

**AS LEVEL**

*Candidate Style Answers*

# **DRAMA AND THEATRE**

H059

For first teaching in 2016

## **Section A – Question 2 Necessary Targets**

Version 1



## QUESTION 2 – NECESSARY TARGETS

- 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

Necessary Targets – Eve Ensler

The conflict in the opening scene of Eve Ensler's *Necessary Targets* is between the two therapists as they prepare to go on a working visit to a refugee camp to hear the stories of the Bosnian Women. It's a modern play about a conflict which the majority of a modern audience would be familiar with, but the themes could easily be applied to a 2017 Syrian refugee camp.

JS is the elder, more experienced and wealthy of the two women. She lives in an expensive home with furniture that looks like it can't be used. To emphasise the modern context of the play, I would use a chair which is modern in design and a table crafted of wood. I would have some modern art hanging on the wall to represent modernity, wealth and taste. The chairs should be expensive looking but not identical to show that JS is inclusive and stylish but does not like everything to be the same. There would be a suggestion that she has gathered items of furniture throughout her life rather buying the whole lot as a matching flat pack! This emphasises her maturity and experience. Melissa highlights her lack of ease with these surroundings early on when she mistakes the coaster for the art object. Her nervousness is evident as she spills her drink. As a director I would emphasise this whilst keeping it in the naturalistic style Ensler intended. Melissa could continually glance around her and appear hesitant in her speech, she could fiddle with the rim of the glass she is holding. Her discomfort with her surroundings could be shown by the way she sits 'awkwardly on the chair' perching on the edge and leaning forwards. She is at conflict with her surroundings and seems nervous of the older woman. Her repetition of the word 'Like' is typical of a modern young person which demonstrates how young she is and this could be further emphasised by her having a high tone and a pattern of speech which goes up at the end of a sentence to create a slightly questioning effect. It would also suggest that she is of a lower social position than JS which makes her nervous in these surroundings. This is later reversed when they arrive in the refugee camp and Melissa is initially much more relaxed than JS. In contrast JS should seem relaxed and should 'own' the chair she sits in. She will move gracefully and seem very at home in these surroundings.

In order to explore the underlying conflict between the two women, I would have the actors explore their subtext which should bring out the threat that they perceive each other to be. JS sees Melissa as very young but recognises that she has experience in a field she has herself never explored and is perhaps unsure about. She is at home in these surroundings but will later on behave very differently in the refugee camp without her 'little luxuries'

JS asks a lot of questions which make Melissa defensive and protective. This could be emphasised by her crossing her arms across her chest and crossing and uncrossing her legs. In spite of the surface tension, there are moments when the two women bond and find an equal status. During this moment they could hold eye contact for the first time and laugh together in a more natural way to show that a connection has been made. Melissa could uncross her legs and admire her shoes before moving further back in her chair and breathing out deeply to show she is relaxing a bit. Her reluctant admiration for the older woman could manifest itself in a subconscious mirroring of her actions.

JS will be more sophisticated at hiding her discomfort and her voice should remain steady as she asks questions and interacts with the younger woman. Her voice should be very steady and professional yet there could be a slight air of disapproval as she speaks 'you're a writer and a therapist, that's very unusual'. Melissa should respond quickly with 'trauma counsellor' to emphasise the fact that she is defensive and looking for a reason to assert her status. It would be interesting as a director, to explore the shifting status relationships between these two characters by getting the actors to play the scene several times with different relationships. This would enable them to recognise the silent conflict between them and struggle for supremacy and would highlight the moments that the power shifts.

As the scene goes on and the women relax, they become more open with each other. JS admits that she sees the task as an honor that should be fulfilled rather than something she had planned and Melissa shares stories of her experiences in Haiti and Rwanda. This sets the scene for the audience and reminds us that the conflicts being discussed are both real events from our world. It is important that both the characters are played as naturally as possible in order to emphasize the realism of their conversation. The play was inspired by real life events experienced by Eve Ensler in a refugee camp and it is essential that the characters are portrayed as realistically as possible. I would not break the fourth wall but would choose a theatre space which allows the audience to be close to the women and feel that they are a part of the atmosphere between them. A thrust stage would work well for this as it would seem that the crisis the women are going to support is thrust into our lives and impossible to ignore.

The developing warmth between the women is challenged when JS uses the word assistant. When Melissa questions her on it, we should hear from her tone that she dislikes the word 'assistant' she should sit up tall and speak confidently when she recited her experience and the fact she needs stories for her writing. JS should remain calm as she smooths things over, but should perhaps hesitate slightly as she says 'I am sure this will be alright' to foreshadow the conflict that later arises when Melissa wants to record conversations for a transcript of the refugee women. JS then becomes quite maternal as she encourages Melissa to eat and Melissa rejects this by getting annoyed, this could be shown by her speaking quickly and getting a sharp tone. She does then backtrack and could try to smooth it over with a smile and eye contact when she says 'I'm okay'.

The final exchange between the women involves Melissa winding up the glamorous JS by suggesting she will need to wear army gear. JS could rise for the first time when she hears this to show her rising concern, she should put her hand to her throat to show the discomfort that she is trying to hide. Melissa will enjoy this reaction and the power and control it lends her and should slide further back in her chair to show power. This is short lived though and when she repeats the word assistant she spills her drink and gets flustered. This suggests that she is hiding something and JS regains power and composure by stating 'I make you nervous'. For this line she could stand behind her and place a comforting yet controlling hand on the younger woman's shoulder. She should then move swiftly back to the other side of the table and assist in the mopping up. Her clam wipes should contrast with Melissa's frantic wiping. The scene should end with the 'oddly frozen' women staring at each other across the table which represents the differences between them.



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