1.1 Reading film

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 25 marks**

KEY WORDS mise-en-scène • editing

Reading film

Objective

Use the four systems of film language precisely, complete the denotation–connotation–significance chain in every paragraph, sit an extract in its four contexts, and structure the 1 750-word analysis (the textual-analysis task).

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

Textual-analysis toolkit. Four systems: mise-en-scène (setting, costume, lighting, staging), cinematography (shot size, angle, lens, movement, composition), editing (duration, transitions, continuity, montage), sound (diegetic vs non-diegetic, dialogue, silence, bridges). The chain: denotation (describe precisely) → connotation (read the suggestion) → significance (meaning in THIS film). The extract: at most 5 minutes from a prescribed film, chosen and justified as focal. Four contexts: production, historical, cultural, generic. The document: extract justified, context compact, analysis element-by-element, conclusion of significance; 1 750 words; sources separated primary/secondary. Failures: catalogue, plot summary, review. Worked: the neo-realist long take read as the movement's argument.

2 Practice

2.1 Name the four systems of film language and one element of each. [4]

2.2 Distinguish diegetic from non-diegetic sound with one example of each. [2]

2.3 Complete the chain for: “a low-angle medium shot”. [2]

2.4 What does a long take hold that montage cannot? [2]

2.5 Name the four contexts an extract is sat in. [2]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 *(Analysis style.)* A prescribed neo-realist extract shows a long take, location light and direct sound of a worker walking home. Write the analysis paragraph: denotation, connotation, significance, context. [6]

3.2 *(Justification style.)* Draft the extract-justification paragraph: what the examiner needs identified, and the two tests a chosen extract must pass. [4]

3.3 *(Failure-diagnosis style.)* A draft paragraph reads: "The scene uses a close-up, a pan and non-diegetic music. This shows the director is very skilled." Name the failure and rewrite the sentence through the chain. [3]

Solutions

2.1 Mise-en-scène (lighting); cinematography (shot size); editing (transition); sound (dialogue) (4).

2.2 Diegetic sound has a source inside the story world (dialogue heard by characters, a radio in the room); non-diegetic has no source in the world (the orchestral score under a scene) (2).

2.3 Denotation: the camera is below eye level, medium distance (1). Connotation: the subject towers, invested with power or threat (1).

2.4 Duration and continuity of real time and space (the event unbroken, the audience left to find the significance) (2). Montage fragments and directs, compressing time into constructed meaning.

2.5 Production, historical, cultural, generic (2: 1 for three).

3.1 Denotation: a single uninterrupted take, available light on a real street, direct sound of footsteps (1). Connotation: documentary observation; the ordinary given unbroken attention, no cutting to tell the audience what matters (2). Significance: the film's claim that ordinary lives deserve the screen is made BY the film language itself: the form is the argument (2). Context: the post-war neo-realist movement answering studio escapism with location, non-professionals and contemporary subjects (1).

3.2 The paragraph identifies the prescribed film (title, director, year), the extract's time codes (from–to, at most 5 minutes), what precedes and follows, and the film's central concern the extract carries (2). The tests: FOCAL (film language visibly carries the film's central concern in these minutes) and JUSTIFIED (why these minutes and not others: what the analysis will show) (2).

3.3 The failure is the catalogue: technique names without the chain, plus review vocabulary (skilled) instead of analysis (2). Rewrite: The close-up isolates the hands (denotation), making the nervous preparation the scene's centre (connotation), so the film locates the character's conflict in work, not words (significance) (1).

Local review guidance: all three chain links named in the paragraph; (R1 3.2) justification argues, it does not describe; (R1 3.3) the rewrite replaces evaluation with the chain. Authored guidance.