

# **FILM SOUND – A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

**A guide to planning, researching and  
creating a Film **Sound** Comparative Study**

# STEPS for this TASK:

1. **Brainstorm** possible films for the task. You must select TWO films to compare and/or contrast.
2. **Brainstorm and justify** at least three different areas of FILM FOCUS for your two chosen films.
3. **Finalise** your choices and select your topic sentence (or research question). **Choose** two films for comparison.
4. **Develop** the main arguments you will make about your topic.
5. **Collect evidence** from the films that support your argument.

# STEPS for this TASK:

- 6. Research secondary sources** for information that supports your argument.
- 7. Write your Narration** and plan the audio-visual components of your video essay. OR compose and write the first draft of your written essay
- 8. Record, assemble and edit** your Comparative Study video essay. OR compose and write the second draft of your written essay
- 9. Create a Works Cited** document (separately) once your Comparative Study is finished.

## Comparative Study task components

For this assessment task, each student identifies, selects and researches each of the following **task components**.

1. One area of **film focus - SOUND**.
2. Two films for comparison from within the chosen area of **film focus - SOUND**,

3. A clearly defined topic for a recorded multimedia comparative study, which links both the selected films and the identified area of **film focus - SOUND**. Each student should invest time in researching, developing and honing their topic (which in most cases is likely to be expressed in the form of a research question) to ensure it is clear, focused and concise, to provide them with the maximum potential for success in this task. The topic should seek to enrich the student's understanding of the chosen area of film focus - **SOUND** and should avoid a plot-driven approach to comparison.

# 1. FILM Choices List

Which films are you considering for your final Comparative Study? List as many as you wish below as part of an initial brainstorm. Remember that you must select (at least) TWO films to compare and/or contrast for this task.

e.g.

THE TRUMAN SHOW,  
BLADE RUNNER,

Year, Country and Director of the film.

e.g.

1998, USA/AUST, Dir: Peter Weir  
1982, USA/UK, Dir: Ridley Scott

Add more rows if you need. Once you have brainstormed your list, **highlight the two films you choose to focus on!**

## 2. Area of FILM FOCUS

**Focus Possibility - identify the broad focus area and then add specifics (e.g. “THEORY - Auteur theory” or “GENRE - Horror”). Develop at least THREE options...you can create more by adding more rows.**

**Justification for this Film Focus.  
Be as specific as possible.**

### 3. Chosen CULTURAL CONTEXT

For this assessment task, “cultural context” involves consideration of some of the following factors, some of which may be blended (such as socio-economic)

Economic	Geographical	Historical	Institutional
Political	Social	Technological	

[Here are some details and questions](#) about the possible cultural contexts you can choose for this task.

Identify at least <b>TWO</b> Cultural Context possibilities for your chosen films.	Justification for this Cultural Context. Be as specific as possible.



### 3. Chosen CONTEXT

For this assessment task, “cultural context” involves consideration of some of the following factors, some of which may be blended (such as Dramatic Emphasis factors).

*Dialogue*      *Sound Effects*      *Music*      *Ambience*      *Silence*

*Dramatic Effect*   *Emphasis*   *Character Development*   *Underscoring/Counterpointing*   *Emotion*

*Perspective*      *Misdirection*      *Time*      *Location*      *Transitioning*      *Explaining*

[Here are some details and questions](#) about the possible contexts you can choose for this task.

Identify at least ONE/TWO? <b>Sound and Music</b> Context possibilities for your chosen films.	Justification for this Context. Be as specific as possible.

## 4. Comparative Study Topic Possibilities

Consolidate your thoughts above and develop at least **THREE** different CS Topic possibilities. More are possible by adding additional rows to the table below.

Your Chosen Area of Film Focus	Topic for Comparative Study (can be written in the form of a research question).

## Examples of possible task components

The table below outlines some examples of possible **task components** related to the use of **Sound** elements and **Music** that students could feasibly consider for this assessment task. These examples are for guidance only and are neither prescriptive nor restrictive.

