

AS LEVEL

Exemplar Candidate Work

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H059

For first teaching in 2016

Exemplar 1:

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 1

SAMPLE ANSWER

Metamorphosis

We examined Berkoff's work and techniques, both within Metamorphosis and elsewhere. Firstly, we acted out several mimes of actions that are commonly done in the morning. For example, some of the actions I decided to do were brushing my teeth, getting dressed and eating breakfast. I then built upon this and added live sound effects and narration and also crafted transitions between each action in order to keep it true to Berkoff's idea of total theatre. Whilst doing this we distinguished how dramatic or realistic the sounds and actions had to be in order for it to be the most effective and make the audience cringe. When looking at total theatre in respect to the text, we focused on the breakfast scene with the family feeding Gregor. When reading the scene we decided we wanted the sound of Gregor eating to be gross and repulsive, to the extent that it made the audience feel uncomfortable. We managed this through the use of exaggerated noises from Gregor, dramatized reactions to certain tastes and the scraping of plates and cutlery.

To explore the social context within the script of Metamorphosis, we made a modern interpretation of Gregor's transformation. We replaced Gregor's Metamorphosis of becoming a dung beetle with that of Gregor becoming a drug addict. Within modern day society the idea of being a drug addict is greatly frowned upon, and those who are drug addicts are often avoided or deliberately ignored by those around them. We also had to bring the rest of the family into this modern day interpretation, and in doing so, I played the part of making Mr Samsa Gregor's abusive step-father. We thought this worked well as it made the audience develop a stronger hatred towards his character, which is what we intended to do. We were able to carry over the character's original traits through into our interpretation, such as Mr Samsa's constant lack of concern for Gregor. At the end of our piece was added a 'six months later' section, where Gregor was taken to rehab and Mr Samsa was arrested for being abusive. We used this to show the way that those who are not seen as 'normal' in modern day society are treated differently to those who are.

When exploring interpretation, we looked at the Ballet of the stools sequence on page 98. We started with the idea that whoever has possession of the chairs had the stronger argument. I made this clear to the audience by starting with Mr Samsa having both of the chairs, because he has the most control and dominates over Mrs Samsa. I then tried different ways to use the chairs to represent the shift in authority between Mr and Mrs Samsa, one common yet effective way was through using levels. We focused heavily on the line "Is it? Gregor installed us here – as you retired yourself from work, we had to depend on him for money – we could never have afforded it without him" (page 98). At this point, we had Mr Samsa on one side of the stage, and Mrs Samsa on the other, with just the two chairs between them. We wanted to show the audience how angry and violent Mr Samsa can be towards Mrs Samsa, and so on each pause of her line, I pushed a chair out of my path. I thought this was effective as it showed that Mrs Samsa doesn't have much protection against Mr Samsa and that he can very easily knock down what little protection she does have. When finishing the scene both Mr and Mrs Samsa had a chair each, to show that they were seen as more equal after their argument.

I physically explored Gregor's character at three distinct points of his transformation during the play. When playing Gregor before he awakes as the beetle, I decided to slouch back onto the chair, this gave the impression that Gregor was tired and exhausted from working all day, every day. In the middle of the play, when Gregor has become a dung beetle, I decided to cross my arms and legs over on the floor, pointing them in different and awkward positions, this reflected that Gregor was no longer a human and that he found it very awkward to move. Towards the end of the play, when Gregor has completed his Metamorphosis and is starting to die, I decided to still cross my arms and legs over on the floor but exaggerate it a lot more, tensing my muscles and twisting my joints. Whilst this did cause pain when holding the position, it reflected the physical pain that Gregor would have been feeling at that point in the play. By acting out Gregor through different parts of the play it allowed me to feel the way the character gradually changed throughout the play, with the physical pain gradually increasing as the play comes closer to the end.

To explore the visual, aural and spatial aspects of the play we bought to life our interpretation of the opening of Metamorphosis. We focused mainly on visual and spatial and how we could use these to make the audience feel a similar way to which Gregor was feeling. We positioned the seats on a Traverse formation, to make the audience feel extremely enclosed, just like Gregor feels in his small and secluded room. We also spaced the chairs out so that nobody in the audience was facing another member of the audience, this made the audience feel isolated and uneasy, like Gregor would be feeling. We also decided to make the room extremely dark as we found that this helped to make the audience feel uneasy. We also decided to give torches to several members of the audience, so that they were able to shine the light

wherever they chose. This meant the audience members were more immersed with the production, and could examine the characters in more depth. At the end of the performance we showed Gregor up on the scaffolding and the family looking up to him. This showed a mass divide within the family and almost a sense of conflict.

In order to explore the aspect of non-verbal communication, I focused on the character of Mrs Samsa just before the lodgers came to inspect the house. We thought about the way a character would quite simply enter a room and sit down. Through doing this with the character of Mrs Samsa I focused on her key gesture of playing with her hands a lot. Not only does this show that she is an extremely anxious character, it also shows that she is constantly very busy, and often does tasks or jobs in order to keep herself occupied. When opening the door I initially pushed it the wrong way, showing that my character is stressed and can't think straight because she is nervous about the lodgers coming. When entering the room I was very cautious, making sure I was familiar with all surroundings before proceeding further into the room, reflecting that my character is always afraid of finding Gregor in any/every room she goes in within her house. When sitting down I sat extremely rigid, with my legs and back straight, chin up and my hands in my lap. I sat like this as it reflected the fact that the character of Mrs Samsa is extremely particular and has to make sure everything looks presentable.

When looking at vocal awareness, we took on a specific character at a certain point within the play and tried to act as them. I took the part of Mrs Samsa just before the lodgers arrived. I decided that I really wanted to portray the character's worry and panic through her voice. I did this through making my voice very high pitched, to instantly show the character I was playing, but I also made her voice quite shaky and inconsistent, to show that she was nervous and extremely anxious about the lodgers coming. I made her talk at a fast pace, with no pauses or breaks in her lines, showing her panic about the lodgers were coming to inspect her house. I also played around with the volume of her voice, making her speak loud when she is talking to herself or someone she feels comfortable around, but then making her speak quietly when she is around the lodgers or someone she doesn't feel comfortable around, showing that she feels very anxious and timid when she is in their presence.

When looking at language across all the character within the play, we focused very heavily on Gregor's monologue on page 117. We took the monologue and changed the language to the way that we thought Gregor would have spoken. I changed a lot of the language used, including using a lot of shortened words and swear words. I used swear words to show the amount of pain that Gregor was in, as I didn't think it was shown an awful lot throughout the play. I also found that by adding swear words it made it more relatable for the audience, as that's what they would probably do if they were in a lot of pain. I also reiterated the fact that Gregor is in a lot of pain through using shortened words, which showed that Gregor found it hard to speak without causing himself a lot of pain and so tries to use as short words as he possibly can. I also decided to make his language a lot less formal than the other characters, not only showing his declining mental ability, but also the shift in capability, from Gregor to the rest of the family.



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