

# Q&A

with Tessa Cheetham, student and Blair Smith, teacher  
Highlands Christian College

Film, Television & New Media, Internal assessment 3: Stylistic project

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## Tessa Cheetham, student

### Q: What did you enjoy most about Film, Television & New Media?

A: *Being able to witness the creativity of others around me. I found it wonderful to see how a single concept could be interpreted by a room of students, and then turned into multiple pieces of work that were each unique.*

### Q: How did you prepare for this assessment task?

A: *By drawing inspiration from the world. I found that observing some of the many existing works that shared my chosen topic helped me to generate ideas for my project. For example, there were many surrealist films that I viewed in order to cement my understanding of the movement, which guided how I shaped my own film.*

### Q: How did your teacher prepare you for this assessment?

A: *Learning how to effectively brainstorm was actually one of the ways we prepared for this assessment. Since it is such a pivotal part of creating a film, our teacher walked us through various techniques that could help us inspire our creativity, and avoid falling into a block. Learning how to successfully generate, discard, reshape and improve our ideas was highly beneficial and ensured that everything tied together well in the end.*

### Q: What made you choose the topic or method of presentation?

A: *I chose the movement of surrealism because it invited the use of abstract techniques and ideas, which could creatively shape my own artistic style. As a filmmaker, I personally enjoy exploring and manipulating things such as lighting, colours and costumes in abstract ways in my films. The surrealist art movement, with its odd and nonsensical ideas, was a perfect vehicle for this. I chose to focus on the surrealist idea of 'dreams', because it allowed me to create a ridiculous and peculiar world where reality did not need to be explained or justified.*

### Q: What is most important to you when you are preparing a response to an assessment task?

A: *Keeping the big picture in mind. When creating films, it is sometimes easy to get swept up into the flow of creativity and the small details. While this is wonderful, I found that in order to stay true to the criteria and not set unrealistic standards, I had to continuously picture my end goal. Before jumping into creating, I took time to visualise my film and each scene in as much detail as I could. Although nothing can go fully to plan, this kept me from getting too lost.*

### Q: What are your thoughts about this assessment and the approach you took when responding to the task?

A: *One thing that was challenging at the start of this assessment was deciding how the 'surrealist' theme would be made evident. The creative decisions that I made in order to achieve this were mainly based on the concept, costumes, props, audio and lighting. I implemented surrealism by creating inconsistency in each of these areas. Things like unexpected costume changes, odd props and unexplainable lighting added a sense of randomness that I felt built the surrealist vibe that I wanted. I liked how all of these things together made the film unpredictable, and although a pattern of sudden scene changes becomes obvious while watching, there is no way of knowing where the pattern will take you next.*

**Q: How will you use what you have learnt in this subject?**

*A: Film, Television & New Media taught me how to take my ideas and communicate them. It is easy to have the concept for something in your head; however, it is not always easy to express it clearly to others. I want to take this learning and apply it in the future. Whether it be related to other films I may create or not, I think the clear communication of ideas is a beneficial skill that everyone should practise.*

## **Blair Smith, teacher**

**Q: What was the purpose of this assessment and what were the key decisions you made in the design of the task?**

*A: The assessment was designed to allow students to experiment with filming techniques to self-reflect on individualised representations. This task was intentionally open-ended to allow students to explore creative options pertinent to their own interests and identity as filmmakers.*

**Q: How did your teaching and the student learning experiences prepare the students to complete this assessment?**

*A: Key to teaching and learning was how to manage creative processes and generate ideas. Critical to this was understanding the 'why' of their media product to drive the 'how'.*

**Q: How does this assessment reflect the unique characteristics of your school and your students?**

*A: To a Christian school, this film represents ecclesiastical principles about life being 'like smoke'. In other words, it explores navigating the complex narrative of life in search of meaning in a broken world. The film was created for a broad audience beyond a Christian environment, employing a vast array of surrealism techniques that are highly relatable to the human experience.*

**Q: Can you explain the exemplary aspects of Tessa's response?**

*A: The underpinning ideas, language structure and terminology within the treatment and reflection are of an immaculate standard. The interrelationship between the written component and film product are explicitly clear. The film product itself is exemplary in the style of surrealism, especially in terms of shot selection, audio, mise en scène and use of colour.*