Build an analytical response

Explain how an unseen TV-drama extract constructs meaning and representation. Use precise evidence to make your reasoning visible.

These steps are support, not a compulsory Cambridge formula. There is no required paragraph count, word count or quota of named theorists.

1. Identify the question's focus

Underline what you must explain. Keep that focus in your claims and examples. Address meaning and representations of people, groups, events or places through the choices that make them visible and audible.

2. Watch the whole extract

Use the first viewing without writing. Notice the situation, important changes and the ending. Hold your first interpretation provisionally: a later reaction may change how you understand the opening.

3. Collect evidence a reader could locate

Keep notes in the order of the extract's scenes or stages. During later viewings, record **moment → observable detail → accurate term → possible meaning**. A short action or dialogue cue can locate the moment; an exact timestamp is not required. Check camera, sound, editing and mise-en-scène. They do not need equal space.

4. Test your argument

State the overall meaning or change briefly. Check a detail that might challenge it. Narrow words such as “all,” “only” and “completely” when the evidence does not support them. A low angle, standing position or close-up does not establish total power by itself.

5. Plan in the order of the extract

Divide the extract into its main scenes or stages. Plan from the opening through the development to the ending. Within each stage, combine relevant technical choices and explain their meaning. Use **stage → claim → evidence and choices → meaning**. A substantial scene may need more than one paragraph. Follow extract order rather than separate camera, sound, editing and mise-en-scène sections.

Keep observation and interpretation distinct. First record what you can see or hear. Then explain what the detail may suggest in this sequence.

Explain the evidence

6. Write the argument, then develop it

Open with a brief interpretation of the extract as a whole. Then follow its scenes or stages in order. Pair scene content with technical choices and explain how they construct meaning.

Inside an analytical paragraph

Claim	State what this stage contributes to the relationship or representation.
Evidence	Locate the moment and describe its relevant detail.
Choice	Pair the scene detail with its technical choice, named accurately.
Meaning	Explain how this choice supports your interpretation. Connect it to the relationship or social meaning in the question.
Development	Add a relevant choice or contrast with an earlier stage when it develops the point.

These are reasoning moves, not five compulsory sentences. Explain why the evidence supports the claim. If you write “creates tension,” explain the source and significance of that tension.

7. Check the ending

Let the final part of the extract inform your argument. It may confirm a change or leave it unresolved. Conclude briefly. Do not add an unexamined theory, invented earlier event or unsupported claim about the director's intention.

8. Reread for accuracy and explanation

Check the order of stages and use transitions to show development. Make sure each example supports its claim. Verify technical labels; describe a choice accurately if its label is uncertain. Replace plot retelling with explanation and remove unsupported absolute claims.

Check against the five criteria

Media concepts	Link media language to representation.
Contexts and debates	Explain relevant social significance within the extract.
Terminology	Use accurate terms to make a specific analytical point.
Analysis	Explain how choices construct meaning; apply theory where it helps.
Examples	Select precise moments that support your argument.

Each criterion is worth 5 marks (25 total). The examiner judges the whole response. One sentence may support several criteria; it has no automatic mark of its own.

Sources: Coursebook §§4.1-4.3, pp. 86, 90-93, 97-103 (chronological scene order and micro/macro analysis); Cambridge 9607 syllabus for 2027, p. 23; June 2025/21 mark scheme, pp. 9-10; Example Candidate Responses, Paper 2 (2021), pp. 6-8. Teacher-developed support, revised October 26, 2026.