

AS LEVEL

Candidate Style Answers

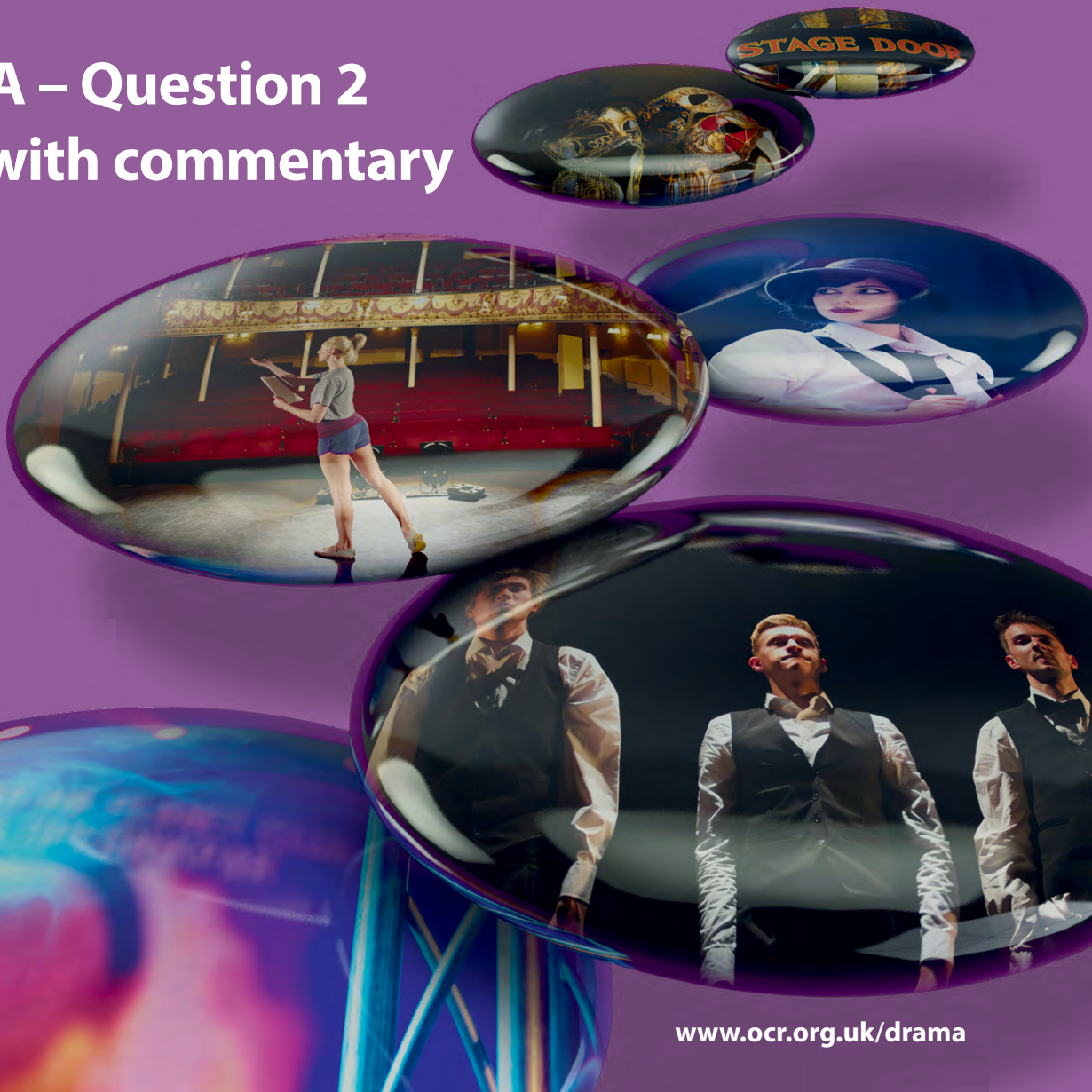
DRAMA AND THEATRE

H059

For first teaching in 2016

Section A – Question 2 **Hamlet with commentary**

Version 2



INTRODUCTION

This resource has been produced by the A Level Drama and Theatre assessor team to offer teachers an insight into how the assessment objectives are applied.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers.

