

**GCSE (9–1)**  
*Candidate Style Answers*

# DRAMA

J316  
For first teaching in 2016

## Section A: Death of a Salesman – exemplar 1 with commentary

Version 2



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# INTRODUCTION

This resource has been produced by senior members of the GCSE 9-1 Drama examining team to offer teachers an insight into how the assessment objectives are applied.

Please note that as these responses have not been through full moderation, 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 these answers and commentary can be found on the GCSE 9-1 Drama web page.: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse-drama-j316-from-2016/>

# QUESTION 1

- 1 Select **one** line from the list below. Explain how it has an impact on this character in the performance text you have studied.

***Blood Brothers***

‘Edward: Well, my mummy doesn’t allow me to play down here actually’

***Death of a Salesman***

‘Happy: See, Biff, everybody around me is so false that I’m constantly lowering my ideals...’

***Find Me***

‘Jean: Other mothers cope. I feel so inadequate’

***Gizmo***

‘Rust: I’m walking away now. I suggest you do the same, eh’

***Kindertransport***

‘Evelyn: You’ve made a commitment to moving into that place. Stick by it’

***Missing Dan Nolan***

‘Pauline: ...I just delegated it... Ask your father’

***Misterman***

‘Thomas: It all began from a Nothing. This loud crashing all began as a whisper...’

[4]

## SAMPLE ANSWER

See, Biff, everybody around me is so false that I’m constantly lowering my ideals...’

This proves that the American Dream is a seasonal thing which grants someone with this ambition of improving their status for only a limited time. Before an individual knows it, that sensation is snatched away and the world continues to keep on going. To keep up with the world, and hopefully regain his notion of the American Dream once again, Happy continues to lower his ideals for people. Happy’s way of keeping up with the world must consist of him pleasing those surrounding him before pleasing himself.

## COMMENTARY

The candidate scored four out of a possible four marks. An accomplished response which covers relevant potential impacts on Happy with clear specific reference to moments from the text.

The candidate has been awarded full marks as they have focused in detail and demonstrated clear potential impacts, with sound understanding, of the relevance of the line, specifically in relation to the character.

## QUESTION 2

- 2 Select **one** stage design from the photographs below. Justify why this could be suitable for a production of the performance text you have studied.

[4]

### SAMPLE ANSWER

I would choose set 4. The towering and angular shapes that are seen within the design are representative of the towering and angular shapes of the New York skyline as well as the greyness within the design which adds to the concrete jungle and high rise blocks of apartments that the Loman's live in. Having the centre stage focus of a dining table, chairs with entrances and exits going up and down makes for easy manipulation of upstairs to the bedrooms and downstairs to the garage/yard. The revolve which is cut out and obvious from the photograph also means that it can be turned 180 degrees and the memories of Willy's life can happen on the other side of the revolve. The set design also appears to be raised and gives the option to have a live orchestra down in the pit to the front of the set.

### COMMENTARY

The candidate scored three out of a possible four marks. The candidate's suggestions are well reasoned in referring to the potential of Set 4 and some detailed understanding in relation to proxemics.

To gain full marks, the candidate needed to further justify, with reference to specific moments from the text, in order to fully demonstrate their understanding of suitability.

## QUESTION 3

3 Select the character from the performance text you have studied:

<b><i>Blood Brothers</i></b>	Mrs Lyons	<b><i>Death of a Salesman</i></b>	Linda
<b><i>Find Me</i></b>	Jean	<b><i>Gizmo</i></b>	Bernice
<b><i>Kindertransport</i></b>	Faith	<b><i>Missing Dan Nolan</i></b>	Greg
<b><i>Misterman</i></b>	Mrs Cleary		

Complete the table below by listing **three** ways in which an actor could use their voice to portray this character. Justify your choices with examples from the performance text you have studied.