Area of film focus	Film 1	Film 2	Possible topic (or research question) for comparative study
Contemporary Narrative drama films	<i>Nomadland</i> (2020)	<i>Lion</i> (2016)	How and with what effect are specific film elements of <b>sound</b> used within a chosen contemporary narrative drama film?

Area of film focus	Film 1	Film 2	Possible topic (or research question) for comparative study
Film movements: French New Wave film movement	<i>Breathless</i> (1960)	<i>The Graduate</i> (1967)	What, if any, is the influence of the French New Wave on (1960s/1970s) “New” Hollywood’s use of innovative film <b>sound</b> elements in its representation of youth and cultural change?
Film genre and film style: Science Fiction and Fantasy	<i>Blade Runner</i> (1982)  <i>Blade Runner</i> (1982)	<i>The Truman Show</i> (1998)  <i>Arrival</i> (2016)	To what extent are “other worlds” created or enhanced by using sound elements in films? How are sound elements used differently in each film?

Area of film focus	Film 1	Film 2	Possible topic for comparative study
Film Theory: Auteurs-Sounds creating meaning	<i>There Will Be Blood</i> (2007) <i>Dir. PT Anderson</i>	<i>Nomadland</i> (2020) <i>Dir: Chloe Zhao</i>	To what extent and to what effect are Sound Effects and Music deployed to create dramatic meaning by established or emerging <i>Auteur</i> filmmakers?
Film and Pop Music 1: Screen narrative use of contemporary pop culture & music	<i>The Graduate</i> (1967)	<i>Chungking Express</i> (1994)	Examine the effects and functions of the use of popular music within the dramatic structure of film narratives (from the <i>The Sounds of Silence</i> to <i>California Dreaming</i> )

## 5. Final Decisions

Using your topic options in the table above, select **ONE** to be your final topic for this Comparative Study task.

<b>Your Chosen Area of Film Focus: Sound</b>	<b>Film 1</b>	<b>Film 2</b>	<b>Contrasting Cultural, Technological or Artistic Sound related Context</b>	<b>Topic for Comparative Study practice task (can be written as a research question)</b>

## 6. Developing Your Topic

**Develop 3-5 main arguments that can be made about your topic based on your research question and chosen film focus.**

**Brainstorm how you could support these arguments within your video or written essay.**

## 7. Selecting Supporting Evidence (Primary)

**Identify scenes from your chosen films that will help support the arguments you have outlined above. Screen clip a frame from each scene below.**

**Write notes about how this scene helps support your argument. (These notes will help form your voice over narration or written text.)**



## 8. Selecting Supporting Evidence (Secondary)

**Identify at least 3-5 secondary sources (articles, books, websites, video essays, films etc.) which provide information that help support your arguments being made. In this column include the specific source citations.**

**Summarise the detailed information from the secondary source that you can use in this column. (You can copy & paste if they are from online sources.)**

## 9. Writing your narration

*Using the information, scene choices and external sources you have compiled in parts 6-8, you will now write your voiceover narration and match it up to your chosen visual examples.*

*For the final Comparative Study, your narration should be no longer than **10 minutes in length.***

*Remember that you need to:*

- **COMPARE and CONTRAST** your two chosen film **using the arguments and evidence** you identified in parts 6-8
- Begin your narration with a **detailed justification for the chosen cultural contrast**
- Use an **equal balance** of the two selected films.
- Write in a third-person voice to construct your argument (similar in tone to your Extended Essay and other comparative analytical work you have written in Film or Literature classes).
- Identify where any **WRITTEN TEXT** will appear on screen and highlight this (to reference during the creation/editing stage)

Voiceover Narration	Which visual evidence/scenes line up to this part of the narration?	Storyboard Images or Drawings
<p><b>SOUNDS:</b> Any music or sounds that will be used in the production</p> <p><b>NAME:</b> Spoken words that will be heard by the audience</p> <p>++++One page of A/V script is roughly 30 seconds of run time. To gain a more accurate estimate, time yourself reading the narration and make a note of it at the end of each narration passage.</p>	<p><i>Visual description of what will be seen</i></p> <p><i>Pair it with the audio element</i></p>	<p><i>You can insert pre-visualized photos you take with your phone.</i></p> <p><i>You can draw an illustration, take a picture and then place it here OR take a picture of what the shot will actually look like and place it here.</i></p> <p><i>Every edit/shot will need an image.</i></p> <p><i>Every title card or visual element will need an image.</i></p>

# 10. Assembling the Comparative Study

Now you will collect all media resources needed for the task and construct your video essay.

