

AS LEVEL

Candidate Style Answers

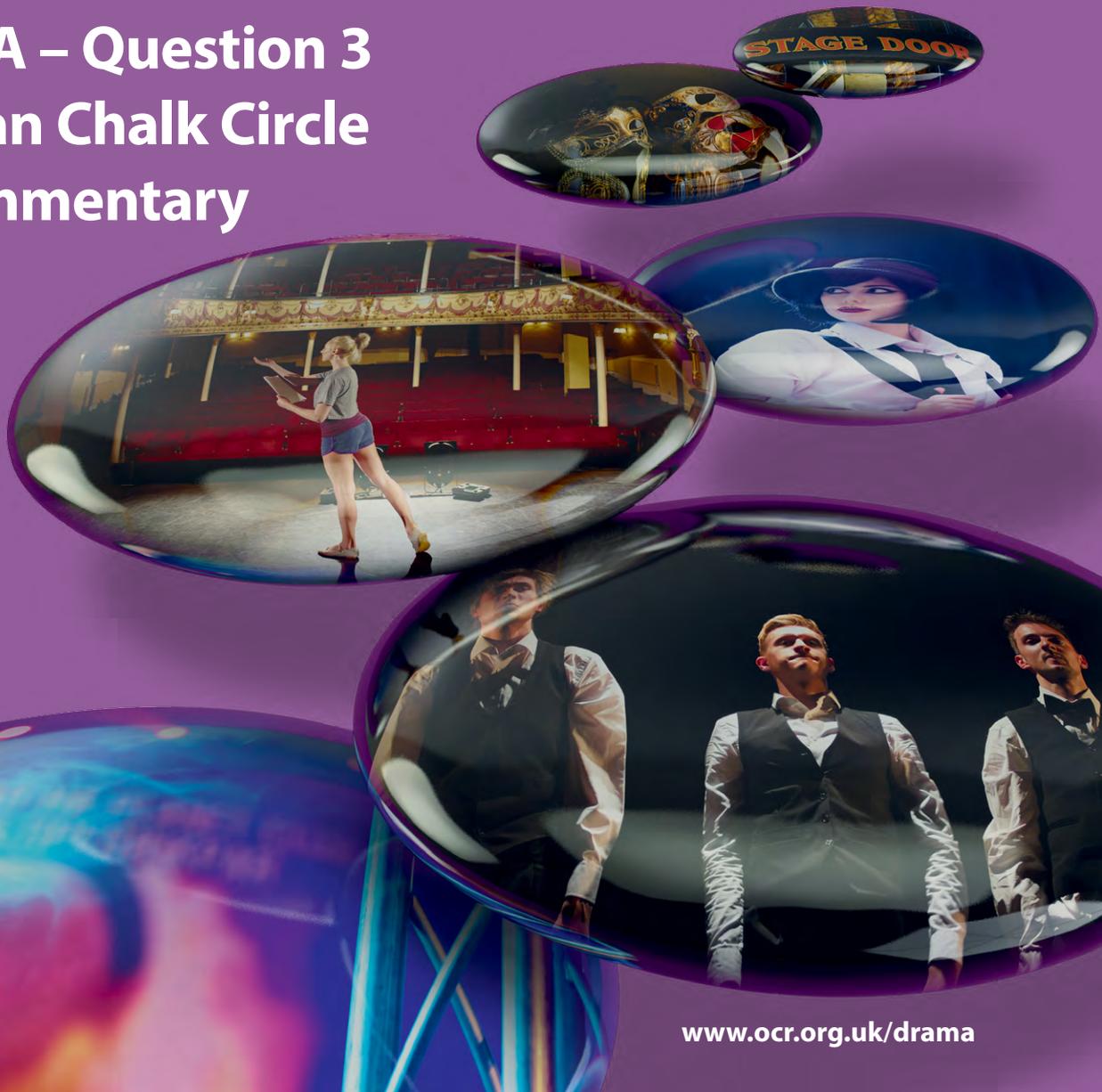
DRAMA AND THEATRE

H059

For first teaching in 2016

Section A – Question 3 Caucasian Chalk Circle 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 3 – CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE

- 3 “My family is my strength and my weakness.” Explain how a present-day director could approach the performance text to emphasise the social attitudes towards family at the time the performance text was written? Justify your ideas with examples from at least three scenes from the performance text you have chosen for this question.

[20]

SAMPLE ANSWER

Caucasian Chalk Circle by Bertolt Brecht:

Caucasian Chalk Circle was set in 1944 after world war two when rich were rich and poor were poor, this is shown in scene one, when the Governor's wife has two clowny doctors to look after her son this is shown when she she tells them to look after him. This shows that she doesn't want to look after her son herself and doesn't really care about him whereas Grusha has to stop her rituals of going to church, to fetch a goose for the Governor's Easter banquet as she is a peasant. A present day director might show this by having the characters step out into third person to explain how the characters feel both rich and poor or have monologues showing their different viewpoints of their life due to their wealth.

