

## Question 2.

Film narratives begin by creating numerous story possibilities and they usually close by resolving some or all of these possibilities in a way, which is believable and consistent in the story context.

Describe the issues and expectations established in the narrative in the opening scene

The film opens with an extreme close up of Foster's face- the camera tracks back to reveal the main character stuck in traffic- The lead character, D-FENS, a divorced, unemployed worker for a U.S. defense contractor, sits uneasily in his 1977 Chevette, gridlocked on the Santa Monica freeway. The air-conditioning doesn't work and the window cranks are stripped. Tense, sweating and quavering, D-FENS (he is known by the name on his vanity license plate) is a classic industrial strength white-Anglo male, circa 1965. He has a bad crew cut and glasses. He wears a too-tight, short-sleeve white dress shirt, adorned with a black- and-white polyester tie and supplemented by a plastic pocket- protector. D-FENS and his Chevette form a contiguous symbol of the economic decline of a white-male Anglicized U.S. industrial apparatus. Together, they are simultaneously going nowhere (gridlocked on the freeway) and have nowhere to go (to work). Psychically imploding, D-FENS lurches out of his inert, steamy car into the open air. When asked, by another stalled motorist, in the opening lines of the movie. Hey, where do you think you're going?", D-FENS replies, "I'm going home."

A cross cut medium shot then reveals an older motorist viewing a defaced Sun Screen billboard with amusement until he observes a police motorcyclist investigating the deserted motorist's car. He then leaves his car to offer his assistance to the police officer revealing that he too is a policeman on his last day on the job.

The narrative possibilities established in the opening are initially derived from the film's title "Falling Down". Which suggests to the audience that the story will focus on the issues or themes of a character's psychological or emotional breakdown

The opening reveals the central character to the audience and suggests he is in a state of conflict- his actions in leaving his car on the freeway suggests he is highly anxious and stressed. His abandonment of his vehicle perhaps has greater significance. Imagery of license plates, mobile phone users, school children, billboards and bumper stickers project issues about American culture that may have contributed to the character's condition may also be examined in the film. Recurring images of a young girl staring blankly out of the rear window of the car in front suggests perhaps some detachment or breakdown of family. The opening presents a highly stylised and dramatic introduction to the condition of the central character amidst the chaos of urban American society. This establishes the audience's expectations that this character is highly anxious and in conflict, which will be examined throughout the film's narrative. The introduction of a secondary character, Policeman Prendergast

on his last day on the job is also likely to be further developed in the film in parallel to the central character