## REQUIRED STEPS:

- ❑ **Import** the digital copy of your chosen films into editing software
- ❑ Identify and **extract** chosen scenes and clips
- ❑ **Place and edit clips** into a rough timeline for your video essay
- ❑ **Record audio narration** (both partners should participate in narrating this practice task) into an audio file using recording equipment (Zoom recorders, iPhone, iPad, DSLR + Rode video mic, etc.)

## REQUIRED STEPS:

- ❑ **Import** your recorded narration audio file into your project timeline
- ❑ **Assemble, edit and fine tune clips** and narration until your video essay takes shape
- ❑ Create and add any required **textual information** in timeline (including black slate at the start)
- ❑ **Audio mixing** of narration and movie clips (adjust levels so that narration and movie sounds complement each other)
- ❑ **Export** the final video essay movie file
- ❑ **Create Works Cited** list separately (Google Docs)

# Comparative Study Checklist

**Did  
it!**

**1. My essay is.....(duration)**

**2. My essay begins with.....**

**3. The essay includes the titles of the 2 films I will compare.**

**4. The essay includes the topic I will explore.**

**5. My essay addresses the justification of my task components.  
(film focus, two films and topic).**

**6. I demonstrated an effective and highly appropriate knowledge  
and understanding of the cultural, technological, artistic or  
genre contexts of the two selected films.**

# Comparative Study Checklist

**Did  
it!**

7. I gave equal consideration to the two films in my essay.
8. The information in my essay is communicated clearly, logically and in an appropriate manner.
9. I provided insightful, accurate and relevant observations regarding similarities and differences on the two chosen films.
10. I effectively analyzed how the two films connect to each other and to the chosen topic.
11. My commentary is consistently and effectively supported with accurate film vocabulary.
12. My essay is logical and effectively organized, conveying information audibly and in a visually appropriate manner.



# Comparative Study Checklist

**Did  
it!**

**13. I've adopted a formal, academic, and grammatically correct form.**

**14. The text is clear and legible.**

**15. I make clear reference to my sources as citations.**

**16. I reference an effective range of sources that are highly appropriate, adding to the critical perspectives explored in the essay.**

**17. My essay is substantiated by relevant, meaningful and effective examples.**

**18. I uploaded/attached a complete and properly formatted list of all sources used**

# Assessment Criteria

## Summary

Comparative study		Marks	Total
<b>A</b>	Task components		
<b>B</b>	Comparing and contrasting		
<b>C</b>	Assembling the comparative study		

# Criteria

## A. Task Components

Evidence: Recorded multimedia comparative study and sources.

- To what extent does the student provide a credible justification for the choice of **task (SOUND) components** (the area of film focus, two films and topic)?
- To what extent does the student demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the **task (SOUND) components** and the **socio-cultural, theoretical or genre contexts** of the two selected films?
- To what extent does the student support his/her work with a suitable range of relevant sources?

