

**A LEVEL**  
*Transition Guide*

# DRAMA AND THEATRE

H459  
For first teaching in 2016

## Performing

Version 1



## Using this transition guide

This transition guide has been created to be a flexible tool for teachers and students.

It can be used as a series of activities making a scheme of work in Year 11 to assess whether students would be able to cope with the demands of an A Level or AS in Drama and Theatre.

The activities suggested can also be used and adapted to make a taster lesson to see if students would like to study the subject at a higher level.

The check point tasks baseline assessment criteria can also be used by teachers to create their own tasks using their own resources, scripts and stimuli available in their centre.

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## Key Stage 4 Content

In GCSE (9-1) Drama students are required to do the following:

- Study two performance texts, one explored in full and key extracts explored from a second contrasting text.
- Participate in a minimum of two performances, one devised and one text based.
- Researching, working collaboratively and refining work through rehearsal to create their own original performances
- Demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of Drama including: genre, structure, character, form and style, dialogue and stage directions.
- Use subject specific terminology accurately.
- Understand key differences between the roles of performer, designer and director.



## Key Stage 5 Content

### AS Drama and Theatre

There are two components in the new specification.

- Students complete a text based performance (Teacher assessed)
- Students can take these roles for practical work assessment: Performer, Lighting Designer, Sound Designer, Set Designer, and Costume Designer.
- There are separate performance and design routes through the qualification.
- There will be a written exam worth 40% of the qualification.
- Students study three texts; one for performance and two for the exam.
- Students also study one practitioner and analyse a live theatre performance.

### A Level Drama and Theatre

- There are four components in the new specification.
- Students complete one devising project and one text based project.
- Students can take these roles for practical work assessment: Performer, Lighting Designer, Sound Designer, Set Designer, and Costume Designer.
- There are separate performance and design routes through the qualification.
- There are two written exams worth 20% each, totalling 40% of the qualification.

## Comment

At GCSE level, students will have been given a clear grounding in practical and theoretical aspects of Drama and Theatre. They will have a practical understanding of performance texts as well as experience in devising. They should have gained an understanding of the roles of the actor, designer and director.

The knowledge and confidence gained at GCSE may inspire students to consider taking A Level Drama and Theatre as an option at KS5. It is, therefore, important that learners are made aware of the demands of pursuing this A Level.

It is a common student misconception that this A Level is a straightforward continuation of GCSE Drama. There is of course, a strong continuity to be found in studying at A Level as a continuation from GCSE. However, at A Level there is a considerably more demanding level of challenge and commitment, coupled with increased academic rigour and higher standards of performance. Learners will need to be willing and able to learn independently and take responsibility for their own learning.

It might be useful to advise students about the extra challenges that come with studying an A Level performance text compared to GCSE performance texts. Students will have been guided by teacher-led activities at GCSE, whereas at A Level, although the teacher is the specialist facilitator, students will be encouraged to take more active learning roles, especially when exploring performance and devising work.

Students taking the performance route must be confident performers who are also strong team players. They need to be able to take an active and focused role in all aspects of group work/discussion and be reliable and trustworthy. Being self-motivated with good time management is also important.

Students also need to be able to construct logical arguments when writing essays and to respond to a wide range of performance texts with interest and imagination. They need to have a capacity for novel thought – offering their own ideas of interpretation to a text/character/devised piece without merely relying on the ideas of their classmates.

Strong students will be imaginative and creative with the ability to respond positively to all aspects of feedback and evaluation. They will be able to work with a positive attitude, despite apparent setbacks.

The students that will be most successful in A Level Drama and Theatre will have a strong interest in Theatre (including beyond the curriculum and/or outside of school) and be keen and fully motivated to learn more about Drama and Theatre as an art form. They will also have a strong interest in watching a wide range of live theatre performances, including a diverse selection of genres and styles of live performance.

It is also vital to emphasise the importance of independent learning when studying at A Level, and the A Level Drama and Theatre course is no exception. Ideally, students will be well motivated to pursue their studies beyond the Drama Studio by wider reading, researching into practitioners, playwrights, technical theatre, different genres/styles of theatre, theatre history and more. They will also be keen to follow up learning beyond lessons by exploring ideas further and independently and then bring that learning and knowledge to future lessons.