At the start of scene two the fat prince seems to be the strength of the Governor's family, wishing the Governor's wife happy Easter trying to cheer everyone up, but at the end of the scene it is shown that the fat prince turns on his brother letting the iron shirt's behead him, which draws a weakness in to the family, as Michael doesn't have a father anymore and the Governor's wife is on her own. A director may show this by getting the actor who has the role of the fat prince to thought track so then the audience understand what is going through his mind with in the scene.

Grusha is shown to feel lonely on her own and can't keep away from Michael when he is abandoned as he keeps her company. This relates to the quote 'my family is my strength and my weakness' as Grusha claims that she is Michael's mother and is part of her family which gives her strength as she is not alone anymore, but also Michael is her weakness because she has to risk her life for him and try and help him grow up. Also in scene three she asks her grandpa for a jug of milk but due to the rations she cannot afford it which is also classed as a family weakness. From Michael's perspective his family was his weakness as the Governor's wife didn't want to look after him and thought that her husband liked Michael more than her. Michael's family became his strength when Grusha claimed him as she was willing to do anything for him. A modern day director would probably emphasise these strengths and weaknesses either by having a narrator telling the audience when the strengths and weaknesses happen or by getting the actors to use gestus to convey the strength and weaknesses.

Within scene four Grusha has crossed the bridge and is living with her brother but in the 1940's men were mainly in charge of women and Laverenti forces her to get a husband, who is a man who is slowly dying, which is quite a harsh social attitude towards her as it is someone she doesn't want to marry and Laverenti is also making Grusha break her promise she had made with Simon to marry him when he returns. A director would probably get some actors to act out the wedding scene within the middle of scene four and then get some other actors to act out a scene of a women's rights campaign using placards, showing what it was like for women after the war.

For the end scene Azdak decides to draw the chalk circle and determine who is the real mother of Michael. This scene largely relates to the quote mentioned earlier, 'my family is my strength and my weakness' as Grusha didn't want to hurt Michael pulling him out of the chalk circle she let him go each time, just leaving the Governor's wife to yank him out the circle but then luckily because Grusha was a good mother she was allowed to claim her family back. Although she had to marry the old dying man so she could keep Michael safe and Simon was confused and mad at her when he found out she had married a dying man and has got a child, he forgives her and fights Grusha's case with her which represents the strength within their family as at the end Simon and Grusha get married to each other and they helped each other through their tough times. A director may show Grusha's growing her strength by her posture within each scene at the start she wouldn't have much posture at all as she is just classed as working peasant but as she becomes more confident in herself her posture can become more straight and upright.

On the other hand, the Governor's wife's family turns into a weakness as she loses her husband at the start and doesn't show much respect to her family. Due to the fact that she had left her child in a rush and didn't go back for him she disclaimed her child and when it resulted in the chalk circle scene although she pulled Michael out the circle it was clear that she wasn't the right mother for him. As she loses Michael from her family her weakness shows even more as all her estates that she owed when she looked after Michael was turned into a garden called 'The garden of Azdak' for all the children to play on, so the Governor's wife lost everything. The only strength within her family thought out the play was that she was the Governor's wife so was quite wealthy. To show this a director may change the costume the governor's wife wears in each scene making her look like she is wearing more lower class clothes each time her family falls under a weakness, to show that she is losing her wealth and money.

Mark: 6 out of 20

Commentary

The opening paragraph is confusing and appears to edge around the question posed referencing class issues rather than family issues. The candidate refers to the idea of what a family member brings to their family and whether their actions strengthen or weaken that family.

There is discussion of the Fat Prince's attitude to his family but his betrayal of the family out of fear for his own life is never clearly stated. How this attitude is to be brought across in performance is not clearly established either. The use of thought tracking is mentioned but this is a rehearsal technique used in order to achieve the end performance and the candidate must discuss it as such.

There is knowledge and understanding of the role of women and how Grusha with a child needs to have a husband but the point is focused on the role of women rather than on the establishment of a family to meet expectations. The use of placards is appropriate in a Brecht play and as a technique but it is not clear as to how the placards will work in relation to the questions or the key moments under discussion.

The last two paragraphs provide knowledge and understanding of the plot and although the role of Grusha and the Governor's wife are referred to in terms of what they bring to the family and the role of a mother, there is a lack of performance detail.

It is vital to initially identify the social attitude towards family at the time that the play was written. This requires a knowledge and understanding of family at the time that the play was written. This requires a knowledge and understanding of family post-war and an understanding of family within the play. This could be from the point of view of being either in Germany or England as well the Russian province of Georgia where the play is set.

How the answer could be improved

The candidate must clearly identify what is said about family and family dynamics within the play. These ideas may focus on the relationship between family members, the role of the mother, social expectations of what a family is and the comparison between the family experiences within the play. The candidate does touch on some of these ideas but there is a lack of clarity. The points need to be clearly established. Until the candidate can clearly explore the points in relation to the question then the performance details will be unfocused or limited.

There needs to be a clear application of specific performance skills and how this relates to the family. There needs to be reference to the social, historical and cultural idea of family dynamics.



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