

AS LEVEL

Candidate Style Answers

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H059

For first teaching in 2016

Section A – Question 5 Frankenstein 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 5 – FRANKENSTEIN

- 5 “Life is not simple, and people can’t be boxed into being either heroes or villains.” Discuss how an actor could use vocal and facial expression in their interactions with others to characterise the complex personality traits of a hero. Justify your ideas with examples from at least three scenes from the performance text you have chosen for this question.

[20]

SAMPLE ANSWER

Frankenstein – Nick Dear

In the opening scene of Frankenstein the stage directions describe how the creature comes to life. It is hard to decipher whether he is Hero or Villain. He looks hideous yet he is childlike as he plays with a kettle and laughs at his dizziness. I would emphasise this oxymoron by having him grimace facially but sit with his legs open and feet turned up as a child might. When he reaches out to Frankenstein I would keep the characterisation ambiguous – it would look like it could be an embrace but one which might be misjudged and become too strong. If he grips around Frankenstein’s neck this would emphasise the danger he represents and even if he is smiling his face would be so distorted with make up that it would not be a comforting smile. His movement would be recognisable as human but clumsy and grotesque in its lack of co-ordination and he would stagger across the stage in a lumbering way – including the audience in his stare. When Frankenstein pushes him away and rejects him the creature should look sad and vulnerable, perhaps hanging his head and rubbing his head in a childlike way. He should appear both vulnerable and terrifying at the same time – not clearly classified as either a tragic hero or villain.

When the creature meets the blind De Lacey who cannot see his appearance to be terrified of it, he will respond differently. He shovels food into his mouth in an animalistic way but the words and sounds he makes are just learned from his interactions with the beggars in the previous scene. We should see his frustration as he tries to claw at the guitar - he could look a mixture of sad and angry by frowning and turning his mouth down, perhaps barring his teeth in frustration. Vocally his noises are animalistic and pure in their emotion as he hasn’t yet learned to be refined. When De Lacey plays for him we should see the creature become transfixed, his tense body should relax, his face become calm and the hint of a smile should spread over his face. He could sway slightly to the music and appear more relaxed than we have previously seen him. When he repeats ‘Music’ his voice should be softer and the vowel sounds more rounded as he enjoys a word which signifies something pleasurable. At this moment the audience should realise that this beast is capable of finer emotions and has the ability to be moved by music and feel very human emotions. As his relationship with de Lacey develops we should see a more refined creature developing, he will sit on a chair and copy the old man’s movements as well as his sounds. When de Lacey touches him he should recoil slightly but then seem to enjoy the touch of another person – rather like a dog enjoying being stroked. When he loses concentration and says ‘paradise’ he should attempt a smile and look directly at de Lacey with his body language open in a non-threatening way. In this scene the audience should feel sympathy for the creature and recognise that he is keen to become civilised and possesses human qualities. In some ways de Lacey becomes a heroic figure as he is able to respond to the creature in a compassionate way without being frightened by his appearance. Through his example the audience grow fond of the creature and recognise that he is not an evil character. He learns quickly and his vocal range should develop and undulate more to enjoy the sounds of the poetry he recites. The rasping voice he first used will become more human as he acquires more language. In the same way his movement should become more fluid and human, with the childish actions giving way to more mature gestures. He should touch his heart a lot to show how he longs for love.

When Felix sees the creature and shouts at him, the creature should regress and make the noises he made previously. His quiet and controlled movements should give way to wild sweeping gestures as he attempts to protect himself. It is important that he does not lash out at Felix but cowers behind de Lacey who he has come to trust. The audience should have full sympathy for him and the unkind way his is judged and should reflect on how fear can turn to aggression so quickly. Had Felix treated the creature with the sympathy and warmth his father gave him, things would have been different. As it is the creature bursts out and we see him in a rage which is an exaggerated version of Felix’s.

I would have him mirroring the actions and facial expressions we saw Felix present towards him. When he takes a flame to the cottage, the audience should be horrified but understand his motivation. If he is mirroring the actions of Felix it will demonstrate that his anger is learned and he is a victim as well as a villain. Perhaps he could be defined as a tragic hero whose fatal flaw is not being able to control his anger and frustration against a world who rejects him.

The creature's frustration grows and prompts terrible actions but he is still not seen as completely villainous. He explains to Frankenstein that he is lonely and would be contented if only he had a wife. In the scene where he meets his wife we should see again the gentle side of his character and as he touches her cheek, he should visibly tremble with the emotion of at last having a mate. His voice should be soft and he should extend his hand towards Victor in a human way as he tells him he admires him. He remains polite and civil initially when Frankenstein refuses to bring her to life and shows his desperation by pleading softly and gently touching his new bride. His declarations of love are educated and have reflections of the rhetoric he has learned in the poems. This could be emphasised by a soft voice and enjoyment of the sounds of the words he speaks. The stage directions state that he is more capable of love than Frankenstein and we should see this as he clutches his heart in genuine adoration. When he looks at his bride to be we should see absolute adoration that is entirely human and reminiscent of other romantic heroes such as Romeo. His eyes should open wider and his mouth curl upwards as if in a smile. He should lower his head as if to show respect which alludes to the idea that he could be a respectful and gentle lover. These touching gestures will be offset by his hideous physical appearance leading the audience to question their responses to him. Are we repulsed or sympathetic? This will ask the question – should imperfect people not be allowed to love? How much do we judge on physical appearance?

It is the constantly undulating audience response to the creature that makes 'Frankenstein' so exciting. One minute we could cry for him as a tragic hero the next we see him as a pure villain creating mayhem and destruction in others' lives. This response is mirrored in his creator who has a similarly complicated balance of heroic and villainous characteristics.

Marks: 19 out of 20

Commentary

The candidate immediately gets to grips with the character and the question posed. There is consistent analysis of the creature's personality and whether he is a villain or a hero. Different key moments within the play are discussed in terms of the relationship with others and how this reflects the character of the creature. The work is fully focused on the question, there is a clear argument and the structure of the writing is coherent and effective reflecting the development of the argument and the development of the character of the creature within the play. There is an excellent knowledge and understanding of the role and how the character develops and of how the relationship with the audience changes. The candidate is fully aware of how the understanding and interpretation of the role is communicated to the audience through a range of vocal expression and body language. Justification of ideas is full and consistent and this work is considered to be detailed and comprehensive.

How the answer could be improved

If there were developments to be given then it would be appropriate to add rehearsal techniques into the essay in order to demonstrate the process which might be used in order to develop the complexity of the personality. There is no reference made to the social, cultural and historical context of the piece and therefore the role.



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