This qualification can be a truly fulfilling experience for most students. They will be inspired and respond with imagination and delight to their new learning experiences at A Level. However, some students may lack the necessary range of skills and confidence that have the scope to be developed at A Level, especially performance skills and/or the ability to contribute imaginative ideas and contribute effectively to all aspects of group work. For these students, such an A level course can become too challenging to the extent they will end up relying on others, especially when exploring practical processes, especially devising. They could even create problems in terms of group dynamics within the group. Such students need to be carefully advised when selecting this A Level.

**At the start of the A Level course students should be able to:**

- Effectively learn lines for performance and be reliable in meeting performance deadlines
- Perform with focus and commitment in front of an audience
- Use a clear and effective range of physical expression to communicate character to an audience
- Use a clear and effective vocal range/expression to communicate character to an audience
- Show clear evidence of being able to react in role
- Show clear evidence of use of skills in performance such as status plus levels and proxemics (spatial awareness)
- Show a clear willingness to take risks (emotionally, intellectually and at times, physically) in performance
- Show a willingness to take on new genres/styles of plays in performance
- Work effectively in groups with other students towards performance
- Respond positively to feedback given
- Adapt ideas/skills in response to feedback given
- Show objectivity about the strengths of their work
- Show objectivity about areas for development in their work.

**Checkpoint task success criteria – Performing Exemplar****Students should be able to:**

- Work as an effective ensemble member of the chorus in both rehearsal and performance
- Articulate understanding about the super objectives of the main characters
- Read a Shakespeare text with accuracy and understanding
- Ask questions to clarify their own understanding
- Show clear understanding of the use of iambic pentameter and its influence upon the spoken word
- Rehearse with focus and interest
- Contribute ideas towards interpretation of characters in rehearsal
- Realise dramatic intentions through a clear and purposeful range of vocal and physical expression
- Perform with focus, energy and commitment to the scene.

# Transition KS4 to KS5: Performing activities

## Performing: Shakespeare

The principles in this plan can be applied to any Shakespeare play. This plan is based on *Romeo and Juliet* focusing on The Prologue and Act III Scene I, focusing on the text from the opening up to the death of Mercutio.

Other choices of play/scene will depend on the number of students in the group.

These activities are presented with overall aims for each activity and can be used over six to eight lessons depending on lesson times/number of students

Teachers can select the most appropriate activities according to time constraints.

[Activity 1](#) [Activity 2](#) [Activity 3](#) [Activity 4](#) [Activity 5](#) [Activity 6](#)

### Overall aims

- To explore a range of creative activities to enhance understanding of a Shakespeare scene (text-based and devised)
- To develop confidence when using a Shakespearian text
- To develop imaginative responses to the text
- To develop a range of rehearsal approaches
- To perform the scene with focus, imagination and skill
- To respond to evaluation processes to develop and refine the work.

NB: Pupils will be expected to have read the play before this starts (or at the very least be familiar with the plot and characters).

## Activity 1

### Teaching and learning aims

- To present a chorus reading from the text and explore creative choices of vocal/physical expression to bring the text to life
- To use visual / spatial communication to communicate ideas to an audience
- To use performance skills (vocal and physical) to reveal dramatic intentions.

### Lesson outcomes

- To be able to explore and perform The prologue from *Romeo and Juliet*
- To be able to work as an ensemble.

### Activity 1a: Practical chorus exploration of the prologue

Give out copies of the prologue from *Romeo and Juliet*. Alert pupils to punctuation and enjambment when reading Shakespeare. With the whole group standing up, read the speech working round the group, one actor at a time according to the punctuation/phrasing e.g. where ever there is punctuation in the text, a new actor starts the next phrase. Discuss any points that need to be covered to ensure all pupils understand the meaning of the text.

Discuss with the group suggestions for vocal delivery/range within the speech: tone, pace, volume. Now read again as before exploring these vocal notions. Evaluate the effectiveness of the delivery.

Read the speech again, with the whole group as a chorus, keeping together as a Chorus with the phrasing/timing using the vocal notions identified.

### Activity 1b: Practical development of chorus exploration of the prologue

Divide the group into two or more chorus groups. You may decide for the whole group to remain as the chorus. Their task is to rehearse and then perform the prologue as a chorus.

