

AS LEVEL

Exemplar Candidate Work

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H059

For first teaching in 2016

Exemplar 9:

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 9

SAMPLE ANSWER

Metamorphosis

Berkoff used the idea of 'Total Theatre', which includes mime, narration and sound effects. To explore total theatre, I used large scale mime whilst acting the family eating breakfast. The movements were so accurate they were almost mechanical. I moved my arm in an eating motion, scooping the food and bringing it up to eat, choreographed specifically and impeccably to sync with each character. This was juxtaposed with minimal text and sound effects including crunching and slurping, which was almost grotesque – an assault on the senses. The emphasis was on physicality and mime to highlight the technique. My research has shown that Berkoff often uses minimal set and props, leaving the actors to use mime and symbolism, this way, the focus is on the character and the acting. To explore this technique, I used no props when working on the breakfast scene, but mimed everything, from eating to folding napkins. The movements had to be so accurate because the audience needed to know exactly what it was I was doing.

In order to explore interpretation, we re-created the scene where Gregor wakes up as a dung beetle, set in modern day. We used modern examples of Gregor's condition, such as mental illness, disability and addiction, and set it in a modern family. To show this, I decided that Mr and Mrs Samsa would have likely split up and live separately, uncivil. I also decided that a more realistic and current example of Gregor's condition could be bipolar disease, as it isn't his fault, yet his father especially, resents him for it. By interpreting the play into a modern setting, I managed to understand how Gregor must be feeling isolated and responsible for his family's trouble. I also realised by doing this that Mr and Mrs Samsa in Metamorphosis may not have been happy together, as Mrs Samsa seemed very conflicted and there's limited communication between the couple.

Metamorphosis is set in the early 20th century, at time where anybody who was remotely different and not considered 'normal' was an immediate outcast. Whether this was a disability or they had views that didn't fit the mould. This social expectation was shown clearly in Metamorphosis as Mr and Mrs Samsa didn't try to get to the bottom of why Gregor had turned into a dung beetle, they just covered it up straight away and locked him away from the world, hiding it. If the community found out about Gregor, their reputation would be ruined.

In order to explore the social outcast, I set a scene in modern day, and my version of Gregor suffered from bipolar disease. In modern day society, this is a very realistic example of somebody considered different and unfortunately are still sometimes an outcast. By doing this, I could understand the family's reaction and Gregor's emotions better and the audience could connect with the scene, as it's not so far-fetched from reality. Our version of Mr Samsa in particular was disgusted with his son and refused to accept his difference, a reflection on Metamorphosis' Mr Samsa with regards to Gregor's beetle state.

To explore language I looked at Gregor's monologue on page 117. He uses complex words such as 'appreciate', 'intruders', 'announce' and 'detest'. This showed me that Gregor's well-educated and well-spoken. I then adapted the monologue to make him seem less intelligent because I wanted to see how important his level of intelligence is for the audience to connect with him. I then used more sounds and fewer, basic words with the intention of letting the audience hear Gregor from the perspective of his family. This made the connection weaker as nobody could really understand. To convey the pain Gregor was feeling, I screamed out words and often appeared to struggle to form words, as that's how I imagine the family to see it. I also adapted it so that Gregor wasn't so polite, by being cruel towards the family rather than understanding. To show this I changed the attitude and focus from wanting to 'protect' Greta, to wanting to 'spit' at the family.

My monologue: "Only- I like – m,m,music. PLAY TO ME. Spit. Spit. A-a-at the-m. THEM."

Compared to the actual monologue, mine's much shorter and much more aggressive. It also doesn't make much sense, therefore I found that the audience didn't sympathise with Gregor.

To explore visual/aural/spatial conventions I adapted the exposition. I used a traverse setting and the whole room was pitch black, apart from a red spotlight shining on a white sheet at one end of the traverse. Red's a connotation for danger and blood and this made the atmosphere creepy and dark, creating a sense of uneasiness for the audience. Music from Donnie Darko was used throughout, as this is slow and tense, adding to the general spooky atmosphere. The use of music also meant we could time movement to it, making our ensemble movement synchronised and polished. The aim of this was to make the audience feel intimidated, as we adapted the exposition for the genre of horror. Scaffolding was used to hold the white sheet and for Gregor to climb on. I wanted to get the movement and behaviour of a dung beetle across, so to see him climb was important. There were chairs around the back of each side of the audience to represent the natural habitat of a beetle and to also represent Gregor's bedroom. We started the exposition with Gregor hiding amongst the upturned chairs and he made scratching noises, the audience then had to seek him out, adding to the atmosphere of the piece.

To explore vocal awareness, I chose three lines from different stages of Gregor's transformation. One before, one during and one after. I then performed the lines as if I was Gregor at that particular moment and analysed the way in which I had delivered them. Before the transition, I lowered my voice to show how Gregor feels unappreciated and unimportant. He knows his family aren't listening and don't care as I said "I'm always tired – travelling day in, day out." This also indicated that Gregor was tired and fed up after his long day at work. It was so quiet it was almost as if he was talking to himself. The line during the transition was a lot louder. This is because I wanted to portray the physical pain and panic Gregor was feeling. The line I chose was 'What's happened to me?' and, through raising my voice, I showed the panic Gregor must have been feeling. The final line was much like the first, slow-paced and low-pitched because he's fully transformed and has calmed down. I chose "I won't try to speak again," and spoke slowly and quietly because Gregor knows the family can't understand and are ashamed of his existence as a beetle. As he's feeling isolated, I wanted to make him sound as unloved as possible.

To explore non-verbal communication, I improvised an entrance from Mrs Samsa. I walked quite quickly as I wanted to portray how she's constantly uptight and mentally all over the place, due to the stress and nature of the situation regarding Gregor. I used a gesture of wafting my hands in the air whenever I spoke or made a sound to show that she's at odds and is quite an expressive, exaggerated character. I looked around the room a lot to show a high level of paranoia and uneasiness because I feel Mrs Samsa is nervous about her reputation and cautious of her husband. She's a lot more sensitive and sentimental, so I often placed my hands over my heart whilst talking about Gregor or Greta. The aim was to make her appear panicked and rushed as my entrance was set just before the lodgers are due to arrive. Whilst I was looking around, I was also straightening furniture obsessively, again to show how reputation driven she is. My facial expression remained worried throughout the piece to show her permanent state of stress.

To explore characterisation, I created three still images as Gregor throughout the play. I wanted to show his character from boy to beetle. For the first still image I portrayed Gregor as fed up of not being appreciated and tired from his work. To show this I used a neutral facial expression and hung one arm down, with one on my hip to show annoyance.

For the second, I lay on the floor in a twisted, unnatural position to show his discomfort and exhaustion from the transformation. This moment is pivotal in his lifetime and so it was a scene I felt I needed to explore as it was emotionally scarring for him.

For the final image, I hung myself off the scaffolding, as once the beetle form was normality for Gregor, he climbed around and I wanted to show the full transformation. I hung upside down to show the unnatural beetle behaviour Gregor adopted and again, twisted all my limbs to reflect his many angular legs.



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