group, give a copy to each member.

Getting a production to the right length

A production rarely comes in at the right length. When it does, enjoy your good fortune. Most productions are too short or too long after the first edit has been done.

When it's too long

A video that is too long runs the risk of boring the audience. Even if the production is really well done, all stories seem to have a natural length and your audience will be annoyed if you over-extend the narrative.

When the production is too long, the best place to start trimming is at the beginning. There are two reasons for this:

- At the start of the production, you would have thought you had plenty of time. Scenes were probably allowed to run a little longer than absolutely necessary.
- Audience attention must be grabbed immediately. The pace must be quick. You can speed things up here, and probably end up improving the audience appeal a great deal.

Go through each scene and reduce it by an agreed amount. Even small cuts made to each scene can add up to substantial changes in the overall length. You will probably end up with a much better production as well.

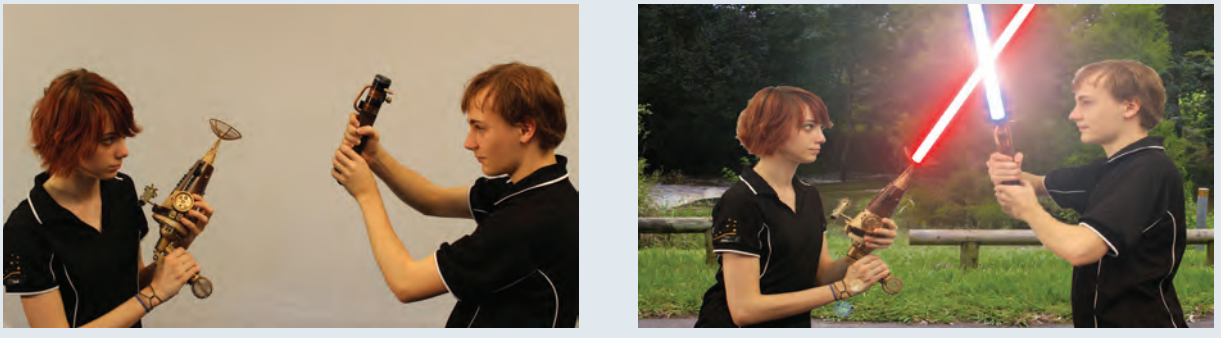

Figure 9.19 Characters fight it out with 'light sabers' and lasers. Once the basic story has been constructed on the timeline, you can add special effects.

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'Murder your darlings' is a well-known writers' adage, meaning that you should be ruthless with your favourite parts of the story (your 'darlings') if they turn out to be unnecessary. This famous phrase can equally be applied to video and film. Ask yourself whether the scene is really adding to the film's plot. If it is not essential from a storytelling point of view, then it can easily be cut out altogether.

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Figure 9.20 It is rare for a production to come in exactly at the right length on the first edit. Mostly they are longer; sometimes they are shorter. Cutting the production down is easier than adding to it. However, either can be achieved if you allow enough time to do it before the due date.

When it's too short

A video that is too short is a lot harder to fix than one that is too long. If you did not get enough footage in the production stage, you have an even worse problem.

When trying to make a production longer:

- **Do not flashback whole scenes.** Audiences find repetition irritating. However, when a video is too short, it is very common to search for a solution such as a complete repeat of the first half. Often this can mean running the whole sequence in reverse motion and then ending up with a scene saying it was all a dream. Generally, this technique does not work. It is too obvious.
- **Extend the tension.** Find scenes where there is a climax in the action. Try to draw out this scene a little longer by holding the tension longer. You can do this by using parallel editing/simultaneous time. If you lack footage, quickly film some reaction shots in close-up with neutral backgrounds.
- **Add a montage.** At an artful point in the production, you may be able to create a montage out of various found pieces of production footage. Edit this together in a new and lively way that adds something extra to the story at that point. The audience will not notice the intrusion.
- **Re-film a new scene.** Using one or two available actors, quickly film a short segment in a neutral daytime setting, or choose a dimly lit indoor or night-time setting with shafts of light on the actor's face only.

Titles

Stylish titles are an important part of the impression that a film or video makes upon its audience. Putting extra work into your titles can add a lot of value. The terminology of titles includes the following:

- **The title card** is a non-moving title that is held on screen for a length of time. Often the term refers to a title over a black screen, like the title cards in old silent movies.
- **Supers** are titles that appear over moving action or scenes. 'Super' is short for 'superimposition'.
- **Head credits** are the names of famous actors placed at the beginning of a film, before or after the main title.
- **Inter-titles** are title cards that appear within the production, often between scenes. They are often used to let the audience know that time has passed – for example, 'Three days later'. Inter-titles were very common in silent films.
- **End credits or tail credits** are the long list of credits and acknowledgements at the end of a production.
- **Scrolling credits** are usually scrolled vertically to allow equal time for each person, and to make it easier for the audience to read.
- **Crawling titles or crawling credits** are horizontally scrolling text.

Shutterstock.com/Piotr Zajac

Figure 9.21 Official lettering on stands used at the Berlin premiere of the James Bond movie *Skyfall* (2012). Choice of font is something of an art in itself. The limits are imposed by the audience's sense of good taste. However, it can be advisable to avoid fonts with very thin outlines, as these can flicker on screen.

Getting good titles

Following are some general suggestions for creating good titles:

- **Short film, short title.** Opening titles on short films should be as brief as possible. Feature-length movies can afford to drag things out. Short films seem pretentious or above themselves if they extend the opening titles too long.
- **Opening title design.** The titles at the beginning should work to set the expectations of the audience. It can be effective if the title design gives away clues about the genre. The opening title should also hint at the central conflict or premise. One of the best examples of this is the opening titles of *Jaws* (1975).
- **Supers over steady shots.** Camera movement underneath a superimposed title is very noticeable. Use shots where the camera is on a tripod, or where there is very little movement. However, superimposing over a gentle pan or tilt usually works.
- **Spelling and typos.** All textual mistakes look much worse when they are on a screen. It is also difficult to change them after they have already been included in an exported film. Titles should be thoroughly checked before they are finalised.

Timing your titles

If titles are incorrectly timed, they can annoy the audience. Slow titles can even feel as though they are slowing down the film. However, titles that flash off the screen before people finish reading are frustrating. There are some rules of thumb for achieving good timing for titles:

- **Counting.** A common rule is that ordinary text can be read at three words per second. To get the correct length for your titles, simply count the number of words and divide by three. The quotient is the number of seconds you should leave the title up for.
- **Reading.** This technique requires that you read the titles aloud. Speaking them aloud is a little slower than reading them silently. Wait a brief moment after you have finished reading aloud and then cut the title.

9.4 ACTIVITIES

Synthesise the video you made in section 9.2 ('Shooting story-based productions') into a fully resolved story, **solving** post-production **technical problems** and **creative** and **conceptual issues** as they arise.

MANAGING GROUP PRODUCTIONS

Media production is often a collaborative process. At this stage in Year 11 Film, Television & New Media, there is an opportunity for you to work in groups, depending on your school's approach. Mostly this can be a positive experience, but there can be some pitfalls.

What does it mean to work in a group?

It is possible to work individually or in groups in media production in Units 1 and 2. Groups or teams are very common in media industry practice.

A production team is composed of two or more individuals who are working on a clearly defined media production task that requires them to work interdependently, or even to work in formal roles. Ideally, everyone in the team has some control over their area of work. They should also be responsible and accountable for coming up with the media product.

Choosing a group

There is no single method that works to form the perfect group. However, there are three methods that media production groups have commonly used. Each can be equally successful if things go well, but each also has disadvantages. This is shown in Table 9.3.

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Table 9.3 Advantages and disadvantages of different group formation methods

GROUP FORMATION METHOD	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Friendship	Good group support system Automatic team spirit Improved communication Free exchange of ideas Well known to one another Raised achievement if all are committed to gaining good results Reduced conflict	Disputes can cause loss of friendship Too much time chatting or laughing Greater conformity in thinking Reduced innovation Reduced achievement if all not committed to results
Skills-based	Good specialisation in roles Strengths come to the fore Higher-quality work Commitment based on expectations of quality Innovation based on specialised knowledge	Loyalty to each other not automatically there Need to get to know one another Coordination problems Over-focus on techniques and skills reduces overall achievement
Randomised	Hidden talents can be there Ideas are stimulated by new encounters Less conformity in thinking	Loyalty to each other not automatically there Personalities unknown Greater potential for conflict Coordination problems Unknown standards of quality

Stages groups go through

A popular explanation of the stages that groups go through in their development was developed by psychology emeritus professor Bruce Tuckman.

1. **Forming.** Groups organise themselves and members get to know each other. They decide on routines and tasks. Often this is an easy stage as everybody is being friendly and there aren't really any differences of opinion yet.
2. **Storming.** In the storming stage, different ideas compete, and there are discussions and arguments about what to do. This can be a painful, argumentative stage when ideas are rejected, or conflict develops. Successful groups move through this quickly. Some groups stay locked in the storming stage throughout the project.
3. **Norming.** The team develops a 'norm' or generally accepted idea or plan. Everybody agrees to get behind this and work towards a common goal.
4. **Performing.** Some groups reach this stage and perform at a high level. Usually in these groups everybody is self-motivated and there isn't a need for continual monitoring of performance.

According to Tuckman, groups can go in and out of any of these stages. They can also remain stuck in one stage (usually storming). Often a change in membership or a new problem will cause the group to shift back into one of the earlier stages for a while.