- The following resource may be useful: <http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/discover-more>
- Pupils allocate different sections of text to different number of voices in the group
- Where does the weight lie for all voices and where does one voice create focus / intimacy?
- Select / Allocate different attitudes of the chorus to the prologue which will influence TONE, VOLUME, PACE etc. (Confidential, Bitter, Sad, Angry...)
- Consider: Group shape / levels / Proxemics / Movement in the space linked to voices / Gesture / Posture / Facial Expression
- Consider: Entrances/Exits to shape the performance
- Perform and evaluate. Discuss the choices made by the group and assess their dramatic intentions and effectiveness for an audience.



### Activity 2

#### Teaching and learning objectives

- To explore the relationships between the characters at the heart of the play
- To explore the Super-objectives of these characters in the play
- To use visual aspects to communicate notions of character to an audience
- To integrate use of lighting and sound to enhance visual presentation.

#### Lesson outcomes

- To have a clear understanding of the relationships between important characters in the play
- To have a clear awareness of the Super-objectives of these characters
- To realise their understanding through visual and verbal presentation.

#### Practical: Creating a Capulet Family Portrait

This task explores the relationships within the Capulet Family. The task can easily be applied to other Shakespeare plays. e.g. the court in Hamlet or the line of succession in Macbeth.

The following web link might be a useful introduction to this task: <http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/video/introducing-romeo-and-juliet>

- Divide the group into groups accordingly, depending on the overall numbers in the group. Not *all* of the characters have to be represented. It is a useful differentiation task to see which characters the group(s) decide to select for the task.
- Explain the notion of the 'super-objective'; this is the character's overriding objective in the play. It can be simple or complex according to the level of thought of the pupils. It is most usefully expressed as '*I want ... , so I ...*'. Allow time for the pupils to draft their super-objectives.

At this stage of the activity, the extension task can come into play if required.

#### Extension Task: Develop super-objectives as monologues

Pupils are given time to draft and develop these super-objectives as monologues to perform with the portrait presentation.

- Their task is to create a "living portrait" of the Capulet family and then with the characters stating their objectives out loud to the audience. Pupils need to focus on hierarchy, status, relationships between the characters and how the characters feel towards each other.
- Time should also be devoted to *how* the portrait can be enhanced through lighting and use of sound to create mood/atmosphere.
- Pupils need to consider how the portrait can be created and presented as a tableau with the characters stepping out to state their super-objectives to the audience. Important consideration should be given to entrances and movement with an integration of the super-objectives.



- Entrances and movement should consider:
  - hierarchy
  - status
  - relationships
  - attitudes to the other characters.
- Rehearse and perform.
- Evaluate the choices made about the characters and what is revealed to the audience through the communication of their super-objectives? How successful were these interpretations? How successful was the use of levels/proxemics and well as physical and vocal expression in revealing dramatic intentions to the audience? How did lighting and sound help to evoke mood/atmosphere and visual aspects of the portrait?
- These YouTube links may provide a useful resource:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZIXam3BOZg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3PlhGgtWTs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hf7qoOV2dkA> (from 53 seconds onwards)

### **Extension Task: Integration of the prologue and the portrait**

This task links the chorus presentation of The prologue and the Capulet Family Portrait Task.

- Divide the class into groups. The number of groups depends on the number of pupils in the class. Groups will work together in pairs. One group will focus on the chorus/Prologue work whilst the other will focus on the Capulet family portrait task, but they will combine to work as one group for this extension task.
- Their challenge and extension task is to integrate these two pieces together as one performance whilst retaining the key features from the original tasks.
- Creative choices involve: How will the chorus be integrated with the portrait and its Super-objectives? Can they find links in the chorus text which integrate/connect with the Portrait piece? How might the original model of the portrait be developed with the chorus? How does this integration influence their use of entrances? How does this integration influence their use of space/levels/proxemics? What possibilities are there for development of choreographed physicality/movement? What motifs from the two separate pieces can be found and developed? How can lighting and music/sound be used to create mood/atmosphere?
- Evaluation: What was particularly successful about the integration of these two pieces? How has the interpretation of the two original models been developed/refined? How could these ideas be developed further?