Mark	Descriptor	Possible characteristics
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.	
1–3	<p>This work is <b>limited</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student provides little or no justification for the choice of the <b>task components</b>.</li> <li>The student demonstrates little or no knowledge and understanding of the identified <b>task components</b> and the <b>cultural, theoretical or genre contexts</b> of the selected films.</li> <li>The student does not reference sources that are relevant or appropriate to the work.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Limited</b></p> <p>Irrelevant</p> <p>Simplistic</p> <p>Superficial</p>

Mark	Descriptor	Possible characteristics
4–6	<p>This work is <b>adequate</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student provides a justification for the choice of <b>task components</b> but this is underdeveloped.</li> <li>The student demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the identified <b>task components</b> and the <b>cultural, theoretical or genre contexts</b> of the two selected films.</li> <li>The student references some sources that are mostly relevant or appropriate to the work, but these are limited.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Adequate</b></p> <p>Attempted</p> <p>Underdeveloped</p> <p>Uneven</p>

Mark	Descriptor	Possible characteristics
7–9	<p>This work is <b>good</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student provides a coherent and logical justification for the choice of <b>task components</b>.</li> <li>The student demonstrates a clear and appropriate knowledge and understanding of the identified <b>task components</b> and the <b>cultural, theoretical or genre contexts</b> of the two selected films.</li> <li>The student references a suitable range of sources that are appropriate and relevant to the work.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Good</b></p> <p>Accurate</p> <p>Focused</p> <p>Relevant</p>

Mark	Descriptor	Possible characteristics
10–12	<p>This work is <b>excellent</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student provides a credible and persuasive justification for the choice of <b>task components</b>.</li> <li>The student demonstrates an effective and highly appropriate knowledge and understanding of the identified <b>task components</b> and the <b>cultural, theoretical or genre contexts</b> of the two selected films.</li> <li>The student references an effective range of sources that are highly appropriate, adding to the critical perspectives explored in the work.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Excellent</b></p> <p>Discerning</p> <p>Insightful</p> <p>Thorough</p>

## B. Comparing and contrasting

Evidence: Recorded multimedia comparative study and sources.

- To what extent does the student compare and contrast the selected films, making links to the chosen topic?
- To what extent does the student support his/her comparative study with accurate film vocabulary?

Mark	Descriptor	Possible characteristics
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.	



Mark	Descriptor	Possible characteristics
1–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student lists ways in which the two films connect to or contrast with each other and to the chosen topic, making superficial observations regarding similarities and differences that are inaccurate, irrelevant or incoherent.</li> <li>The comparative study contains little or no accurate film vocabulary.</li> </ul>	Limited Irrelevant Simplistic Superficial
4–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student adequately outlines how the two films connect to or contrast with each other and to the chosen topic, making accurate observations regarding similarities and differences, but this work is underdeveloped.</li> <li>The comparative study contains some accurate film vocabulary, but this is underdeveloped.</li> </ul>	<b>Adequate</b> Attempted Underdeveloped Uneven

Mark	Descriptor	Possible characteristics
7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student successfully explains how the two films connect to or contrast with each other and to the chosen topic, making accurate and relevant observations regarding similarities and differences.</li> <li>The comparative study is well supported with appropriate and accurate film vocabulary.</li> </ul>	<b>Good</b> Accurate Focused Relevant
10–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student effectively analyses how the two films connect to or contrast with each other and to the chosen topic, providing insightful, accurate and relevant observations regarding similarities and differences.</li> <li>The comparative study is consistently and effectively supported with accurate film vocabulary.</li> </ul>	<b>Excellent</b> Discerning Insightful Thorough

## C. Assembling the comparative study

Evidence: Recorded multimedia comparative study and sources.

- . To what extent does the student assemble the comparative study in a clear, logical, audible and visually appropriate manner?
- . To what extent does the student provide an equal treatment of the two films selected for study?

Mark	Descriptor	Possible characteristics
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.	

Mark	Descriptor	Possible characteristics
1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The comparative study is constructed with little or no consideration of how to logically convey information. The work is limited, both in terms of audibility and supporting visuals.</li> <li>The student focuses on one film in particular throughout the comparative study.</li> </ul>	<b>Limited</b> Irrelevant Simplistic Superficial
3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The comparative study has been constructed with some attempt to logically convey information. It is audible and makes adequate use of supporting visuals.</li> <li>The student generally gives more consideration to one of the films in particular during the comparative study.</li> </ul>	<b>Adequate</b> Attempted Underdeveloped Uneven