Group size

A production team is best if it is made up of a relatively small group of people. The smaller the group, the more likely members are to contribute. Coordination problems in large groups often end up reducing the quality of each individual's input. This can be referred to as the Ringelmann effect. In 1913, French agricultural engineer Max Ringelmann tested the strength of men in a tug of war. An individual man could pull around 85 kilograms. A group of seven men, roughly equal in strength, managed to pull 450 kilograms – a huge difference. In this situation, a group can achieve much more than an individual. However, note that seven times 85 is actually 595. Ringelmann had proved that, while groups are effective, coordination or process problems reduce the output. The aim of good production teamwork should be to reduce the losses and maximise the benefits of group effort.

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Figure 9.22 In a series of experiments, it was found that one person could pull 85 kilograms. Seven people of approximately equal strength could pull 450 kilograms – not the expected 595 kilograms (that is, seven times one person's effort). This is the so-called Ringelmann effect: the loss of output caused by group coordination problems.

How can you ensure a successful group?

According to organisational psychologist Eduardo Salas, there are five main things that a good productive team should have:

1. **Leadership.** Whether it is leadership by one person all the way through or by different people at different times during the production, there needs to be leadership. Some groups may have multiple leaders. Leaders help understand the task and motivate others to get started.
2. **Adaptability.** This is the ability to change your approach according to different circumstances. For instance, if post-production video editing reveals that there isn't enough footage, an adaptable team can come up with solutions.
3. **Performance monitoring.** Making sure that each member has completed their tasks as the group goes along is an important factor in success. Checks needs to be performed before deadlines mean that they are too late.
4. **Back-up behaviour.** Group members need to be supportive to one another. If someone can't seem to get things done, they will benefit from friendly back-up. Back-up should follow performance monitoring.
5. **Team orientation.** This refers to team spirit and the ability of the group to stick together when things get tough.

What stops groups reaching their potential?

Production groups can fail to reach their potential because of faulty processes. There are three main areas of faulty processes.

- **Coordination problems.** Group members don't get things completed on time, or there are misunderstandings about what is required.
- **Social dynamics.** Members of the group can become offended or create difficulties by being too argumentative or obstructive.
- **Motivation.** One or more group members can lose motivation, leaving other members to struggle.

Social loafing

Have you ever done something physically difficult, such as lifting heavy furniture or pushing a bogged car, in a group? Perhaps you've put in a bit less effort than you would have if you'd been doing it by yourself? Perhaps you thought someone else was stronger and could do more of the work? All you had to do was look like you were lifting or pushing. That describes social loafing.

Social loafing is the slackening of effort that can happen when people have the attitude that 'someone else will do it'. This lack of effort is often unconscious. Social loafing is one of the main reasons that some groups do not reach their potential performance.

Encouraging social labouring

If you know that other people who are important to you are depending on you, and if you know they are watching you do something you are good at, you will often perform better than if you'd been doing it alone for yourself. This is the opposite of social loafing, and has been termed 'social labouring' by sociologist Rupert Brown.

There are several ways in which you can encourage social labouring in your media production groups:

- **Make the group important to its members.** A group of friends or people who know each other well can be more likely to work above and beyond the effort level of an individual. This is because the group members care about the others' opinions. They also don't want any bad feeling about loafing lingering after the production is over.
- **Have a group identity.** If the group isn't a friendship group and doesn't have a strong team spirit to start with, then try to find ways to give the group a special identity. One way of achieving this is by setting up a production company.
- **Increase specialisation and give members credit for their skills.** If members believe

that their good work or good ideas will be recognised publicly, they may be more inclined to work harder. Giving them specific roles to perform and then giving them credit for those roles can help increase social labouring.

- **Keep groups reasonably small.** It is harder to be a social loafer when your contribution is indispensable because you are part of a small group.

9.5 ACTIVITIES

1 **Experiment** with different ways of choosing groups, **trying out** different formation techniques to **discover** the best combination before you settle on your final production group. Suggested ways of forming the experimental groups include the following:
   - **Skills-based**. Decide on a small number of the important specialised roles required for production. Divide the class according to those students who would like to specialise in those roles, or those who have the necessary skills. Form groups by randomly selecting one person from each group.
   - **Randomised**. Line up the class in numerical order based on the digits in their house number/street number. Groups of the required number are then formed by dividing up the line of people.

2 **Explain** what the task demands are for a production group by brainstorming a list of everything that has to be done. You can try allocating elements on this list to different group members, but it can be equally useful just to keep the list and tick tasks off as they are completed.

3 **Symbolise** in a flow chart some useful processes that can work to ensure group success, **representing** each process and labelling the flow chart.
Explain each stage in the process.
Some suggested stages include:
   - Swap contact details.
   - Provide a back-up person for each role.
   - Allocate someone who will monitor how everyone is performing.

4 **Synthesise** a production company name and logo as a means of building team identity. **Solve** the **conceptual problem** of developing an appropriate idea and then **combine the elements** into a moving-image media production.

Part B: Producing genre stories

Alamy Stock Photo/Todd Bannor

Figure 9.23 A student film crew at work. Each member of the crew has a specific task.

GENRE STORIES

Genres are built up out of sets of narrative codes and conventions that filmmakers have used to create the types of films that audiences have expected. Films from the early days of Hollywood until about the 1970s tended to stick to just one set of genre conventions. This is known as the classical period of filmmaking. From the 1970s until the present day, many directors have blended genre conventions to create hybrids. Audiences have become more sophisticated in what they expect.

As a result, identifying moving-image storylines as a particular genre can be difficult. The categories are arbitrary. They are shifting over time, and new stories often fall between the neat definitions.

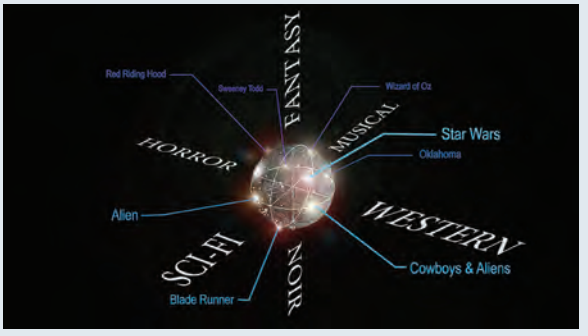

Figure 9.24 Our current 'genre universe' has expanded from what it was during the classical period of Hollywood filmmaking. Hybrids allow the sphere of media possibilities to grow. New platforms and ideas cluster around the genre traditions but also emerge in the gaps between them.

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Genre (with a soft 'g') is French for 'a type, kind or gender'. It is connected to the English words of 'genetics' and 'generate'. Even before this, it stems from the Greek word 'genesis' (*gen* meaning 'to be born' or 'to produce'), so it is also useful to think of film genres as a family tree. Science fiction and horror both have a common literary ancestor in Mary Shellley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818), and Japanese Samurai films are closely related to American Westerns. Each generation interbreeds in new ways to form hybrids, starting new branches and evolving through innovation.

Science fiction

Science fiction (often called sci-fi) is futuristic **speculative fiction** based in part on the knowledge that we have in the present day. It often addresses the question of humanity's purpose in the universe. Science, religion and art pose the same questions as science fiction. Personal stories are used to explore a philosophical big picture, usually on a grand scale, sometimes involving the whole universe.

The Moviestore Collection Ltd/MGM: Space Odyssey

NASA

Figure 9.25 Artwork from *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and an actual NASA 2010 photo showing a spaceship docking. Science fiction is speculative fiction that describes imagined scenarios that may not always remain impossible, unlike horror and fantasy. Alternative histories or extrapolated futures are based on current inventions or theory.

> 'Yeah, but your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they *could*, they didn't stop to think if they *should*.'
>
> **Dr Ian Malcolm (character)**, *Jurassic Park* (1993)

The many forms of the science-fiction genre provide a place to debate the ethics of technology already developed. It has also been the inspiration for many scientific inventions, interacting with history in a way that other genres don't.

H.G. Wells imagined atomic energy as a new kind of bomb in 1914 at the start of the First World War. Physicist Leo Szilárd read the book in 1932, and invented chain reactions as he waited and crossed at a traffic light in 1933. He convinced Albert Einstein to write a letter to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President of the United States, in 1939. They argued it was too dangerous to let Germany invent the bomb first. Two bombs were dropped on Japanese cities in 1945, at the end of the Second World War. This science fiction had created its own conceptual chain reaction of imagination and shaped history.

Features of plot and production

Science fiction tends to have the following features:

- **Scientific principles.** Plausible technology is imagined, such as Mary Shelley animating Frankenstein with electricity. This is similar to Luigi Galvani's experiments on frog's legs.
- **Ethical dilemmas.** Questions are posed about the implications of scientific developments. For example, in the short-story collection *I, Robot* (1950), Isaac Asimov's 'Three Laws of Robotics' are debated – robots mustn't hurt humans, but robots may also be biological and expect rights. The dilemma posed by this are explored in *The Island* (2005) and *Blade Runner* (1982, 2017).

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- **Grand implications.** Science-fiction stories often concern themselves with events that threaten the very future of humanity. Individuals often are responsible for the fate of all other humans, as in *Sunshine* (2007).
- **Visual effects.** *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) by Georges Méliès established special effects. Expensive, realistic spectacle made Hollywood the home of high-end science fiction. Others used quirky plots and more internal space action – for example, *Doctor Who* (1963–) and the radio series *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (originally broadcast in 1978).
- **Rich soundscapes.** Bernard Herrmann developed the electronic **theremin** instrument as a spooky classic sci-fi code in films such as *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951). *Star Trek: The Original Series* (1966–69) had 'spot effects' associated with each device – even doors. *Star Wars* (1977) had laser sounds that were created with a spanner striking powerlines. *2001: A Space Odyssey* used the orchestral piece '*Also sprach Zarathustra*' to portray the awe of space through classical music.
- **Borrowed genre features.** The *Star Wars* films (1977–) have significant fantasy elements allowing spiritual mysticism to be a serious plot element. 'Tech-noir' is a common hybrid.