The sample assessment material for this answer and commentary can be found on the A Level Drama and Theatre web page and accessed via the following link:
<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-a-level-gce-drama-and-theatre-h059-h459-from-2016/>



QUESTION 2 – HAMLET

- 2 Explain how a director could make the conflict in the opening scenes of the performance text relevant for a present-day audience. Justify your ideas with examples from the opening scenes of the performance text you have chosen for this question.

[20]

SAMPLE ANSWER

In the first moments of Hamlet, we see the castle guards encounter the ghost of the King for the first time. It is a moment of recognition and introduces the audience straight in to the action, a key area of the play which is then revealed and present throughout the play. It is important therefore that for a modern day audience, they still understand and can follow what has happened. This would possibly mean a change from those performances of Hamlet for an Elizabethan audience. Other opening scenes include Hamlet's first soliloquy, introduction to more characters and learning more of the attitudes he performances to others.

With the main intention to change the original setting of the play in mind, a modern director must first think of how they would like the characters to be portrayed. Many film and theatre directors take Hamlet's personality in different ways, depending on what they read in Shakespeare's directions and what the audience would feel more towards modern day situations against those of the time.

A unique change must be made for the language; it needs to be understandable and fit to more modern English. The director would not want an audience of today to learn little development of the plot due to this lack of language adaptation. But it must also have the same ideas and intentions of Shakespeare's style, along with their own changes. For example, in Elizabethan England stages, especially that of Shakespeare's globe theatre, the set would have been very minimal due to cost and how he has set certain areas in stage directions allocated in moments of his writing. For many areas, Shakespeare uses the simplest of directions and for set he would write: '(A guard platform of the castle)'. In the late 1500's the audience would not be surprised with seeing a set so simple, consisting normally of a few backdrops, chairs and the occasional prop but a modern day director would then have to use ideas to create their own more fitting set, aiding an audiences understanding and sensual experience.

When watching a modern day adaptation of the play in 2015, directed by Lyndsey Turner, compared to a Shakesperian play, that may have been very minimal, she chose to use very extravagant set and costumes, to show the era and emphasise the difference in class, especially that of the higher, focusing on whites and reds, regal colours used mainly by King Claudius and Queen Gertrude throughout. But to help bring the piece to a modern day style, Turner aided this by dressing Hamlet in modern clothing, jeans and t-shirts although chose to keep the same language style.

By following a Stanislavskian technique, the director can show the Shakesperian simple plotline of the play and the audience can follow more of what is going on. They can connect with the more real life characters and I feel that this would be the best approach, not just for modern day but for any audience past or present, this style present in all of Shakespeare's work. Although this is the case, there may be key areas that the director wants to show in a more stylistic way, following Brecht or Artaudian style, using music, abstract movements or sounds.

If I was a modern day director choosing to put on Hamlet, I would make sure to adapt certain areas for the audience to help them feel for what I am trying to achieve. I would take characters and work on how I feel that they should be portrayed. I would take in to importance the set, costume and style and work on each, depending on whether I want to keep the more simplistic Shakesperian areas.

Marks: 6 out of 20

Commentary

The candidate has immediately addressed the need to modernise the original context in order to appeal to a modern audience. There is an understanding of Elizabethan staging and its minimal approach. The candidate feels that for a modern audience, there is a need to challenge this concept making reference to a production which used extravagant set and costume. However the candidate does not make specific staging suggestions of their own. There is some reference to costume, colour and style but no specific reference to the idea of conflict.

For the rest of the essay, the candidate discusses a combination of practitioners' techniques but the discussion lacks focus or relevance to the question. The answer reflects a basic knowledge and understanding of the text but there is a lack of focus on the demands of the question and only a basic reference to staging and costume as theatrical methods of communicating ideas.

How the answer could be improved

The candidate should make specific reference to the key moments within the first 10 minutes of the play and give detailed, justified ideas of their interpretation of the text using a full range of performance and theatrical elements such as set, costume, physical and vocal work, lighting, sound, use of space and proxemics – in order to reflect the theme of conflict.

A strong answer would also include details as to how the original Elizabethan performance conditions might impact on a modern performance.



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