**Tension often exists between dominant, emerging and oppositional values. To what extent did the texts that you studied reflect this tension**

**How to get started**

Texts both reflect and challenge the values in a society. As such, they often come to reflect the tension between dominant, emerging and oppositional values of the production period. The 1987 Australian film Shame examines the conflicting attitudes towards the discourse of gender roles and equality existing between rural and urban societies of the production period. The film’s central character Asta Cadell an independent and professional urban women seeks help and refuge in the small country town of Ginborak after a motorcycle accident prohibits her touring holiday . Visually defined as leather clad bikie, her figure initially is not identified as a male or female. The adverse reaction of the men outside the pub to her arrival and removal of helmet-are evident by their wolf whistles and leering comments. The hotel patron’s mill in groups outside the hotel where an aboriginal drinker sits alone, marginalised and outcast from the other drinkers. This would support Justice Muirhead the head of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody findings in 1988 that "Racist attitudes are endemic in Australian society".

When Asta casually walks into the hotel to seek a room she exhibits contemporary urban values of the production period where she believes she has the right and freedom to travel alone and seek accommodation in the local pub. The hotel appears to be exclusively fraternised by men who quickly gather around Asta at the bar and offer crude remarks “ You can stay at my place love”, indicating oppositional views and sexist and demeaning attitudes towards a women intruding into their domain. The Local police Sergeant Wal Cuddy condescendingly places his hand on Asta’s shoulder and announces “You wouldn’t want to stay in a rough joint like this” as he guides her out of the hotel, reinforcing the dominant values of the hotel patrons where a pub is no place for a lady. The men’s catcalls and offers of bed are positioned against Asta’s more utilitarian enquires about bike repairs and (single) accommodation: their dishevelled appearance and her smarter looks: their gazes of psychic neediness and hers of self-assurance. The functional style and character representations facilitate strong identification from female viewers who have ever entered an Australian Pub alone. The dialogue, mise en scene, and acting reinforce the tension experienced between the dominant traditional values of the town’s men and the oppositional values of urban Australian women where the equal opportunity act and women’s rise into positions of authority during the 1980s had shaped contemporary values.

When Asta reaches the Curtis garage, the narrative so organises the scene to endorse her mechanical skills and determination to repair her motorcycle, as well as Tim Curtis’ generosity in lending his tools. Tim’s acceptance that Asta is skilfully equipped to repair her motorbike opposes garage hand Gary’s unhelpful sexism; ”Not today Sweetheart”. Accommodated in the Curtis Sleep out Asta soon sees a logical extension of the drinkers innuendo and gawping. Lizzie is brought hobbling home by father Tim and Grandma Norma after-it is later confirmed being raped. Lizzie’s face is traumatised and drained: Asta’s look is sensitive and sympathetic .When Lizzie soon runs out from what appears to be family recriminations -“Tell them to Stop”, it is Asta who comforts her thus initiating the female bonding that is crucial to the townswomen’s growing opposition to rape.

In the following encounter between Asta and some of the town’s young blades, her ready feminist wit directly challenges masculinist positions and exposes the brittleness of macho identity held by the mateship group of young men. A group of boys surround her in the milk bar with taunts about her jeans ;”Kinda looks butch in them trousers…Hey butch, you own a dress?”. She looks coolly at Bobby and says “Not in your size”. Recognising her superiority , his mates laugh at Bobby aligning masculinist identification with Asta as assertive confident women.

In the street outside , the sense of threat to Asta deepens as suave Danny backed by half a dozen of the older boys, repeatedly asks her for a drink. She twice declines . The camera adopts a low angle shot of the pack lounging on and around their cruising machine where mateship is reduced to a pack mentality which opposes the positive stereotype of masculine identity and camaraderie of the 80s.Male violence is posed as a threat, but one that Asta seems well equipped to deal with, it shows her moral –political if not physical superiority over the youths.

The following scene the next morning launches a structural alternation that recurs through much of the film, between male violence and female action. Asta’s compassion for Lizzie is in stark contrast to policeman Wal Cuddy who sneers “How’s the, er, family Tim. Cuddy’s lack of law enforcement is negligent and complicit in preserving the towns secret . Whilst Police corruption was rife in the 80’s the outcome of the 1987 Queensland Royal Commission resulted in the dismissal of the Police Commissioner and police officers announcing that the misappropriation of the law was unacceptable. This is brought to a head later in the film when Asta is attacked by a group of young boys whilst collecting repair parts for her motorbike at night at the railway station. Only at this point in the film when it becomes narratively necessary in terms of a women’s action against rape, does Asta reveal her profession as a Barrister , to the townspeople and to the viewer. The woman embodies law as principles of justice”. Wal whose name symptomatically reverses the law represents its local perversion. Her final “ I couldn’t be bothered to lay charges” lets Wal off the hook for the moment but not before the film has marked the townswomen’s support for Asta with Rita’s cry of “Good on yam love”. Whilst the narrative function establishes Asta as the female outsider, the male rape culture endemic in the town, it also shows the outsider beginning to catalyse change in that culture ; on the male side by defeating the boy rapists and denouncing the cop and on the female side, by bonding with the towns women and sowing the seeds of their resistance to male violence.