[6]

### SAMPLE ANSWER

Use of Voice	Justification
Trepidation/hesitation	Linda opens the play with her first line with trepidation/hesitation because Willy has come home late at night and she dreads to think what she might be faced with.
Quiet and Calm	Linda knows that Willy is a volatile character and needs to be handled with patience. She manages Willy without him realising and this says a lot about their relationship.
Projection	Linda has two boys and husband that she constantly calls after and shouts out into the yard for, she needs to do this to represent the need for them to be outdoors trying to break free.

### COMMENTARY

The candidate scored six out of a possible six marks. An accomplished response. The uses of voice are highly thoughtful and relevant throughout. The candidate has been awarded top marks as they have justified in detail and identified clear use of voice throughout.

## QUESTION 4

- 4 Explain, using examples from the performance text you have studied, how stage directions can be used to support the actors in communicating their role to the audience.

[6]

### SAMPLE ANSWER

Stage directions are imperative within Death of Salesman to support the actors because of the shifts in time period. There are often whole paragraphs of stage directions which also give contextual understanding for the actors to show to the audience. At the start of the play for example the actors playing Biff and Happy are told "Sexuality is a colour on him, His brother is lost in a different way..." If the actors are given this information and just merely try to interpret the lines the meaning will be lost as Miller intended.

### COMMENTARY

The candidate scored four out of a possible six marks. A sound response. The candidate offers some clear examples of the uses of stage directions and describes how the actors could potentially use these to aid the delivery of some key moments within the performance text.

To gain additional marks, the candidate needs to demonstrate a deeper understanding of stage directions and the audience. Their understanding of the text in relation to stage directions sometimes lacks depth. Their response needs to explore the meaning/interpretation of text more in specific relation to key moments from the text. Offering examples from their practical work to explain and/or justify how stage directions have impacted on an audience, referring to specific moments from the script would allow for a more rounded response.

## QUESTION 5

- 5 Compare the advantages and disadvantages for an actor when presenting the performance text you have studied 'in the round'.

[6]

### SAMPLE ANSWER

Everyone is looking at the Loman family, having the audience on all sides of the family almost like a 'fly on the wall' would work with the concept of them feeling trapped and observed. The advantage of being in the round for the actors would help emphasise this feeling, the other advantage is the believability of characters being created and moving in naturalistically turning your back to certain audience members and characters as you would in normal life. The disadvantages is the set design and lighting design would be hampered by masking lines and sightlines a minimalistic set would need to be designed to be able to work effectively. The sound design and the imaginary world of Willy's mind being created with the flute sounds etc would work well in the round and the surround sound atmosphere would add to the actors world they are creating.

### COMMENTARY

The candidate scored five out of a possible six marks. A very strong response. The candidate has demonstrated some clear examples in relation to both the advantages and disadvantages of performing 'in the round', with some very sound reasoning in relation to specific aspects of the text. A strong understanding of aspects of design and technical needs are also discussed within the potential staging.

To gain the top mark, the candidate needs to discuss this staging with greater acknowledgement of the potential impact on the audience; engagement with audience; more versatile seating; set changes in front of the audience, and discuss key moments from the text in relation to this.



## QUESTION 6

- 6 Discuss how a director could stage the opening of the performance text you have studied to engage the audience from the start. You may refer to the direction of the performers and/or design of the scene in your answer.

[8]

### SAMPLE ANSWER

As a director Arthur Miller has given you over a page of stage directions to help with setting the scene and starting the play. I would have a split level set to not only represent the upstairs and downstairs of the family home but to also show the status shifts between the characters, Linda hold her status throughout the play and begins the play upstairs. I would also light the areas of the stage with shuttering off the light to create boundaries from one room to the next rather than flats or scenery so that when the characters leave or enter a room the boundaries are broken literally through walking through the light lines. I would have a live orchestra with the flute played live and at the start of the play I would have the flute playing the American national anthem as Willy is obsessed with the American dream.

