

AS LEVEL

Candidate Style Answers

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H059

For first teaching in 2016

Section A – Question 4 Live Like Pigs 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 4 – LIVE LIKE PIGS

- 4 Discuss how cultural status could be demonstrated through the creative use of set design for the family environment. Justify your ideas with examples from at least three scenes from the performance text you have chosen for this question.

[20]

SAMPLE ANSWER

Arden was a champion of the Kitchen Sink Drama which, in a novel way, held a magnifying glass to the inner cogs of the lower classes. I feel that this should be represented through the sceneography of the set for the successful presentation of the play. Arden's *Live Like Pigs* leans, to some extent, to a Brechtian style and though I don't believe the set should follow the strict conventions of Brechtian theatre, I do believe that there should be forms of non-naturalism within the set. I feel that *Live Like Pigs* demands a total theatre style presentation whereby the semiotics of the set itself, is communicating as much as the action on stage – the play deals with presentation and class with the motif of aesthetics at its core; it is for this reason I feel the set should have its own narrative.

The play examines the relationship one has with their abode – the Jacksons and the Sawneys both live in in a pair of semis built by the 'Corporation'; by definition it means that the houses themselves are both identical but opposite in equal measure. I believe that this should be explored through the semiotics of the set. I believe that the way in which their houses are presented stands for an extended metaphor of how they view themselves as well as their view of the 'Corporation' itself. This would challenge the questions of class systems and resonate with the audience in terms of Marxism itself.

I feel that Scene One should be a very visual exposition for the audience as well as the characters as they explore their new 'residence'. I feel that the audience should be met with a set that connotes the situation. This would best be achieved with a clear use of levels. The Sawneys' house should be situated on the base of the stage with a clear view of the front façade of the house with a view of the living room and similarly, the Jacksons house should be presented above the Sawneys' house with a similar presentation of the set but designed differently, as I will explain. I feel that the front doors of the houses should have a clear communication of the narrative itself. The front door is the gateway to somebody's house and, as such, should communicate their relationship with it. This should then be a reoccurring visual motif whereby the door of the Sawneys' gradually decays and becomes less 'welcoming' as the hostility of the situation of them living in a fixed abode rises. Similarly there should be pride and decoration building up on the door of the Jackson's house. This will then act as a direct comparative of the two households and can then be semiotic of their family dynamic. The Sawneys' house itself should communicate their relationship with it – I feel this could be achieved by the scale of the property in its design. I feel that walls and objects should appear larger and with the use of angling in the walls it will make the property seem officious and overwhelming. This will communicate the notion of unrest with the Sawneys' in their relationship with the property that they are being forced to live in. I feel that there can also be clever interaction with the set in with the use of Brechtian conventions by not adhering to the typical paradigm of social living... This could simply be achieved by an intolerance to use furniture and objects within the house in a normal way. For instance, as the set will be open plan, Sawney family members could actively walk around doorways and such. This could then become a motif that breaks the fourth wall and the audience becomes aware of. I feel that during the play there could be a reoccurring action where the upper 'Jackson' household deposits their waste down into the house of the Sawney's. This would be a clear presentation of society and question what Arden was trying to highlight with his text. There would be clear links to social and cultural context explored here that allow the audience to see this metaphor for society. Importantly, the action below should resume, unchanged by the falling of the debris... This would explore the wider argument of how the Sawneys are not interesting in the upper classes and vice versa.

I feel that Scene Eight has particular scope for clever use of sceneography. I would design a bed that is vertically facing the audience so that actors can stand on a platform and it would appear they are in the bed – the sheet of the bed would then be hung to appear it is being held down by gravity upon them. This would be between the two sets and this itself would be a symbol within the play. The two families are so different in their worlds but through their infidelity, they meet in the same 'beds' therefore the same bed would be used for both families – this would portray the crossover in the family dynamic cleverly positioned between the two 'worlds'. I feel that this would be an effective framing devise for the infidelity scenes as it would allow the audience to see that on a raw level the families are both the same but its only their façade that is different represented by their families.

In the final scene, where denouement of the play explores the consequences of these two classes residing in the same space, I feel that the set should communicate the decay of society as well as the family dynamic. I feel there should be a strong visual representation of the cyclical nature of society and a stamp that reads that the core of society is deeper than a house or possessions. The Sawneys' house, having been neglected throughout the play, should resemble that of a dump – a noman's land. This is a political statement against the hierarchy and corporation. Through Brechtian conventions the set can be gradually taken away up until the point. The lower level of the Sawneys should be filled with the rubbish of the upper society. There could be a clever use of dismantling the set during this scene to replicate the non-fixed nature of the Swaneys and society. This would dismantle the illusion of theatre and, in a Brechtian style, force the audience to think about the message of the play.

Marks: 11 out of 20

Commentary

The essay reflects an understanding of the genre and style of the play appropriately referencing both Brecht and Total Theatre. It is apparent that the candidate understands the concept of cultural status and how the different status of the two opposing families is a vital element of the play.

Some relevant and effective points are raised regarding the house of the Sawney's with reference to the use of levels, stage position and the angle of walls. However some points require a fuller and more developed argument in order to make ideas clearer. Some valid and interesting ideas are raised but not all are fully explored and there is a need to separate out a large number of ideas which are pushed together in one paragraph. This would suggest more attention should be given to the initial structure of the answer in planning clearly what points will be made.

There is little reference to the overall design where the use of sketches might be supportive, or the use of colour, materials, furniture and props. There is an understanding of the transitions of the set in representing the downfall of the family and or society with the idea of the upper classes dumping their rubbish on the lower classes.

How the answer could be improved

Whilst there is an overview of the design concept and the use of the performance space – the design does need to be explored in more detail with reference to a wider set of theatrical and design elements.

Ideas should be clearly established, described and justified in relation to the question before raising the next idea. In preparation, students must consider the details of a set design and how it will reflect certain themes or contexts in support of the play from the point of view of the director/set designer.



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