Common themes

Certain common themes occur repeatedly in science fiction:

- **Fear of 'the other'.** Fed by different versions of America being invaded.
- **Slavery.** Suppression of entire classes reflect the US experience.
- **Fear of technology.** Escaping monsters and replacements for the workforce.
- **Predestination.** Interfering with genes or time travel creates paradoxes regarding free will.
- **Individualism.** Those who deviate from the norm are often punished but ultimately benefit others.
- **Faith.** Belief in human ingenuity, inferior primitive spiritualism or superior techno-transcendent spiritualism.

Origin influences and context

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Figure 9.26 Rockets from 1930s comic books evolved to shape designs from cars to kitchens as the space race between the US and Russia gathered importance into the 1960s.

Table 9.4 Four recognisable science-fiction story types.

SCI-FI TYPE	SCI-FI STORY	GENRE INFLUENCE	BORROWED FEATURES	FILM EXAMPLE
Horror	Natural order disturbed	Horror	• monster escapes or creation turns on creator • sequential victims • fight to the death	*Alien* (1979)
Political	Invasion	Western	• dispute over territory • lifestyle under threat • individual with unique skill • inspired community defence	*Independence Day* (1996, 2016)
Glorification	Fantastic future	Fantasy	• technology blurs with the mystical • problems are solved • noble acts • peace or future hope	*Gravity* (2013)
Dependence	Post-apocalyptic future	Noir (circular narrative) Road movie (duo on a journey)	• societal collapse • resource depletion • individual self interest • erosion of morality	*Minority Report* (2002) *The Book of Eli* (2010)

Warnings against 'playing God' persist along with invasions, mostly from the US's contemporary threats, including the 1950s **McCarthyist** fear of communism, and the current fear of terrorists. Originally, *War of the Worlds* (radio, 1938; film, 1953) featured an alien attack from Mars, but the film remake (2005) shows the enemy hiding 'underground' in waiting, like a terrorist sleeper cell.

Social attitudes to 'nature vs nurture' change the representation of The Force in the *Star Wars* series over time. In 1977 it was 'stretch out with your feelings' to discover the force, but in 1999 potential was measured via a blood test. In the original version of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), planetary annihilation was via atomic self-destruction, but it was environmental damage in the 2008 remake.

Science-fiction stories and characters

Codes and conventions produce four recognisable science-fiction story types, as outlined in Table 9.4.

These story types also have recognisable recurring characters:

- the messianic one
- the anointed one
- the professor
- the freelancer
- the princess
- the automatons
- the community representative.

Alamy Stock Photo/Courtesy Everett Collection/© Warner Bros

Figure 9.27 The *Mad Max* series (1979–) uses a recognisable story type in an Australian context to warn of 'dependence' with road movie elements.

Film noir

Film noir is French for 'black film' and refers to moody US films made after the Second World War. They often feature detectives, private investigators or insurance snoops. They were often filmed at night, or in shadowy interiors.

Features of *noir* films

Films shot in the *noir* style have the following features:

- **Deep focus** to lend an air of realism and to cut down on the need for different scenes.
- **Complex compositions** with several actors in the shot.
- **Complex *mise en scène*** with crowded furniture or claustrophobic buildings to allow for surprises and entrapment.
- ***Noir* motifs** such as lights shining through venetian blinds, swirling cigarette smoke, mirrors, spiral staircases and so on.
- **Low-key lighting** with sharply defined areas of light and shade. Low-key lighting casts threatening shadows and allows surprises to be hidden.
- **Backlighting** that directs shafts of light towards the camera, putting the character or object of interest into silhouette.
- **Complex plots** with lots of intrigue and twists and turns. Often the plot is so complex that narration has to provide explanations.
- **First-person voice-over** that allows the audience to identify with the main character and provides the explanation for complex plots. In classic *film noir*, the voice-over is almost always male.
- **Urban settings depicting dangerous and mean streets** in a highly stylised way. Interior settings are sinister and shadowy, full of slightly scary furniture.

Film noir plots

Film noir movies usually have plots based around murder and crimes of passion. Chance events play a large part in the story. A single chance event leads to snowballing complications. A strange twist of fate brings the male character into the clutches of a beautiful but deadly female character. Together, they often commit a crime. The male ends up dead.

It is very common for *noir* films to have a circular plot structure. They begin at the end of the story – often at the point of defeat or death for the male character. The male voice-over explains how events came to play out in such a way as to end up at this final point. The whole movie is like a flashback. The last scene adds some extra final details to the story that we didn't see at the beginning.

Noir characters

There are two types of characters that are very common in *film noir* movies:

1. **The hard-boiled cynical male.** This character is usually a loner who appears to be the typical tough-guy detective or investigator. He's seen all the crime and corruption that the world has to offer, and he's disillusioned and detached. But that doesn't stop him being a smart-talking wise-guy.
2. **The femme fatale.** The French term 'femme fatale' means deadly woman. She is a beautiful and seductive 'spider woman' who entraps the male and uses him for her own ends. She isn't after love so much as money and power.

Alamy Stock Photo/Granger Historical Picture Archive

Figure 9.28 Gloria Swanson and William Holden in *Sunset Boulevard* (1950). Male characters in *film noir* movies are often cynical and street-wise, but a chance event causes them to fall into the clutches of the deadly femme fatale. The movies are famous for their shafts of light shining through venetian blinds into shadowy sinister interiors. Deceit and entrapment are common themes.

Horror

Horror movies are films whose main aim is to create feelings of dread and terror. To do this, they often tap into deep fears that most people in the audience will have. For the audience, the horror movie is an experience of fear that is bounded by the safety of being able to say, 'It is only a movie'. This allows some critics to call them 'safe nightmares'.

Features of horror movies

Most horror movies tend to have several features in common:

- **Monstrosity.** Horror movies focus on the monstrous, or depict supernatural or psychological monsters.

- **Disruption of the body.** Most horror movies feature some kind of bodily horror. This can be expressed in the victims of the monster as their bodies are disrupted by the 'monster'. Or it can be expressed in the body of the 'monster' in the form of gross bodily features or gross behaviours.
- **Playing upon phobias.** Horror movies exaggerate phobias that many of us have until they become almost unbearably horrible. There is a horror movie for almost every single human phobia, from snakes and spiders to fear of being alone. There is even one for fear of the dentist.
- **Trespass.** A specialty of horror movies is to invade socially accepted boundaries and to break taboos.
- **Violence.** Because horror movies rely on shock and fear, the easiest way to get this is to use extreme violence. Violence disrupts the normality, but violence also restores it.
- **World upside-down.** After the 'monster' attacks, the world becomes a crazy place. The logical basis of normality is turned upside-down.

Horror movie plots

Horror movies focus on disruption to normality – therefore, the normality has to be established very strongly at the beginning of the film. The monstrous or the monster disrupts the normality and then what follows is a battle between the normal or natural and the hideous or supernatural.

There are two kinds of resolutions to horror movies: the secure ending where normality returns, or the insecure ending where there remains a suggestion that the monstrous might return.

Horror movie characters

Three main character types are common in horror movies:

1. **The monster.** This character can invite the audience to be sympathetic or repulsed. However they are represented, the monster is always the main character in the story.
2. **The victims.** Even though the audience does not have to spend much time with the victims, they are important. They aren't important as individuals so much as they are in total numbers.
3. **The final girl.** In many horror movies from the 1950s until the 2010s, the monster was male, but the lone survivor was female. This sole survivor was dubbed 'the final girl'. The final girl appears because the audience is more likely to live their own fear through a female – rather than a terrified male, argues Carol Clover, the originator of the term.

Alamy Stock Photo/RGR Collection

Figure 9.29 Actor Robert Englund is made up as Freddy Krueger for the filming of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984). Monstrosity in the horror movie is often focused on the body. Settings tend to have an exaggerated normality, as suggested by the name 'Elm Street'. Later horror films are often set in suburban locations, but early horror films tended to be set in exotic foreign locations such as Transylvania.

Westerns

A Western is a film set during the frontier period of the American West. They are usually set in the period from the end of the American Civil War (1861–65) until the First World War (1914–18). Most often they are set before the 1890s. Westerns are about the conquest of territory and the imposition of law and order. Battles are mostly between Europeans and Native Americans, or between cattlemen and homesteaders.

Features of Westerns

The *mise en scène* of the Western genre is familiar to audiences around the world, and includes Stetson hats, horses, steam trains, stagecoaches and so on. A number of other features regularly appear:

- **Frontier landscapes.** The frontier was the edge of European settlement in the US. Western landscapes are dry and often harsh.
- **Violence.** The Western starts and finishes with a violent event.
- **Clear oppositions.** There are clear divisions between good and evil, lawlessness and order, civilisation and nature. The strong versus the weak is another division. Often the hero is somehow opposed to society, or at least an outsider.

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Western plots

After studying hundreds of Westerns, foundational genre analyst Will Wright has identified the most common plot structure:

- A stranger comes into town on horseback, often with exceptional skills in marksmanship or fighting. But these skills are only used when justified.
- Villains threaten the townspeople or the homestead settlers. The villains have contempt for the ordinary people but have respect for the stranger.
- The stranger attempts to avoid serious conflict with the villains, but finally a friend is threatened.
- The stranger takes on the villains and defeats them using justified violence. Society applauds the stranger, but their acceptance is rejected and the stranger rides off into the sunset. An alternative ending involves a marriage into the community.

