

**AS LEVEL**

*Exemplar Candidate Work*

# DRAMA AND THEATRE

H059

For first teaching in 2016

## **Exemplar 10:**

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 10

## SAMPLE ANSWER

### Metamorphosis

Berkoff said that everything you do on stage is important in conveying the story and called this Total theatre. We explored some off text mime in a Berkoffian style focusing on our morning routine. To do this I mimed using the toilet. To differentiate from naturalistic mime Berkoff's movements are stylised using irregular movements and well picked gestures and attention to detail. The first action would be lifting the lid so to achieve the grotesque movement quality I slowly lifted the lid with a 'dink' sound when it rested upon the cistern. The next action was a slow unzipping, with sound affect, followed by a splashing noise. The next step of the mime was to put the zip back up and flush the toilet which I did with a simple flushing sound and a slow hand gesture to add a slight discomforting feel to the action. After reviewing the mime I found there was attention to detail missed. When the act of urinating was finished I added a small shake as this was associated with men using the toilet and adds a small extra detail, as is crucial to the success of Berkoffian mime. The Sound and the mime working together in equal measure are crucial to the success of a piece of total theatre.

To explore the social context I looked at Gregor's condition and its effect on the family. I found that his transformation to a beetle caused the family to feel a real sense of embarrassment and they wanted to hide him away so thought of mental illness as a similar cause of embarrassment in modern times. To experiment with this idea we tried setting metamorphosis in modern times with the idea of Gregor having Bipolar as we believed it would be difficult in a very similar way to Gregor's condition in the play. To make this work we replaced the Chief Clerk with a social worker and instead of the part in which Gregor opens the door and reveals his beetle like body we had Gregor snap and turn angrily to the social worker as it would spook the social worker and cause the family to be embarrassed. For this part I played Mr Samsa and had him shout at Gregor, I did this as Mr Samsa was a selfish individual who just cared about himself so by trying to maintain order in front of the social worker he felt retained his reputation. This was done in an attempt to modernise the play and interpret it in a different social context.

For our modern interpretation of the family we focused on Gregor's condition and likened it to Bipolar as it is both debilitating and difficult to live with. Because of the nature of mental illness in the past and the lack of understanding around it we thought that bipolar could cause a similar sense of shame on the family as Gregor's condition did. We then looked at the family and thought about how we could bring them into modern day. By looking at Mr and Mrs Samsa's relationship we interpreted that they were very conflicting people and their relationship was clearly not a healthy one. We decided to portray Mr Samsa as a failure that had no job and was incredibly lazy, very similarly to the play. This contrasted to Mrs Samsa greatly as we decided she would be lot more controlling over Mr Samsa than in the play as women now have great deal more freedom than they did at the time of this play and have a lot more independence.

Today I worked on characterisation and focused on the character of Gregor and specifically his physical and mental metamorphosis and how we can represent that throughout the play. For this I chose three different lines from different sections of the play that I thought encapsulated his transition. For the beginning I used the line "Always tired-travelling day in, day out." as it showed the tiring and boring life he led to support his family, to physicalize this I stood slightly slouched with a vacant and exhausted expression on my face. For my middle section the line "Because you took the money... you took the money that was meant for Greta." helped show some of the physical and mental stress the transformation initially caused him so to display that physically I contorted my body in various acute angles. This contortion caused all of my muscles to contract and the severity of his transformation was displayed in the position of my arms and legs. Verbally I strained my voice and often spat out some of the lines to show both the pain he is in but also the frustration it caused. For the final image I showed more angular positions by contracting my muscles however this time I was lower to the ground and more introverted as to show his loss of hope and sadness, this was shown through my eyes and in his line by sounded desperate and deprived.

To explore language I focused on Gregor's monologue on pg117 and tried adapting it to way that fit his physical state. Despite his form Gregor appears most human throughout the play as he speaks very well and is quite emotive through his speech, so I experimented with shortening some of his sentences to simplify his speech in order to make him less relatable, This meant long sentences like "I'll protect you from these swine – my ugliness could protect you by frightening them away," became shorter and less elaborate, "I'll protect you – my looks could scare them away." This worked as a technique to slightly distance him from the audience and meant that although you still feel sorry for Gregor you find and less human. Throughout I made his speech more basic and shortened many complex words to smaller words. To help show this I had him trip over longer words and made him more angry in what he said as this led to the audience feeling uncomfortable around him, For example when saying Conservatorium he said " Conserva- Conservat- Conserva- AHHHHH". This change in dialogue made him seem both more

aggressive, meaning the audience aren't as emotionally invested in Gregor, and less intelligent meaning lots of the audience have less sympathy for him.

For non-verbal communication I explored the character of Mr Samsa at the point in the play where he had got a job through the use of a hot seat. To show how proud he was I tried to make him look smug as he slowly walked to the chair, I took long slow strides and paused half way to look smugly to the audience, by doing a small slim smile. In order to maintain the characteristic of him being a bit of a slob I had him sit with his legs parted and slouched back on the chair. There were points when I was asked questions which I thought Mr Samsa would want to avoid so I tried to show discomfort by scrunching up my face and shuffle around on the chair to show his resistance to answer. When forced to answer I showed my continued distress by avoiding eye contact and by constantly moving my arms to help show that I wasn't settled. I wanted my performance to be in line with Berkoff's technique of total theatre so I tried to think through and choreograph as much as possible.

For visual/aural/spatial I focused on the exposition and mainly of our spatial choices. We did a lot of work on the space in which we sat our audience. We wanted to create a chaotic and unusual space so to do this we set up chairs and blocks upturned and tipped over. Our idea was to have the audience seated in in the kitchen of the Samsa household so we also put bowls and cups around the space to create this setting. The most noticeable feature of our staging was the distance between where our audience were seated and where they entered the room. We had a large gap when they entered the room between them and the kitchen in which they were guided through, we did this in an attempt to create a sense of alienations and distance both physically and mentally the audience from the characters. We also had a large screen that projected a shadow of the actor behind it and this acted as the focal point of the performance. To further experiment with the space we decided to have Gregor crawl through the screen and into the audience in an attempt to remove the idea of the audience being seated separately and make them feel as if they were in the kitchen of the Samsa's.

To explore vocal awareness I performed multirole in an interpretation of the whole play. I played the roles of the Chief Clerk and the three lodgers, one way I showed a clear difference was the accent of my voice. I did this so it was easy for the audience to hear the distinction between characters. For the Chief Clerk I spoke in a very loud, low and quite gravelly voice whereas for the lodgers I spoke in Australian, Irish and British accents. I also used intonations in my voice to show their position in relation to others in the play. For the Chief Clerk I spoke loudly and slowly and was very punctuated in my speech to help show his dominance. When this was mixed with his low voice the booming quality made him very commanding within the scene. For the lodgers I had them speak very quickly, one after another, this complete lack of pauses and the high pitch of the Irish and Australian accents gave a kind of spiralling whirlwind affect that helped keep the fast paced elements from the script.



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