### COMMENTARY

The candidate scored five out of a possible eight marks. The candidate clearly understands the role of a director and offers very workable ideas towards the direction of the opening sequence. They demonstrate some clear design elements and a sound knowledge and understanding of proxemics and semiotics from the onset.

The question requires the candidate to discuss the engagement of the audience. To gain further marks, the candidate needs to demonstrate a clearer understanding of the potential impact on the audience for each directorial decision they make which is again backed up with explicit examples from the text to justify the decisions made.

## QUESTION 7

- 7 Describe **one** suitable costume for a character from the performance text you have studied. Justify why your choices are appropriate.

In your answer, name the character from the performance text you have studied. You may include a sketch of your design with annotations in your answer.

[8]

### SAMPLE ANSWER



This is the costume design I would have for the character of Willy Loman. Willy is a hardworking man first and foremost but he is also a salesman so I would have him in a suit. He isn't in a brightly coloured suit as his mental health and general age deterioration needs to be reflected within his brown worn suit. His shoes at the start of the play would be dull, as he arrives home tired, they wouldn't be dirty though as he drives. As his mood peaks and troughs this would be reflected in the tightness or looseness of his tie, the tighter and smaller the knot gets the more wound up and agitated he is – also giving a sense of foreboding of his ultimate death. He would have a green tie as he desperately seeks a large open space. He would also have his sleeves rolled up as he often comes home and enjoys playing with his boys in 'the yard.'

### COMMENTARY

The candidate scored seven out of a possible eight marks. An accomplished response. The candidate has developed a super concept of the costume for Willy with excellent justification with examples as to why this costume is suitable for the character throughout the piece.

The candidates overall design is excellent. However, to gain the top mark, the candidate needs to refer to costume design in relation to time and period. This is a key factor in any potential design and should be considered clearly by candidates in their response. Annotating the drawing would help also, as would some consideration of make-up and hair.

## QUESTION 8

- 8 Explain, using two examples, how the social and/or historical context can be seen in the performance text you have studied.

[8]

### SAMPLE ANSWER

At the end of the 1940's America was struggling with the fall out from the 2nd world war, the first workers to be hit by the change in the economic situation were the lowest-paid, unskilled workers like field labourers, shop clerks and salesmen. In the play, Biff has been working as a field labourer for a small-scale farmer and Happy is an assistant to the assistant clerk in a clothing store. Both of these kinds of workers would have experienced a significant reduction in their wages and spending power. At the same time, other members of American society (shareholders, professionals, businessmen, middle management) would have been enjoying the benefits of a massive boost in corporate earnings. The rich started getting richer while the poor started getting poorer – a trend that has continued in America to this day.

Another significant change in the economic situation was an increase in the use of credit, which triggered more inflation. Cash-rich corporations encouraged customers to use credit to buy products at inflated prices that they could not normally afford. People used credit to buy items like cars and houses. In *Death of a Salesman* Willy relied heavily on credit, as we see the pressures of his repayments restricting his ability to afford basic domestic necessities and where Linda has to take control of the family finances.

### COMMENTARY

The candidate scored six out of a possible eight marks. A very strong response. Two highly relevant examples are offered and some clear links to aspects of the text in relation to the pressures of credit and the economic situation of America at the time are discussed. The candidate reveals an excellent understanding of the two key issues they discuss.

To gain a top mark the candidate needs to further select and clearly explain how these key social and/or historical issues are used/discussed within the play. This needs to be demonstrated with strong reference to key moments/scenes also. Candidates should discuss how their chosen two examples are explored and developed in the text and the potential impact they have on character, situation and ultimately the audience within these key aspects of the text. An accomplished response to this question requires the candidate to clearly highlight how their two chosen issues are discussed at different stages throughout the text. This should then be justified with an acknowledgement of how some aspects could be performed to exemplify the outcomes of their chosen issues. The potential impact that this could have on the audience should be demonstrated through an understanding of character context and/or the dramatic effect of key moments from the text.



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