Western characters

There are three main characters in Westerns:

1 **The hero.** Often a stranger to the area, the hero is a superb gunfighter and horserider with excellent physical skills. The hero has a strict moral code because that is what separates them from the villains.
2 **The villain.** Like the hero, the villain has excellent physical skills and is an equal in almost every way – except morally. The villain is motivated by base emotions such as greed or ambition.
3 **The Native Americans.** Early Westerns used Native Americans to create dramatic climaxes. Contemporary Westerns tend to portray Native Americans as virtuous protectors of the environment and as having a noble way of life.
4 **Female characters in Westerns.** Earlier Westerns portrayed two types of female characters: virtuous women (such as ranchers' daughters and schoolmarms) and the not-so-virtuous women (such as saloon girls and barmaids). Contemporary Westerns offer a much broader range of character roles. Examples where females have leading roles include *True Grit* (2010) and *The Missing* (2003).

Alamy Stock Photo/Granger Historical Picture Archive

Figure 9.30 Gary Cooper as Marshall Will Kane in *High Noon* (1952). *High Noon* was made just as the Western was starting to decline as a genre. Like many Westerns, it portrays a good man standing up against a villain while the cowardly townspeople do nothing. Many critics see it as an allegory for the McCarthy anti-communist witch hunts in America in the 1950s.

Gangster movies

Gangster films are associated with the *film noir* genre and the Western. Gangster movies are about crime, aggression and violence in an urban environment. They are similar to *noir* films in that they portray a world that is corrupt and cynical. They are similar to Westerns in that they focus on battles for control, power and territory. However, in a gangster movie, the main character is not someone who is of high moral standing. The main character is very much a 'bad guy'. The common settings for gangster movies are big cities, and the prohibition era in the US. Contemporary gangster movies may also be set in the drug underworlds.

Features of gangster movies

Gangster movies tend to have common features: violence, lawlessness, a cult of the individual, and a focus on success and wealth.

Violence in gangster movies is a key feature. The level of violence is taken above that of most other movie genres. It provides shock value, but it also establishes that the world of the gangster is not the normal world we know. Violence starts the plot and provides the resolution.

Lawlessness is a result of the gangster living in a world with no morals. Greed and power are the only goals. The gangster will do anything to achieve success. Society is placed in chaos as a result.

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Individualism is extreme in the world of the gangster. Gangsters are embodying the American dream of the 'self-made man'. It's just that they are on the wrong side of the law, unlike legitimate businesspeople.

Success and wealth are the sole goals and everything else is subservient to those ambitions. The ends justify any means in the gangster film, but the audience knows it will inevitably end in death.

Gangster movie plots

Violence starts the gangster movie, occurs at all the main complications and climaxes, and violence finishes the movie. The violent death of the lead character usually provides the resolution.

Often the gangster movie follows the bloody career of the lead character, as in *The Godfather* (1972). Brutality increases throughout their career until, by the end of the film, they are totally immoral and overly confident. Their downfall comes as a result.

Characters

The character types that most commonly appear in gangster movies are.

- **'Mr Big'.** The story is told from the point of view of the lead character, who is scheming, ruthless and brutal. There is also often something tragic or sad about these characters.
- **Families.** The gangster genre has its origins in stories of the American Mafia. As a result, there are often family loyalties that are almost tribal. There is a clear chain of command all the way up to Mr Big. Honour comes from upholding the family prestige and territory.
- **The hoodlums.** Surrounding Mr Big, there is a whole pack of burly henchman. None of them has the intelligence of Mr Big.
- **Female characters.** Early films in the genre mostly gave women minor roles as wives and girlfriends. Rarely did they play lead roles as main characters in the gangster movies. However, one of the most enduring female gangster roles is that of Bonnie Parker played by Faye Dunaway in *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967).

Alamy Stock Photo/Pictorial Press Ltd

Figure 9.31 Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty as Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow in the 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde*. Even today, the character of Bonnie remains one of the most powerful and enduring female roles in the gangster genre. In this genre, the lead characters meet violent deaths.

Road movies

In a road movie, all the action takes place during a journey, and the car is almost a character in some sense. The road comes to represent life itself as the characters escape from their previous lives and discover something about themselves. The road journey becomes a rite of passage, a fugitive flight or a quest.

Features of road movies

Common elements in road movies are:

- **Music.** The landscape rolling past as music with significant lyrics plays on the car's sound system is a major part of the road movie experience. Usually the lyrics and music are suggestive of the characters' emotional states.
- **Landscape.** A lot of time is given over to landscape shots. These work in a similar way to the music – they reflect the emotional state of the characters. A common progression is to start in an urban environment and to end up in a desert as an outlaw.

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- **Movement.** Road movies involve a physical movement (in the car) and a spiritual movement (within the characters).
- **Freedom.** The road provides freedom and adventure, away from the social constraints of friends, partners and parents.
- **Violence.** In road movies about fugitives, violence is important at the start and at the end. In rite-of-passage or quest road movies, violence plays a much less significant part.

Road movie plots

Road movies usually progress through stages of dramatic action, and then punctuate these with periods of driving and music. The driving scenes allow the characters and the audience to come to terms with things. Often each episode of dramatic action is like a hurdle or challenge the characters have to overcome.

Endings to road movies fall into one of four categories:

1 The characters have changed so much they can never go back, and often die. *Thelma & Louise* (1991) is of this type.
2 The characters just keep driving into the sunset.
3 The characters return home somehow 'grown up', as seen in rite-of-passage road movies.
4 The characters have a new home waiting for them. *Sideways* (2004) is very similar to this type.

Characters

There are only a small number of main characters in road movies. Minor but influential characters are met on the road, but the main characters must fit into the front seat of a car or ride on a motorbike.

- **A duo.** Most road movies feature two main characters, almost always of the same gender. Road movies are like 'buddy movies'. If the duo characters are of the same gender, there is more chance of them interacting with others along the way. They might form relationships that bring new scripting opportunities.
- **The vehicle and the road.** The car (bus, truck or motorbike) is a character as well. The vehicle is usually of interest in some way. In *Thelma & Louise*, the car is a 1966 Ford Thunderbird convertible. In *Easy Rider* (1969), the motorbikes are Harley-Davidsons. Similarly, the road is often iconic. Route 66 crosses the US from coast to coast, and has had more movies made along it than any other road.
- **The cop.** The characters in a road movie are usually running from something. Often it is a crime. The cop provides a blockage and a reason to keep running. The cop can also provide the resolution as the outlaws come face to face with the law.

Alamy Stock Photo/Ronald Grant Archive

Figure 9.32 In the classic Australian road movie *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994), the bus is almost a character. Iconic landscapes and highways set to driving music separate the action climaxes that occur at each stop along the way.

Romantic comedies

Romantic comedies are comic films about two people finding each other, falling in love and eventually getting together. Falling in love itself does not provide enough of a story, and so there are complications that work to keep them apart until the end of the movie. The comedy comes from the banter between the two, and the comic situations they get into. Often the lead characters start out as antagonists, and the journey they take is from dislike to love.

Features of romantic comedies

Several of the following features appear in romantic comedies:

- **Stars.** Romantic comedies focus on people and personalities, and so the stars who play those people are very important. This is more so than in other genres.
- **Repartee.** This is the witty dialogue that takes place between the characters. It provides most of the comedy. The verbal banter between the 'odd couple' (a mismatched couple) keeps the characters apart till the end. Yet the audience can see they belong together.

- **Physical comedy.** When objects or physical events cause the comedy, it is called physical comedy. Most romantic comedies rely on verbal comedy, but there is often a dash of physical comedy as well.
- **Music.** The soundtrack to romantic comedies helps to progress the plot in the same way as it does with musicals. The music lets the audience into the inner world of the characters.
- **Romance.** These films depict romance as something that transforms people's lives. Romantic love usually ends in marriage, even in modern films.

Romantic comedy plots

The basis of the romantic comedy plot can be summed up as 'person A meets person B, person A loses person B, person A gets person B'. When person A first meets person B, the world is disrupted for both of them. The audience wants them to be together from the start. The scriptwriters have to keep them apart. Complications prevent them from uniting.

At some point, one of the characters makes 'the grand gesture'. This is a declaration of love that changes the direction of the film. Shortly after this, the resolution allows the couple to defy all odds and come together.

Characters

Romantic comedies are built around differences between characters who, despite everything, eventually come together. Masculinity versus femininity is an obvious contrast. However social class or personality can also provide points of difference. Nevertheless, it should be obvious to the audience that the characters should be together. This means they must appear to need each other. One might have some personality trait or inner quality that the other seems to desperately need.

- **The female lead.** Most of the female leads are independent and strong. They aren't particularly vulnerable, because they have to be able to deliver some pretty tough banter.
- **The male lead.** The audience has to like the man, because they have to want him to be with the female lead. Often, he is involved in some worthwhile pursuit that the audience will agree makes him a good marriage prospect.

Alamy Stock Photo/Mim Friday

Figure 9.33 A promotional poster for the movie *La La Land* (2016). This movie sits on the boundary of romantic comedy and musical. There is physical comedy, a mismatched odd couple and plenty of banter. From the musical genre, the movie takes the use of music and fantasy to progress the plot and express feelings. *La La Land* also plays with the traditional idea that the couple ends up together, a more contemporary approach to the classical happy ending.

Documentaries

Documentaries present facts about a subject to construct an argument. They use real events, people or places to present certain realities. Pioneer British documentary maker John Grierson defined documentary as the creative treatment of actuality (or reality).

