

**AS LEVEL**

*Exemplar Candidate Work*

# DRAMA AND THEATRE

H059

For first teaching in 2016

## **Exemplar 7:**

AS Level portfolio for a performance  
of *Metamorphosis*

Version 1



# Introduction

This work has been produced by Drama students as part of their school curriculum time, studying practitioners and performing from a text. It offers teachers an insight into how the process can be recorded by students in their research report and portfolio for Process to performance (Component 01/02/03/04).

As these responses have not been through moderation, an indication of the level of each response has not been included. A version of this resource which provides an indication of the level of the response will be made available in addition to this version in due course.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of an endorsed approach to creating a research report or portfolio.



# EXEMPLAR CANDIDATE WORK 7

## SAMPLE ANSWER

### Metamorphosis

We looked at how the social context affected the way characters acted compared to how they would act if the play had been written in the 2010's. During the time the play was set, women did not have the freedom as they do today. You can tell that they were gaining some freedom as over the course of the play, Mrs Samsa shows more independence from what her husband says by entering Gregor's room against her husband's request. Mr Samsa also personifies the father figure which at the time would have controlled everything going on in the house while in our current era, men and women share responsibilities out more. Gregor's illness could be interpreted in modern day as an illness such as depression which has similar side effects to Gregor's transformation as back when the play was written was hidden more due to the pressures of family life. More recently, conditions such as depression can be treated more openly and would only be made worse if contained and hidden by the family of the sufferer which is how the condition is dealt with in metamorphosis.

We interpreted the scene of Gregor waking up for the first time as a bug from a modern perspective and my group agreed that Gregor would suffer from a drug addiction. We made Mr Samsa more of an abusive father and Mrs Samsa more independent which is similar to the play as Mrs Samsa has moments where she argues against her husband. Greta's age changed to about five or six years old to make her more innocent and to provoke audience feelings of pity towards her. We also decided that Greta would be the reason for Gregor's turn to drugs which links to the play as Gregor works to get Greta to the conservatorium. The clerk was replaced with a social worker who was checking on the family's situation. We decided this was more modern and realistic as Gregor would have originally attempted to hide his addiction. Just as Gregor tried to hide how tough the work was around Greta. We performed this with a split scene so that the audience could see Gregor using drugs in his bedroom while the rest of the family could not. We also used simultaneous choreographed movement so that it could maintain similarities to the original play.

We explored the characterisation of Gregor and how he changed emotionally and physically into a beetle. We did this by choosing three segments from the beginning, middle and end of the production and suggesting positions that could characterise Gregor throughout his transformation. For the line at the beginning of the play, I decided Gregor would be sat down, slightly slumped over to illustrate the feeling that he was fed up with his job. He would use the Californian level of tension as he would be tired but not completely relaxed due to the pain in his back at the beginning of the play. Half way through his transformation, he would be half beetle and therefore I decided the level of tension would be suspense. I made the position uncomfortable on the floor by crossing my hands over, folding my left leg up and putting my right leg at a right-angle. This reflects his physical state as he would be in pain and uncomfortable in his new body. For the last line, the level of tension would be passion. This is because he is fully beetle which would cause him to be in an uncomfortable position. I laid on my back and made every joint an angle to make it look uncomfortable and angular.

We explored Gregor's language during his monologue near the end of the play. Throughout the play, Gregor's language becomes more intellectual than before he was a beetle. Gregor uses longer words than the rest of the family like 'conservatorium' to suggest that he is more intelligent than them. Because Gregor doesn't interact with his family as much, he uses more rhetorical questions and pauses which would be an effect of being alone. I changed the language of the monologue to make it sound more beetle-like. I swapped out the intellectual words for shorter, simpler ones in an attempt to make it sound as though Gregor didn't remember longer words. I also made him stumble over 'appreciate' to show the struggle of getting words out. I found that it didn't have the same effect on the audience as the original as the audience cared less for my Gregor due to his lack of intelligent speech. The language Kafka and Berkoff used to make the audience feel for Gregor as the play reached its conclusion was well chosen as it showed the audience the humanity of Gregor and presented the opinion that the rest of the family were not as human as we would first perceive them to be.

We explored vocal awareness by taking a character from metamorphosis and deducing how they would feel at a certain point. I chose to portray Greta near the end where she claims that the beetle is not Gregor any more. I decided to show a regretful side to Greta which is not shown in the play by incorporating sniffing and sobbing to make it sound convincing, so that the audience feels sorry for her and her situation. By using this technique Greta also appears more upset as this is how someone to act if they were very upset. I decided that she would not stop sobbing throughout as she would be deeply upset and would feel guilty for what she had suggested. I spoke quietly to show how she wouldn't want to tell anyone about it. I tried pausing in the middle of sentences, but this didn't aid the performance so I decided not to pause. I also tried altering the pace of the speech. First I tried speaking quickly, I decided that this was good but the audience might not pick up the speech, so I slowed it down a little.

We explored visual, aural, spatial using shadow techniques and background music. The group that I worked with chose the theme to American Horror Story as our background music as it creates an eerie and surreal feeling which complements the feeling the play imposes on the audience. We also decided to use a shadow effect to give the audience suspense and confusion which the family go through. I took the part of Mrs Samsa and pretended to sew as we moved behind the sheet. This was to clarify my character as only the shadow could be seen. We then, as a group, formed Gregor as a beetle. We lined up and took part of the body. I was the left lower arms. This was difficult as due to the level and angle the light was at, we and the audience could not see all of Gregor. If we were to do it again, we would make sure the light level and angle was more appropriate for the shadow effect. We used a white light as it produced the clearest image, however I would have liked to use red when we formed the beetle to create more tension.

For non-verbal communication, we looked at the Christmas flashback scene. I focused on how Greta would use her body language to convey emotion. When Gregor states he has a secret I put on a curious expression. Then, while he is distracted by Mrs Samsa, I went up behind him with a bounce in my step and tapped him on the shoulder. I started to do this as I felt it gave more of an interaction between Greta and Gregor. The bounce to Greta's step was to show excitement at the prospect of a surprise. When I spoke, I gesticulated wildly to show Greta's excitement to know the secret. When Gregor said 'orchestra' I covered my mouth with my hands to show her surprise and when he said 'conservatorium' I jumped up and down, spinning in a circle. The jumping and spinning was to show how excited and happy Greta was at the prospect of going to a conservatorium. This presents her as young, however as going to a conservatorium costs a lot of money, Greta could be around twelve or thirteen at the time. When I spoke my line I stopped jumping and spinning and looked at Gregor smiling widely.

When exploring the practitioner Steven Berkoff, we used Total Theatre. Total Theatre places an emphasis on mime and physical, mechanical movements set within minimal set and few props. Sound effects are used to make the mime seem more un-naturalistic to the audience and also to make it grotesque. In groups we explored the meal scene from Metamorphosis where Gregor eats noisily. I took the part of Mrs Samsa and as I mimed opening a cupboard, I made squeaking noises to create the image of the cupboard door opening. I used mime as I leaned back very far when I opened the cupboard door to exaggerate it. Then we mimed the eating scene, I mimed cutting something on a plate by slicing three times whilst making squeaking noises to show the knife scraping the plate. Next I mimed picking up toast and eating it, I used a large chewing motion to emphasise the fact that I was eating to the audience to make it grotesquely exaggerated to the audience. Lastly, I put down the rest of the mimed sandwich and picked up a glass and drank from it. When I drank from the glass, I made 'glugging' sounds to inform the audience of what I was doing. We mimed this in unison as a group except for Gregor. We increased the volume to try to drown out the grotesqueness of Gregor's eating, which made our own noises grotesque.



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