

**AS LEVEL**

*Candidate Style Answers*

# **DRAMA AND THEATRE**

H059

For first teaching in 2016

## **Section A – Question 3 Caucasian Chalk Circle**

Version 1



## QUESTION 3 – CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE

- 3 “My family is my strength and my weakness.” Explain how a present-day director could approach the performance text to emphasise the social attitudes towards family at the time the performance text was written? Justify your ideas with examples from at least three scenes from the performance text you have chosen for this question.

[20]

### SAMPLE ANSWER

Caucasian Chalk Circle by Bertolt Brecht:

Caucasian Chalk Circle was set in 1944 after world war two when rich were rich and poor were poor, this is shown in scene one, when the Governor's wife has two clowny doctors to look after her son this is shown when she she tells them to look after him. This shows that she doesn't want to look after her son herself and doesn't really care about him whereas Grusha has to stop her rituals of going to church, to fetch a goose for the Governor's Easter banquet as she is a peasant. A present day director might show this by having the characters step out into third person to explain how the characters feel both rich and poor or have monologues showing their different viewpoints of their life due to their wealth.

At the start of scene two the fat prince seems to be the strength of the Governors family, wishing the Governor's wife happy Easter trying to cheer everyone up, but at the end of the scene it is shown that the fat prince turns on his brother letting the iron shirt's behead him, which draws a weakness in to the family, as Michael doesn't have a farther anymore and the Governor's wife is on her own. A director may show this by getting the actor who has the role of the fat prince to thought track so then the audience understand what is going through his mind with in the scene.

Grusha is shown to feel lonely on her own and can't keep away from Michael when he is abandoned as he keeps her company. This relates to the quote “my family is my strength and my weakness” as Grusha claims that she is Michael's mother and is part of her family which gives her strength as she is not alone anymore, but also Michael is her weakness because she has to risk her life for him and try and help him grow up. Also in scene three she asks her grandpa for a jug of milk but due to the rations she cannot afford it which is also classed as a family weakness. From Michael's perspective his family was his weakness as the Governor's wife didn't want to look after him and thought that her husband liked Michael more than her. Michael's family became his strength when Grusha claimed him as she was willing to do anything for him. A modern day director would probably emphasise these strengths and weaknesses either by having a narrator telling the audience when the strengths and weaknesses happen or by getting the actors to use gestus to convey the strength and weaknesses.

Within scene four Grusha has crossed the bridge and is living with her brother but within the 1940's men were mainly in charge of women and Laverenti forces her to get a husband, who is a man who is slowly dying, which is quite a harsh social attitude towards her as it is someone she doesn't want to marry and Laverenti is also making Grusha break her promise she had made with Simon to marry him when he returns. A director would probably get some actors to act out the wedding scene within the middle of scene four and then get some other actors to act out a scene of a women's right campaign using placards, showing what it was like for women after the war.

For the end scene Azdak decides to draw the chalk circle and determine who is the real mother of Michael. This scene largely relates to the quote mentioned earlier, “my family is my strength and my weakness” as Grusha didn't want to hurt Michael pulling him out of the chalk circle she let him go each time, just leaving the Governor's wife to yank him out the circle but then luckily because Grusha was a good mother she was allowed to claim her family back. Although she had to marry the old dying man so she could keep Michael safe and Simon was confused and mad at her when he found out she had married a dying man and has got a child he forgives her and fights Grusha's case with her which represents the strength within their family as at the end Simon and Grusha get married to each other and they helped each other through their tough times. A director may show Grusha's growing her strength by her posture within each scene at the start she wouldn't have much posture at all as she is just classed as working peasant but as she becomes more confident in herself her posture can become more straight and upright.

On the other hand, the Governor's wife's family turns into a weakness as she loses her husband at the start and doesn't show much respect to her family. Due to the fact that she had left her child in a rush and didn't go back for him she disclaimed her child and when it resulted in the chalk circle scene although she pulled Michael out the circle it was clear that she wasn't the right mother for him. As she loses Michael from her family her weakness shows even more as all her estates that she owed when she looked after Michael was turned into a garden called "The garden of Azdak" for all the children to play on, so the Governor's wife lost everything. The only strength within her family thought out the play was that she was the Governor's wife so was quite wealthy. To show this a director may change the costume the governor's wife wears in each scene making her look like she is wearing more lower class clothes each time her family falls under a weakness, to show that she is losing her wealth and money.



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