Features of documentaries

There are five main features of documentaries:

1. **Observation.** The audience watches events unfold and so they become eyewitnesses.
2. **Interview.** Documentaries rely on interviews to progress the argument. The interview can be either allowed to run in full or cut in with other footage. Sometimes the reporter or documentary maker is visible, but can also be unseen or even unheard.
3. **Dramatisation.** All documentaries use drama to keep the audience interested. Many of them just build this into the observations and interviews. Some documentaries include dramatised re-enactments of events as well. These are effective when it would be impossible to directly film observation sequences. Examples of this include situations where crime or corruption needs to be shown, or when the events are in the past.

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4 ***Mise en scène.*** A documentary maker must use things that already exist rather than fully dress the set. However, the documentary maker can still use *mise en scène* (see 'Languages', chapter 15) to carefully compose the shot, and only let the audience see what they want them to see.

5 **Argument.** What the documentary is 'saying', its point of view, is called the exposition or argument. This can be clearly expressed and direct. It can also be hidden by allowing the audience to think they are drawing their own conclusions.

Types of documentary

Documentaries have gradually changed over time. The following types have developed:

- **Fully narrated documentaries.** Sometimes called 'voice of God' documentaries, these have a strong narrative voice that explains the exposition. Usually this voice-over is of an unseen person – hence 'voice of God'.
- **Cinéma vérité.** This term is French for 'truthful cinema', but it is not necessarily any more truthful than any other style. It relies almost totally on observation and interview. There is no narration.
- **Self-reflexive.** Sometimes the documentary maker themselves is a star. Michael Moore is an example. When the documentary maker appears in their own documentary as someone who is actively participating, the style is called self-reflexive.
- **Mixed.** These documentaries use all of the elements, including narration. Usually the narrator speaks from within the scene, at least for some of the time. This is a more modern approach to documentary making.

9.6 ACTIVITIES

1 Refer to the genre universe diagram in Figure 9.24 (page 214) and select three media texts (a game scenario is also suitable) to view to the end of the first act. The conclusion of these productions can be explored in a later activity. Respond to the activities in the following table.

CONSTRUCT	ANALYSE	SYMBOLISE
Construct a **systematic** list (see sample in Table 9.5) of **technical and symbolic codes** used to represent characters, locations, institutions, objects etc. **Construct** short phrases with verbs (see 'noted features' in Table 9.5 below) of **specific conventions** in the list that deal with relationships with others, objects, cultures, environment and self.	**Analyse** each **convention**, **technical** and **symbolic code** you have listed, **considering** the **constituent parts** of the list individually, and **making judgements** on genre attribution according to known features. **Analyse** the chronological notes by **dissecting** into groupings of genre influence. **Analyse** the relative contribution to the **moving-image media product** story from other **contexts** by using a quantitative (numerical) percentage based on the number of noted features.	**Symbolise** the percentage influence on your selected texts by **representing** it visually using a simple three- or four-pole diagram. **Symbolise** influences clearly by **identifying** appropriate adjacent genre poles to match your findings. **Symbolise** using **images** of the genre universe, a quantitative measure on your diagram of the 'gravity' each genre applies to the story. **Symbolise** by sketching where the production sits to **signify** genre contribution in a three-dimensional **representation**.

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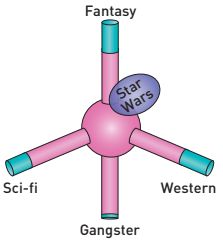
Table 9.5 Sample allocation of a moving-image media text in the genre universe using technical and symbolic codes.

MOVING-IMAGE MEDIA TEXT	NOTED FEATURES	GENRE SOURCE	%	PLACE IN GENRE UNIVERSE
e.g. No. 1 *Star Wars Episode IV – A New Hope* (1977)	• starts in space • laser weapons • androids • hologram • escape in a spaceship	Sci-fi	25	 **Figure 9.34** Example of a four-pole diagram. **Experiment** with other forms of graphs to **discover** a **variety of techniques** to convey the complex web of influence.
	• princess is captured • hermit is revealed • mysterious message from beyond • mind-control tricks • array of strange creatures • enchanted weapon • antagonist no longer human	Fantasy	35	
	• gunfight invades territory • bandits patrol the desert • frontier farm attacked • gunslinger for hire • bar-room brawl	Western	25	
	• call to tradition/father's occupation • family dynasty • gang plots against weaker victims	Western or gangster	7.5 7.5	

2 Refer to your list (constructed for the previous activity) on placement in the genre universe. Introduce a science-fiction element if none of your examples have any. It can be applied to any genre. You need knowledge of the first act of the film (knowledge of the rest of the film doesn't matter). The *Star Wars* example indicates the resolution could be expected to portray the 'town' saved by 'a community', inspired by someone with 'special skills', using futuristic weapons (like a Western) yet with a mystical twist (like fantasy). Use your genre knowledge to **design** possible resolutions and **explore** story consequences based on the **evidence** observed for your 'noted features' and 'genre source' lists.
Respond to the activities in the following table.

SYNTHESISE	ANALYSE	CONSTRUCT
Synthesise a resolution for each of the three movies (or the game) to **solve** the **creative problem** of satisfying audience expectations of the genre balance, based on the first act. **Synthesise** a **combination of moving-image elements** in acceptable conclusions from the conventions of one of the contributing genres. **Synthesise conceptual** connections of cause and effect between the first act using **evidence** from your 'noted features' list and consequences in the climax/resolution.	**Analyse** by **considering** the list of character types from science fiction in relation to *any* **moving-image media product** you know. **Analyse** the level of science-fiction alignment in this text by **making a judgement** against the recurring character types listed in the science-fiction section to assign characters to their best match.	**Construct** three **possible resolutions** for each of the three texts you are working with, **systematically** substituting a different character type from the science-fiction list as the antagonist each time. **Construct** a short **artist's statement** as a proposal to a producer, **reflecting** on particular audiences likely to react against the representation of the antagonist, and **recommending** the most widely popular **plan**. **Construct** a **comparison** for the producer with accepted character **conventions** to indicate whether stereotypes are being challenged or reinforced if your plan was **put into effect**.

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3 **Experiment** with possible story outcomes around a recent invention and how it may **interact** with society, **creating ideas** for the best possible use of this technology and the worst possible use.
Apply literacy skills in a letter to the inventor, **communicating** the potential social consequences (good or bad), and **distinguishing** between the current viewpoint and potential future attitudes.
Appraise your own letter as a basis for a science-fiction text, **drawing a conclusion** as to the worth of your prophecy to an audience.
Synthesise a two- to four-minute genre sequence within a mainstream genre or hybrid genre of your choice. Include the **codes and conventions** of your chosen genre. **Solve technical** and **creative problems** to combine genre elements into a moving-image media product.

Part C: Australian stories on film

AUSTRALIAN FILM INDUSTRY

In a history spanning more than 100 years, Australian filmmaking has had good times and bad. Always there has been a sense that it is a fragile industry.

Film historians Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka define Australian cinema as being made up of three parts:

1 a national industry or business
2 a cultural experience that contributes to a sense of national identity
3 an exportable set of images and ideas about Australia that are projected overseas.

Historical context

Pre-1920s boom

Australia was one of the biggest filmmaking countries in the world in the years before 1914. What's more, we went to the movies more often than any other nation in the world. Local movie production hit an all-time high in 1911 when 51 movies were released. This number has never been equalled in the years since.

Before the First World War (1914–18) there was a global market for films, and travelling exhibitions showed films from all over the world. A German exhibition showed the first films in Australia in 1896, but soon Australian films would also travel the world.

Silent films have no language barriers. At first, presenters read a commentary in the language of the host country. After about 1906, filmmakers began to explain the plot using inter-titles: text on the screen in between scenes. These inter-titles were easily substituted in different languages.

During this era, no English-speaking film industry outside of Hollywood was as ready to go global as the Australian film industry. Unfortunately, Australian companies failed to seize the opportunity. The first Hollywood studio distribution office opened in Australia in 1915. By 1918, all the Hollywood majors had offices in Australia. The cheaper US competition killed off the Australian industry before it could properly develop.

The Australian film industry does have the honour of having produced what is regarded to be the world's first feature film, *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (1906). The criteria for a feature film are that it be a work of fiction and a continuous story, and that it be longer than 60 minutes. Some historians argue that the world's first feature-length film was the Salvation Army's *Soldiers of the Cross* (1900). Made in Melbourne at the 'Limelight Department' studios of the Salvation Army, the presentation was a collection of slides and filmed sequences that lasted more than two hours. Its depiction of the life of Christ included such explicit violence that several women in the first audience were said to have fainted.

Probably the best-known Australian film of the era is a working-class romantic comedy called *The Sentimental Bloke* (1919). Based on a popular poem by C. J. Dennis, it retells the story of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* from the point of view of an Australian larrikin. The film uses stereotyped Australian characters in a similar way to the movie comedies of *Dad and Dave Come to Town* (1938), *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (1972) and *Crocodile Dundee* (1986).

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From the collection of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (a division of the Australian Film Commission).

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Figure 9.35 A shot from *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (1906) before (left) and after (right) restoration. Most film historians regard *The Story of the Kelly Gang* as the world's first feature film. Only fragments survive, but restoration work carried out in 2006 has reassembled about 25 per cent of the film.

1920s–1940s: the 'grim years'

The Golden Age of Hollywood were grim years for Australian filmmakers. For 20 years after the arrival of the Hollywood distributors in Australia, local film production sank to rock-bottom levels. The Great Depression (1929–33) made the challenge of finding financial backing even more difficult.