### Activity 3

#### Teaching and learning objectives

- To explore the dynamics of the scene.
- To focus upon intonation and vocal stress to communicate meaning.
- To understand how Shakespeare uses language to communicate meaning.
- To provide an understanding of the text through practical dynamics.

#### Lesson outcomes

- To have a clear understanding of this text.
- To be able to express the vocal/ emotional range that the text demands.
- To realise their understanding through physical and vocal expression.

#### Practical: Closer exploration of the text

##### *Romeo and Juliet* - Act III, Scene i

*The main principles of this task can be easily applied/adapted for other scenes in Shakespeare plays.*

- Divide the whole group into two groups. It might be useful to use some visual aspect to differentiate the two groups. i.e. Blue scarves for Montagues and red for Capulets. Walking individually in the space at the same time, as the actors encounter others, react non-verbally to each other with friendship/hostility. Explore a range of different reactions. i.e. The pupils are not just repeating the same reaction each time.
- Once this has been established, they can add in vocal reactions as well.
- Standing in a circle, the whole class reads the scene out loud, with one actor at a time. Read according to the punctuation. i.e. Where ever there is punctuation in the text, the next actor reads the next phrase.
- With each group in a line facing each other across the space, one group is named the Montagues, the other group *the Capulets*. Read Act III, Scene i from the beginning up to the death of Mercutio. The Montagues read *all* of Tybalt's lines as a chorus, whilst The Capulets read *all* the lines for the characters on the Capulet side as a chorus.
- Some points to consider include:
  - Scanning of the lines (iambic pentameter)
  - Enjambment
  - Emphasis always on the last syllable (iambic pentameter)
  - Shakespeare as director (as well as playwright)
  - Hidden stage directions.
- After feedback, repeat, now adding in reactive states/physical expression and using proxemics between the groups
- You may wish the swap the Montague/Capulet groups to allow students to read both halves of the text
- At this point, the teacher may lead a discussion with the class to:
  - Identify any meaning of the text that needs to be clarified
  - Alert the pupils to the function and application of iambic pentameter in the text
  - Identify any "hidden stage directions" that need to be followed. e.g. *Tybalt: Turn and draw.*
- Discuss how the fight scene might be presented to a modern audience. If the class has previously explored physical theatre, this is an ideal opportunity for links with prior learning.

### Activity 4

#### Teaching and learning objectives

- To explore action *and* bring the text to life.
- To interpret, explore and communicate character.
- To use proxemics/spatial dynamics to show the relationships between the characters.
- To explore a range of rehearsal techniques/workshop approaches.
- To use rehearsal targets to focus interpretation and refinement of the text towards performance.

#### Lesson outcomes

- To be able to rehearse with confidence, focus and imagination.
- To be able to use rehearsal targets to refine the rehearsal process.
- To be able to make decisions, refinements in the light of peer assessment.
- To respond to feedback given.

#### Practical: Exploring and rehearsing the text towards performance

*This activity can take as many lessons as the teacher/group requires*

*Part of this rehearsal process will require blocking and rehearsing the fights. See also Activity 5.*

- Teacher and/or pupils cast the roles in the scene.
- In groups, pupils read the scene and discuss the key aspects of each character and how these aspects can be successfully communicated to an audience.
- Groups feedback their ideas.
- Each group selects three (or more) key moments from the scene. They must be able to justify the significance of these key moments. Create a tableau for each key moment. Initially they should consider the blocking of the scene and proxemics/levels to show the spatial relationships. Then, they should refine their interpretation through physical expression. The teacher can select some of the tableaux for the class to assess and evaluate by considering:
  - What is being communicated and how?
  - Is it successful? What is the interpretation of character(s)?
  - Why is this a key moment?At this level of work, teacher questioning should help refine the pupils' responses.
- Each group can now start to rehearse the scene, after identifying a range of rehearsal targets. They should write these down. These targets should identify their dramatic aims e.g. To communicate a clear contrast of different moods/atmosphere from light-hearted, tense, suspense, fear, desperation. To ensure there is a building and variation in pace/tempo in the scene.

