

Candidate 6

Shutter Island

The evidence for this candidate has achieved the following marks for this Course Assessment component.

16 marks

Question 15

Choose a film or television drama in which lighting and/or sound makes an important contribution to the impact of a particular sequence. Explain how the film or programme makers use lighting and/or sound to enhance your appreciation of the sequence.

The candidate has selected the film 'Shutter Island' directed by Martin Scorsese and has chosen to write in response to Question 15. This is an appropriate choice. The candidate displays a secure knowledge of the demands of the question by providing a detailed analysis of the contribution of both lighting and sound to the impact of the opening sequence.

From the opening paragraph the candidate gives a clear contextualisation of the background to the plot: Teddy Daniels has suffered a personal tragedy, as a result of which he has killed his wife and is now, unwittingly, involved in a role play exercise. The candidate tells us that the audience sees the truth by means of the use of lighting and sound.

At the start of Paragraph 2 we learn that the sequence under discussion will be the opening sequence. Lighting is discussed first in relation to Teddy in the bathroom on the boat taking Teddy to Shutter Island. The mirror shots in which one side of Teddy's face is darker than the other have been chosen in order to reveal an important aspect of Teddy – his split personality. The discussion in Paragraph 3 focuses on the combination of clear image of his face in the mirror with shadow on the left, suggesting 'almost a second person being there'. The candidate comments that the 'contrast of light and dark' gives the audience 'a hint early on in the film that Teddy is hiding something dark'. The candidate emphasises how this use of lighting helps us to understand the split personality of Teddy Daniels, an example of detailed analysis of the effects of filmic technique.

In Paragraph 3 we move to the manner in which sound is used as the boat appears through the fog. The constant 'low tone' helps us to understand that where Teddy is going is a dark eerie place. This low tone sound is also, we are told, building up 'a sense of suspense' – as we do not know what is to come. Again, we see detailed textual evidence to support the candidate's line of thought.

In Paragraph 4 the candidate moves to the use of flashback involving Teddy with his wife Dolores in their old flat. This emphasises the contrast between the 'musky grey colour on the boat' and 'the bright colours of the flashback', suggesting the difference in the theme of reality (dark grey) versus fantasy (much brighter).

The candidate discusses the recurring sound of a record playing in the flashback – a sound prominent throughout the film. The music connects to the setting because the composer,

Ernesto, was also institutionalised as a result of a family tragedy similar to Teddy's, ie the loss of his wife and family. These comments on the impact of music and of contrasting colours in the flashback illustrate the candidate's use of detailed textual evidence to support the line of thought relating to Teddy's dark secret.

In Paragraph 7, we return to the low sound used on approaching the island. The candidate points out that the eerie music creates a sense of the theme of isolation and the sinister atmosphere of the island. We can see the candidate's engaged evaluative stance in the observation on how this arouses our curiosity regarding what will happen to Teddy on the island.

The candidate explains that the continued use of the same low tone up to the arrival at the gates adds suspense to the sequence and this idea is developed in Paragraph 8: it 'reflects the isolated feel and eeriness'.

In the paragraph beginning, 'At the gates...' the candidate discusses the use of lighting to distinguish between Wards A and B and Ward C, which is shown to be darker. The link is made between the darkness and isolation of Ward C and the way 'insanity is portrayed in the film as a dark isolated state', again showing secure understanding.

The concluding paragraph sums up the importance of the opening sequence in showing 'the viewer hints to the bigger picture' and reinforces the idea that lighting and sound play a vital role in this. Overall, this essay demonstrates a secure focus on the demands of the question, and there is an engaged evaluative stance throughout. There is just sufficient detailed analysis of the effects of lighting and sound to meet the requirements of the Band 18-16, which puts the essay at the lower end of the Band. It is awarded **16 marks**.