Australian identity was an important theme during this period, and historical events provided a way of exploring this. *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1927) spotlighted Australia's convict history.

Family relationships were another notable feature of Australian films of the period. More than half of all Australian films made in the 1920s and 1930s deal with family issues. The hillbilly Rudd family of the *Dad and Dave* series of comedy films is typical of Australian films of the time. Beginning with *On Our Selection* (1932), Dad is a strong country father figure while his son Dave is a stereotypical comic simpleton. Mum is a fairly weak character, always agreeing with Dad, but one of the daughters is a strong female figure. The figure of the strong bushwoman is common in Australian films of the period. This follows a tradition in bush literature and seems to be a uniquely Australian theme.

Film production was boosted by the arrival of the Second World War (1939–45), when most production efforts turned to newsreels and government documentaries. In 1944, Charles Chauvel produced the feature film *The Rats of Tobruk*, starring the famous Australian actors Chips Rafferty and Peter Finch.

Alamy Stock Photo/Mary Evans/Ronald Grant Archive/Cinesound Productions

Figure 9.36 From *Dad and Dave Come to Town* (1938). Lovable country bumpkins (hillbillies), the Rudd family tapped into recurring themes in Australian comedy that would also provide the humour in *The Castle* (1997) and *Crocodile Dundee*.

The Overlanders (1946), a UK and Australian co-production, told of a great wartime cattle drive from the Northern Territory, under threat of Japanese invasion, 2400 kilometres to Queensland. Chips Rafferty played an Australian bushman not unlike Crocodile Dundee. There is also a bushwoman who is an expert horserider. The film plays up the importance of mateship and community spirit in overcoming the odds. It also shows an Australia where agriculture was still the most important industry.

1950s–1960s: 'barely there'

The arrival of television spelt the end of regular movie-going around the world. Where Australians had gone to the cinema once or even twice a

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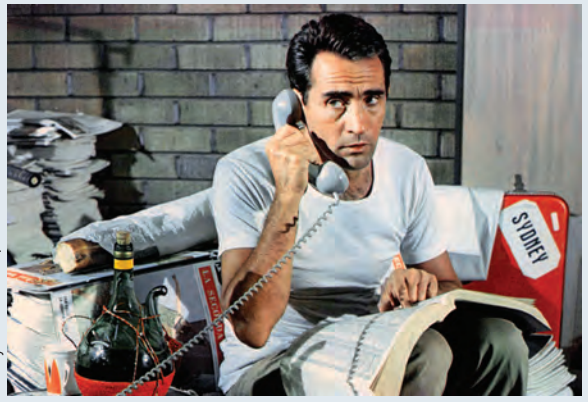
week, in the 1950s and 1960s cinema attendance plummeted, almost killing off the local film industry.

US and UK control of Australian movie distribution and exhibition meant that there was little support for local filmmaking. Only a handful of films were made during the entire 20-year period, and from 1959 until 1966 no films were made at all.

The pioneering bush spirit and mateship remained strong themes in those films that were produced in the 1950s, such as *A Town Like Alice* (1956), *Smiley* (1956) and *The Sundowners* (made in 1959 but released in 1960). The locally made films were often international co-productions in which Australia was merely a location – a mildly interesting backdrop. An example is *On the Beach* (1959), set in Melbourne after a worldwide nuclear holocaust.

Despite these difficulties, some films were innovative. Charles Chauvel produced *Jedda* in 1955. The seed for the film was sown when an American reporter told him overseas audiences wanted to see something uniquely Australian and suggested Aboriginal culture as a subject. *Jedda* was the first film to explore the theme of Indigenous culture in any depth. It was also the first Australian film to be shown at the Cannes Film Festival in France.

They're a Weird Mob (1966) was popular because it allowed Australians to see themselves on the big screen for the first time in many years. According to Stuart Cunningham, Professor of Media and Communications at QUT, the film is important for three reasons: it gave a focus for the movement for government funding of the film industry; it was the first 'multicultural' Australian film; and it kick-started the 'Ocker' movies of the 1970s film revival.



Alamy Stock Photo/A.F. Archive

Figure 9.37 *They're a Weird Mob* tells the story of an Italian immigrant to Sydney who gets into trouble trying to understand Australian slang. By the end of the film he is speaking the lingo like a local.

1970s–1980s: revival

The Golden Age of Australian film arrived in the 1970s and 1980s. Calls for a 'genuinely Australian' film culture and a questioning of UK and US dominance led to unprecedented government support for a national film industry. Local television programs such as *Skippy* (1967–70), *Bellbird* (1972 and 1977) and *Homicide* (1964–77) proved that Australian audiences wanted to see Australians on screen. In the early 1970s, the Whitlam government set up the Australian Film Commission and the Australian Film and Television School (now AFTRS). Most states established their own film commissions as well.

To qualify for funding, films had to contribute to the national identity. As a result, the films of the 1970s tend to be of a certain type and also:

- Tend to be art films rather than Hollywood-style movies because they needed to find a special niche in a competitive market.
- Often have a period setting, or focus on historical events, because they had to prove they contributed to Australia's national identity.
- Have good production values and a 'beautiful image' because many of the film crew also worked in advertising.
- Follow the style of television naturalism, with its soap opera–style close-ups and reverse shots, because many crew also worked in television drama.

Finding the right national identity proved to be a challenge. Australian filmmakers 'tried on' a sequence of different national identities – a number of them incompatible with one another. These included:

- **Ocker films.** The 'Ocker' films of the early 1970s featured loud, rude, beer-swilling males. They took advantage of the relaxation of censorship in the 1970s. The characters were young suburban working-class men and the films relied on stereotypes about typical Australian language and vulgar behaviour. An example is *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* about an Aussie 'yobbo' in London.
- **Art films (1970s).** Art-house films targeted a segment of the market that Hollywood could not capture. The films were often period dramas drawing on historical themes and set in the bush. Examples of films in this style are *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) and *Sunday Too Far Away* (1975).

Alamy Stock Photo/A.F. Archive

Figure 9.38 *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* follows an oafish young Aussie man and his exploits in London. Ocker films of the 1970s took advantage of a relaxation of the censorship laws.

- **Art films (1980s).** In the 1980s, a tax law called 10BA allowed investors to write off film production against their tax at special rates between 133 and 150 per cent! Investors flocked to filmmaking and the budgets for films doubled in two years.

Profit and loss calculations dominated filmmaking. Overseas sales became essential, and films had to be tailored to the tastes of overseas audiences, sometimes at the risk of compromising their 'Australian-ness'. For instance, the US actress Meryl Streep was cast as Lindy Chamberlain in *Evil Angels* (1988).

The 'bush myth' appealed to overseas audiences and so continued to dominate as a theme. Films from this era include *Gallipoli* (1981), *The Man from Snowy River* (1982), and *Crocodile Dundee 1* and *2* (1986, 1988).

1990s–2010: mature phase

The 1990s marked the disappearance of the 'bloke' from the movies. In 1988, *Crocodile Dundee 2* topped the Australian cinema box office. In 1992, the frontrunner was *Strictly Ballroom*, and by 1994 it was *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. This change roughly corresponded to the end of the Bob Hawke era (Hawke being the last of the 'blokey' prime ministers).

Australian society had become more complex and multicultural over these years. Films moved away from the traditional male-dominated Anglo-Celtic outback legends. By 1995, close to 40 per cent of the filmmaking workforce was female.

Globalisation also had a considerable impact on the Australian film industry. Many Hollywood directors produced their films in Australia because the lower exchange rate meant lower costs. Australian expertise was also respected. A number of prestigious films were produced here, including *Star Wars Episodes II* and *III* (2002, 2005), *The Matrix* (1999), *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003) and *Superman Returns* (2006).

The drain of Australian talent to Hollywood became a two-way flow. Australians came back from overseas to produce films at home. George Miller filmed *Babe* (1995), *Babe: Pig in the City* (1998) and the photo-realistic animated musical *Happy Feet* (2006) in Australia. Baz Luhrmann came back to film *Moulin Rouge!* (2001), a movie that transformed the musical worldwide. The big studios became more willing to source films from Australia.

In the 1990s and 2000s, the main characteristic of Australian film was diversity. Films were much more personal and 'quirky'. This can be seen in *Muriel's Wedding* (1994) and *Shine* (1996). Australian life was explored from many more viewpoints than had ever been attempted before. The complex interweaving of lives in *Lantana* (2001) is an example of this.

For most of this 20-year period, Australia produced films at a steady rate that ensured at least the survival of an Australian film culture. In the 1990s, an average of 27 films were produced each year. In the 2000s, the number fell slightly to an average of 22.

> 'One of my criticisms is that we are ignoring our modern Australian literature at our peril because that's where the good stories are. In the '70s and '80s practically everything was adapted from a book – *Breaker Morant*, *Caddie* or *Picnic at Hanging Rock* or *Careful He Might Hear You*, or *My Brilliant Career*. All adapted from great novels.'
>
> **Tony Buckley**, editor, producer and author

2010 onwards – national identity in an era of globalisation

In the 2010s, debate about Australian films focused on whether it was important to continue a national cinema. Some argued that a transnational cinema would provide employment for Australian film crews. Transnational production would involve international movies being filmed in Australia, with Australian input.