- Other considerations for exploring and refining rehearsal targets/realisation of the text are:

<b>Characterisation</b>	What does the text reveal about character? What is the interpretation of character? What emotions/attitudes /motives/status does my character express in this scene?
<b>Iambic Pentameter</b>	Stress / Emphasis to promote meaning; Hidden Stage Directions
<b>Physical Skills</b>	Movement, Gesture, Facial Expression, Posture, Eye Contact
<b>Vocal Skills</b>	Volume, Tone, Pitch, Pace, Diction, Stress / Emphasis
<b>Check Sightlines</b>	Levels/proxememics, Blocking, use of space to show conflict between two social groups; Consider entrances and exits
<b>Characters need to react</b>	to what is happening whether they are speaking lines or not

- Groups can be paired up and offer Peer Assessment on each other's work in progress. Feedback should focus back to the rehearsal targets of each group.

Oral feedback / Evaluation of Targets: Which targets have been particularly useful? What influence have they had on the rehearsal process? How have these targets informed approaches? How have they helped to refine the work? What changes have been made?

### Activity 5

#### Teaching and learning objectives

- To explore physical action and different dynamics to explore the fight sequences.
- To explore a range of styles and techniques to develop an imaginative response.

#### Lesson outcomes

- To have created effective fight sequences.
- To use physical and visual dynamics with confidence and imagination.
- To integrate sound/music and lighting into the fight sequences (as required).

#### Practical: Explore and block the fight sequence in the scene

- The following web links might be useful stimuli at the start of this activity:  
<https://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/hamlet-the-fencing-match-6175294>  
<http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/video/othello-rehearsals-staging-the-brawl>  
<http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/video/romeo-and-juliet-learn-the-movement>
- The fight sequences can be easily be blocked using a series of tableaux integrated with blackouts. Experiment with slow fades/snap blackouts to assess the range of impact.
- Music can also be used with the tableau sequences. The groups can experiment with different styles of music and assess how this influences the quality of movement.
- The fight sequence can be blocked and refined in slow motion:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gj\\_ldee4\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gj_ldee4_o)
- For a physical theatre approach, the following DV8 extract might be a useful stimulus: From 2:36, building to the fight at 3:21 up to 3:35 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7c9ToyDs3mY>
- Physical theatre fight scenes in rehearsal may prove a useful stimulus:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cuQ0797sfw>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnAPHHYbi-M>
- Dependent on the time available, the teacher might wish to explore a range of these options of focus on one approach for developing the fight sequences.
- At each stage, offer peer assessment/feedback/evaluation to assist further development/refinement of ideas.

#### Extension Task: rehearse the scene after the fight sequences have been integrated into the scene

- Teacher sets a rehearsal target: To explore the physical model of the scene. Groups are asked to rehearse the scene NON VERBALLY. This task can be built up with a workshop approach with the teacher giving different lines/ small extracts to different groups to initially explore. These ideas can be shared with the group and evaluated. The teacher might then decide to give each group a section of the text (depending on the number of groups in the class) to then refine and then present their non-verbal interpretation.
- Experiment with a range of tempos, slow motion and running the sequence backwards (like a rewind)
- Perform and evaluate the different interpretations created and assess their effectiveness.

### Activity 6

#### Teaching and learning objectives

- To perform the textual extract of Act III, Scene i from *Romeo and Juliet*.
- To evaluate their own performance as an individual actor as well as the group's overall performance.
- To evaluate the performances of other groups and offer constructive feedback on success and areas for development.
- To identify areas for future development (Skills/techniques/imaginative response/work ethic).

#### Lesson Outcomes

- To communicate a clear interpretation of character.
- To use a clear and purposeful range of vocal and physical skills to bring the text to life.
- Use levels/proxemics and spatial dynamics to show relationships between characters.
- Use a lively range of gesture, expression, posture and movement to express character.
- Use vocal emphasis to communicate the iambic pentameter throughout the scene.
- Create a strong feeling of pace/tension and react at all times to what is happening on stage.
- Perform with a strong sense of belief.
- Demonstrate a strong sense of understanding the text.
- Show understanding through evaluation.

#### Practical: Perform the scene and evaluate success

- Groups perform their interpretation of the scene in turn.
- The group offers individual/group assessment of the performance.
- Peer assessment: pupils evaluate groups after each performance – this analysis should relate to the performance criteria (See Checkpoint Task Exemplar).
- The pupils identify their own criteria for future development in performance work e.g. skills/techniques/imaginative response/work ethic.
- Final, overall evaluation of the performance unit.



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