Mark	Descriptor	Possible characteristics
5–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The comparative study has been assembled to follow a clear and coherent structure. It conveys information audibly and with supporting visuals and examples that are mostly appropriate and meaningful, with some clear links to the topic being discussed.</li> <li>The student gives fairly balanced consideration to the two films throughout the comparative study.</li> </ul>	<b>Good</b> Accurate Focused Relevant
7–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The comparative study is logically and effectively organized, conveying information audibly and in a visually appropriate manner. It is substantiated by relevant and meaningful visuals and examples that are effectively and explicitly linked to the topic being discussed.</li> <li>The student gives equal consideration to the two films throughout the comparative study.</li> </ul>	<b>Excellent</b> Discerning Insightful Thorough

## PLAYING MUSIC ON SET DURING FILM PRODUCTION

- Actors hearing the same music during filming as the audience during screening
- diegetic and non-diegetic music mash up
- Finally.....let's cut to the chase.....
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JiQLHLI0BYo>

# Thank You

## Comparative Study Topic Possibilities

### Examples of possible task components

The table below outlines 10 examples of possible **task components** that students could feasibly consider for this assessable task.

These examples are for guidance only and are neither prescriptive nor restrictive.

Area of film sound and music focus	Film 1	Film 2	Possible topic (or research question) for comparative study
Contemporary Narrative drama films	<i>Nomadland</i> (2020)	<i>Lion</i> (2016)	How and with what effect are specific film elements of <b>sound</b> used within these contemporary narrative drama films?
Film movements: French New Wave film movement	<i>Breathless</i> (1960)	<i>The Graduate</i> (1967)	What, if any, is the influence of the French New Wave on New Hollywood's (1960s) use of innovative film <b>sound</b> elements/design in representations of youth and cultural change?
Film genre and film style: Science Fiction or Fantasy	<i>Blade Runner</i> (1982)	<i>The Truman Show</i> (1998)	To what extent are "other worlds" created using sound elements in these films?
Film genre and film style: Science Fiction or Fantasy	<i>Blade Runner</i> (1982)	<i>Arrival</i> (2016)	To what extent are "other worlds" created using sound elements in these films?
Film Theory: Auteurs- Sounds creating Meaning (The Auteur Theory)	<i>There Will Be Blood</i> (2007) Dir: PT Anderson	<i>No Country for Old Men</i> (2007) Dir: Coen Brothers or <i>Nomadland</i> (2020) Dir: Chloe Zhao	To what extent and to what effect are Sound Effects and Music deployed to create meaning by identified <i>Auteur</i> filmmakers?



Area of film sound and music focus	Film 1	Film 2	Possible topic (or research question) for comparative study
Film and Pop Music 1: Screen narrative use of contemporaneous pop culture music	<i>The Graduate</i> (1967)	<i>Chungking Express</i> (1994) Or <i>Lion</i> (2016)	Examine the effects and functions of the use of popular music within the dramatic structure of film narratives. Why has the Director or Sound Designer used pop music in the selected scenes?
Use of Dialogue in narrative films	<i>There Will Be Blood</i> (2007) Or <i>The Truman Show</i> (1998)	<i>Nomadland</i> (2020) Dir: Chloe Zhao	How does the use of dialogue express the development of characters in these films, especially the main characters?
Use of Music in narrative films	<i>Blade Runner</i> (1982)	<i>Lion</i> (2016)	What role (or roles) does the music play in the overall screen design for these films? How is music used differently in these films?
Use of Music	<i>Blade Runner</i> (1982)	<i>Lion</i> (2016)	Compare how the composers approached the composition and performance of music in these films? And how does this differ, if at all, from most film music composition?
Uses of Silence or very quiet ambiances in films	<i>Arrival</i> (2016)	<i>Nomadland</i> (2020)	Compare when silences and quiet ambiances are used in the sound design in these films and for what purpose and to what effect?
Functional uses of sound and music in film design.			What sound elements are deployed to emotionally engage the viewer and how effectively is this achieved by sound design in these films?