Film producers also argued that Australian films were struggling to connect with audiences. Making films that appealed to a broader segment of society became the aim of many of the film-funding organisations in Australia. A somewhat broader range of topics came about as a result of this. Sometimes assembling a strong cast and crew helped, as with *Healing* (2014) starring Hugo Weaving and filmed by Andrew Lesnie (who filmed the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy). One film that drew a large audience was the teen war film *Tomorrow, When the War Began* (2010) – based on the novel by John Marsden. Another with broad appeal was *Red Dog* (2011), which set a record as the eighth-highest grossing Australian film ever made. The Vietnam-era musical comedy *The Sapphires* (2012), about four young Indigenous women who form a Motown-style band, also drew large audiences. However, at between 3 and 4 per cent of the total takings, box office share for Australian films remains stuck at levels well below that of the 1990s. No Australian film has made it to number one at the box office since 1992.

Increasing globalisation of distribution and production companies has provided Australian films with a stronger investment base. Potential overseas markets make Australian films more economically viable. Diversity and difference has become much more acceptable to audiences worldwide. Indeed, money can be made from being different. One film that gained a positive overseas reception was Tim Winton's *The Turning* (2013). The film managed to depict a local identity within a series of stories of universal appeal.

Appealing to global audiences runs the risk of ignoring the needs of the home audiences. Stories that are uniquely understood in Australia do not necessarily travel well. The difficulty for Australian filmmakers lies in finding a balance. Globalisation also forced Hollywood to change. The percentage of revenue earned from Hollywood's local US market declined to less than half its world revenues. Hollywood had to be more tuned in to what other nations wanted to watch.

Alamy Stock Photo/A.F. Archive

Getty Images/AFP/Robyn Beck

Figure 9.39 (Left) The Australian poster for *The Sapphires* (2012), a movie about four young Indigenous women who form a band in the Motown tradition and end up touring Vietnam to entertain US and Australian troops. (Right) The 2013 US DVD cover for the same movie downplayed the Indigenous girls and put the focus on their white manager (played by Irish actor Chris O'Dowd). The original Sapphires wrote to US anti-racism advocates the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People asking for their support in getting the cover changed.

Australian identity

Australians have spent more than a century debating national identity. Australian language analyst John Douglas Pringle called the search for identity 'that aching tooth'. Historian Donald Horne, on the other hand, argued that there never has been and never will be a unique and definable Australian identity.

In a 2003 reprint of his 1958 book, *The Australian Legend*, Russell Ward wrote that national character is a people's idea of itself. While it is often romantic and out of touch with reality, it does influence how people behave. Ward believed Australians see themselves as:

- practical, inventive and good at improvising
- rough-and-ready in manners
- quick to criticise authority or show-offs
- willing to 'have a go'
- believing 'near enough is good enough' for most tasks
- swearing, gambling and drinking often
- capable of hard work if required, but don't normally see the need
- preferring leisure over hard work (despite statistical evidence of heavy work habits)
- not keen on intellectual ideas and culture
- believing 'Jack is as good as his master' (meaning everyone is treated the same, regardless of status)
- believing in a 'fair go'
- sticking by their mates through thick and thin.

Even in 1958, many disagreed with Ward's ideas of the typical Australian. They pointed to the fact that he appeared to have ignored women and girls entirely and had focused too much on the time-honoured working-class man – the stereotypical bushman. Today there are many other competing ideas of national identity.

Sport is influential in Australia's national identity – from Don Bradman and Phar Lap to the 2000 Sydney Olympics and the World Cup. After dwindling in the 1970s, the Anzac legend was revived in the 21st century as important to modern Australians. Indigenous culture has a place in national identity after having been ignored for most of the past 200 years. Multicultural Australia has replaced the older idea of Anglo–Celtic Australia. The idea of a 'fair go' for all is still seen as important.

The beach is an icon of modern identity today in the same way that the bush was in the 19th century. The surf lifesaver has replaced the bushman as one of our most important role models. The suburbs, too, are being recognised as uniquely and positively Australian. Increasing interest in environmental issues has changed the character of the bush myth, but the love of nature has remained.

There is no more agreement about the Australian identity now than there was when Russell Ward wrote in the 1950s of the typical Australian. But one element is common to almost all interpretations – the importance of landscape. Even though most Australians live in cities, they still think of Australia as a landscape.

Australian filmmakers have explored a number of themes and discourses over the past hundred years of filmmaking in this country. Some of these themes have featured strongly in certain periods in history. For instance, Australian identity films often crop up during times of national crisis and change.

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Figure 9.40 The beach has replaced the bush as an icon of Australian identity.

> 'Australia is only physically an island ... its history is enclosed within a larger western history. The examination of our narratives is not an argument for their uniqueness, but rather for a kind of Australian accent which is audible and distinctive when placed in relation to that of other English speakers.'
>
> **Graeme Turner**, Professor of Cultural Studies, University of Queensland

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Other themes do not seem ever to go away and have been revisited again and again throughout the period.

Each filmmaker has dealt with the theme in a slightly different way – and audience members have had different understandings of the theme in different time periods and locations. Watching a 1970s film at the time it was made is not the same as watching it now.

Sometimes Australian filmmakers have had an eye for overseas markets and used stereotypes they think would appeal to international audiences. Paul Hogan did that with *Crocodile Dundee* (1986). At other times, a film may be directed to a local Australian audience, perhaps attempting to change opinion or engage in a debate. *Jindabyne* (2006) engages in a localised Australian debate.

Surprisingly, the most revisited themes of the Australian cinema are not the same as those in Australian television. Also, the themes do not necessarily represent the same concerns that Australian people have in their daily lives. However, they do represent our imaginations. They are like conversations – with different points of view expressed as the discourse progresses.

Alamy Stock Photo/A.F. Archive

Figure 9.41 Kate Winslet in *The Dressmaker* (2015). Common themes in Australian films include the landscape, the larrikin and victory in defeat.

Common themes or discourses

Mateship

Mateship depicts a code of equality, solidarity and friendship – usually among males. It isn't unique to Australia, but it probably became important in early colonial times because the harsh environment meant sticking together was essential for survival.

The idea of mateship has become significant in the Australian cinema, where male-to-male relationships often seem as important as male-to-female ones. Two forms of mateship are common in the cinema:

- **Inclusive mateship.** This type of mateship is shown in *Gallipoli* (1981) and *Kokoda* (2006), and is seen in a positive light as a response to overwhelming hardship, often during war. It is the mateship that allows survival in hostile environments, as in *The Overlanders* (1946). In these films, a strong woman can sometimes be 'one of the boys'. This kind of mateship can also be multicultural, as in *Footy Legends* (2006).
- **Exclusive mateship.** This type of mateship is usually demonstrated when a group bands together to exclude anyone different. In films produced between 1970 and 1990, this form of mateship was usually directed against women – as in *Shame* (1988), a movie said to be based on a series of real-life assaults.

Alamy Stock Photo/United Archives GmbH

Figure 9.42 Mateship, as depicted in Peter Weir's film *Gallipoli* (1981), has been a recurring discourse in Australian film since its earliest days. Films have shown positive and negative representations in a debate that shows no sign of losing its strength.

The Aussie larrikin

The tradition of the larrikin is strong in Australian cinema. A larrikin is someone who mocks authority in a playful and comic way. A larrikin doesn't go along with the usual polite norms of society and loves to 'upset the applecart'. The best-known film larrikin is Crocodile Dundee. *Kenny* (2006) is another example.

The Aussie battler

The tradition of the battler in Australian literature and film extends back to Henry Lawson. The Aussie battler is an underdog who struggles for survival with great determination against enormous odds.

Early 20th-century films showed battlers overcoming environmental or economic odds. Films of the 1970s and 1980s often showed the battler pitted against society and conformity. It is not unusual for the battler to be a woman struggling against social pressures, as in *My Brilliant Career* (1979) and *Muriel's Wedding* (1994). The films *Tom White* (2004) and *Three Dollars* (2005) feature middle-class battlers in the 2000s who struggle with job retrenchments and mortgage repayments. The movie *1500 Steps* (2014) depicts a battler's triumph.

Victory in defeat

Australian films tend to place the protagonist as the 'victim' of events rather than as the shaper of them, which is in contrast to US films where the protagonist usually drives events and 'makes things happen'. This can possibly be traced back to Australia's roots as a penal colony and to the Australian experience of defeat at Gallipoli. Similarly, the inhospitable Australian environment often makes us the victim of events beyond our control, such as floods and droughts. *Gallipoli* and the Boer War movie *Breaker Morant* (1980) are examples of films where defeat is in some way recast as victory.

Getty Images/Universal Images Group/Photo 12

Australian War Memorial (127971)

Figure 9.43 The most iconic American and Australian photographic images from the Second World War – (left) Joe Rosenthal's *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima* and (right) Damien Parer's shot of a wounded soldier on the Kokoda Trail. Both images are the most famous of the war for each country. Some historians say that rather than focusing on the joy of victory, highly symbolic Australian images of war have focused on sacrifice. This can also be seen in the Australian images showing Simpson and his donkey at Gallipoli in the First World War and 'Weary' Dunlop on the Burma Railway in the Second World War.

Outback landscapes

Most Australian films have been about the landscape in some way, says writer and film-maker Ross Gibson. Landscape has almost become a character in our films and is often shown to have shaped the natures of the human characters.

Part of the reason for this, Gibson suggests, is that non-Indigenous Australia is a young country that has few myths of belonging. The culture and most of its people are relatively recent transplants who have had to come to terms with their new environment. For modern Australians, the outback has become a recognisable national symbol – filmed to look awe-inspiring and grand, or inhospitable and sometimes eerie or haunted.

Another explanation for the outback motif is that international audiences expect it when they see an Australian film. For them, it has become the one symbol that has a unique Australian identity.

While there are many different portrayals of the Australian landscape, two landscape discourses are common:

- **The bush as paradise.** Many films celebrate the bush as a place where the natural world allows people to reach their full potential. In the bush, there is a purity and honesty not found in the city. People can build proper relationships with nature and with one another. This can be seen in *The Man from Snowy River* (1982) and *Crocodile Dundee* (1986).
- **The bush as unknowable and hostile.** The overwhelming sense of emptiness in the outback can often inspire fear. Films often portray the Australian landscape as an awesome opponent or as the source of some mysterious terror. These

movies show how the outback twists and disturbs people in some way. Examples include *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), *Japanese Story* (2003) and *Wolf Creek* (R-rated, 2005). In each case there is a sense of something overpowering or supernatural in the bush.

In 1992, the Mabo decision on native title established that Australia was not an 'empty land' at the time of European settlement but was in the possession of its Indigenous people. This changed the portrayal of landscape in Australian cinema, especially in the 2000s. There is now an increasing recognition in modern Australian cinema of the Indigenous presence in the landscape.

Alamy Stock Photo/United Archives GmbH

Figure 9.44 Peter Weir's eerie film *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) is part of a tradition of Australian films using the emptiness of the outback to create a sense of fear.

Country towns

Small country towns have come to represent all that is bad in Australian culture (and all that city people can pretend they are above): racism, sexism, violence, homophobia and aggressive male dominance. Examples extend from *The Cars That Ate Paris* (1974) to *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994) and *The Dressmaker* (2015). This trend in the cinema is the opposite of that in television soap operas, where small towns are generally portrayed in a positive light, reflecting a yearning for traditional close-knit communities.

Suburbia

Australian film has demonstrated mixed attitudes to suburbia. It can be seen as a supportive and very personal place that is somehow essential to Australian life, as in *The Castle* (1997). It can be a threatening and dysfunctional place of unemployment and petty crime, as in *The Boys* (1998) or even *Idiot Box* (1996). It can be a place of cultural tension, as in *Down Under* (2016), profiling the Cronulla riots. Suburbia can also be seen as an appallingly dull and conformist place that has to be escaped from, as in *Muriel's Wedding* (1994). In this manner, suburbia is often a source of humour.

Multiculturalism

Immigrants have come to Australia from all over the world. Films have explored the migrant experience in various ways in different eras. The first Australian film to deal with non-Anglo–Celtic immigration was *They're a Weird Mob* (1966). The film took an assimilationist approach; it showed how an Italian migrant to Sydney fitted in, learnt Aussie ways and became an 'ocker'. *Silver City* (1984) told of the bigotry that often confronted post-war migrants. Since the 1990s, a number of films have presented a multicultural rather than assimilationist view. Examples include *Head On* (R-rated, 1998), *The Wog Boy* (2000) and *Looking for Alibrandi* (2000). Questions of Australian identity still arise in these films, however, as in the experience of the Vietnamese characters in *Footy Legends*.

Indigenous culture

For the first 50 years of Australian cinema Indigenous Australians were notable by their absence. Charles Chauvel's *Jedda* (1955) was the first

Alamy Stock Photo/Everett Collection

Figure 9.45 Charles Chauvel's *Jedda* (1955) was one of the first films to acknowledge Indigenous people and place them in starring roles. Today it is seen to engage in a discourse of assimilation. It suggests Indigenous people should be absorbed by European culture.

film to give Indigenous people starring roles. Jedda was an Indigenous girl raised by a white family. At the time, the government took an assimilationist approach to Indigenous people – believing their culture should and would be absorbed by European culture.

The 1970s revival of Australian film and the political upheavals of the time led to a renewed interest in Indigenous Australia. Indigenous activist and academic Marcia Langton says films of this era tend to portray Indigenous Australians as romantic figures, often with special mystical powers. Examples include *The Last Wave* (1977) and *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978).

Between the 1970s and the present, several factors changed the film discourses around Indigenous Australians:

1 Multiculturalism as government policy rejected the assimilationist approaches of the past.
2 Indigenous filmmakers such as Rachel Perkins, who directed *One Night the Moon* (2001), Tracey Moffatt (*Bedevil*, 1993) and Ivan Sen, director of *Beneath Clouds* (2002), produced feature films.
3 The 1992 Mabo decision overturned the founding myth of *terra nullius* ('empty land'). This changed filmmakers' relationship to Indigenous characters in their films. It also changed the cinema's attitude to landscape.
4 There was a growing international interest in collecting Indigenous art.
5 Indigenous actors, such as Jessica Mauboy, Deborah Mailman, Ernie Dingo and David Gulpilil, became well known.
6 The 1997 report into the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families was released. The Stolen Generations is the subject of the film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002).

Dead Heart (1996) was one of the first new films to address the social crisis in Indigenous communities. *Samson and Delilah* (2009) is another. During the 2000s there has been a greater emphasis on Indigenous people telling their own stories. Films such as *Ten Canoes* (2006) have a positive story of Indigenous Australian culture to tell, drawing on Indigenous oral storytelling traditions. *Kanyini* (2006) attempts to show from their own point of view why Indigenous people are struggling. Other films such as *Jindabyne* (2006) and *Sweet Country* (2017) have used dramatic narrative to engage in the debate about the Indigenous experience and reconciliation from the perspective of non-Indigenous society.

Alamy Stock Photo/ United Archives GmbH

Figure 9.46 James Gulpilil in *Ten Canoes*. Set in the Dreamtime, Rolf de Heer's film is the first full-length feature film spoken entirely in an Indigenous language.

Uncommon themes or discourses

Some themes or discourses that are common in the cinemas of other nations are notable by their absence in Australian film.

Grand romantic love

Unlike the French or American cinema, there are few great romantic love stories in Australian cinema. This is not because Australian films reject love stories, but because love seems to be rarely explored in any depth. As subplots in movies, love and passion are often shown to be doomed or beset with problems. One Australian love story is *A Town Like Alice* (1956), which tells of a couple kept apart by the Second World War. Another is *Paperback Hero* (1999).

Social class

Australian films do not often address social class or economic inequality. Rich and poor rarely come together in one film, and any form of serious social class conflict within the film is even rarer. Brief encounters with class differences are usually smoothed over, with people found to 'all be the same underneath'. This occurs in *The Castle* (1997), when Darryl and the Queen's Counsel lawyer find a bond in shared fatherhood.

Where class does appear as an issue, it tends to be in films about work – showing the divisions between the boss and the worker, as happens in *Spotswood* (1991).

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Politics

Australian films have tended to steer clear of political stories. American director Oliver Stone, for example, often makes movies with political stories as the basis of the narrative. Australian directors have usually shied away from such topics.

9.7 ACTIVITIES

1 Present to the class a review of your favourite decade of Australian filmmaking.
Explain aspects such as the mood of the decade, and key social and political events of the time. You should **illustrate** your presentation with several clips from films of the era, and **clarify meaning** with a brief overview of each of your chosen films.

2 **Construct** a collage of film clips or still images from Australian films to explore points of view around one of the common discourses of the Australian cinema. Follow the steps to complete the collage:
- Select a theme or discourse (such as 'mateship' or 'landscape').
- Collect clips or stills from films that have contributed to the discourse. You could choose films that have taken similar or opposing points of view, or ones that show some sort of progression over time.

Explain the contribution of each of the films to the theme or discourse, detailing what meanings you can find in each clip.
Appraise the relevance of the theme to everyday life in Australia, **drawing conclusions** about the **significance** of the theme or discourse as an enduring concern.

3 Select an Australian film that you are very familiar with. Find another movie underpinned by this discourse and **contrast** the differing meanings it creates. For instance, contrast the discourses about Australian identity, culture and mateship in the film *Footy Legends* (2006) with the underpinning discourse in a film such as *Australian Rules* (2002).
Respond to the areas of activity in the following table.

EXPLAIN	ANALYSE	APPRAISE
Examine the key Australian themes or discourses that form the basis of each movie, **identifying** the meanings within the discourse.	**Analyse** particular scenes in the two movies, **examining** the **constituent parts** that create the meanings in each.	**Appraise** the **significance** of each film and its treatment of the theme, **drawing conclusions** about the **status** of each of them in comparison to its counterpart movie.

Analyse the presentation of a discourse in Australian movies with the treatment such a discourse would be likely to receive in a Hollywood movie. **Examine** each movie, **evaluating** its **strengths** and **weaknesses** according to the **criterion** of its effectiveness in dealing with the theme.

4 Has the Australian film industry planted a stereotypical view of Australia in the minds of overseas audiences? Discuss in pairs.
Explain your point of view, referring to particular films. Provide **additional information** about some films that have presented opposing views. **Interpret** how either set of films might be perceived overseas.

5 Independent filmmaker and freelance writer Matthew Clayfield says, 'Australian feature films are so preoccupied with what they believe – incorrectly, in my opinion – to be the obligation of Australian cinema that they ultimately fail to speak to anyone at all. They say "this is Australia and these are Australians", when really it's not and they're anything but. They create broad cultural caricatures that may look and sound Australian but have nothing important to say about this or any other country at all.' Discuss this statement in pairs.
Explain to the class the viewpoints that each of you discussed, **illustrating** the explanation with reference to some films that support or refute the argument.

6 A Sydney advertising agency asked groups of people to take seven photographs of things they hold dear about Australia. They then analysed these images to discover some core beliefs that Australians hold about what it means to be Australian. Attempt this yourself.
Construct seven video shots that you think could represent life in modern Australia.
Synthesise these shots into a sequence with an audio track using your knowledge of **moving-image media practices**.

7 In a small group, think of 10 or so Australian films you have seen between you.
Symbolise the locations of these films on a map.
Explain what common aspects you notice. Report to the class.

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