

AS LEVEL

Exemplar Candidate Work

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H059

For first teaching in 2016

Exemplar 2:

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 2

SAMPLE ANSWER

Metamorphosis

To explore the techniques used by Berkoff, we looked at his idea of 'Total Theatre.' We studied on and off-text examples, as we wished to gain a rounded understanding of Berkoff. Off-text we were instructed to think of a few things we did first thing in the morning, like stretching or brushing our teeth. We transitioned between each action we created and made the actions exaggerated, with narration alongside them. During this practical work, we had to find the line between grotesque and just exaggerated. This is due to Berkoff not wanting to lose the realism. We then experimented with the breakfast scene where Gregor's family are repulsed at the sound of him eating. Every movement we did had a purpose. The movements were so exaggerated it almost assaults your senses; you cringe at the noise and at what you see. For example, when James and I were hunched over eating, we exaggerated the way we ate and the noises we made; audience members said that this made them feel uncomfortable. Berkoff works with minimal set and props, and structured choreography. When we ate, and found food for Gregor, every moment we did was stylised and choreographed.

To explore social context, we devised our own modern interpretation of Metamorphosis. Our group represented Gregor as someone struggling with bipolar. During this performance, I played Gregor as a modern teenage girl. To reflect her suffering she was isolated from her family during scenes and found it difficult to express how she was feeling. This was similar to Gregor's situation as he was exiled from his family. After watching the performance we came together in a group and discussed how we represented the different characters and how society would view it. Something we noticed in both performances was that the people who represented Mr and Mrs Samsa were in a broken down or struggling relationship. We noted how society wouldn't perceive this as out of place or strange as it is becoming more of a norm and a common situation.

To explore interpretation we analysed what we thought were the most important moments in the play and created a short performance from our interpretation. My group and I decided to base the performance around Gregor's thoughts and feelings as the audience cannot always understand how he is feeling when in the presence of the entire Samsa family. However, as we experimented with the material further, we discovered it was extremely difficult to include the other characters from the play if the whole script was based purely around Gregor's point of view. We decided to dedicate Gregor a certain scene to express his feelings and we condensed this into Mrs Samsa giving up all hope, up until the lodgers entered the home. My peer and I both played Gregor at the same time to show how central this piece was to this character, as well as this enabling us to create more abstract figures. We pieced together lines that we thought were most applicable to Gregor's emotions at this point in the play. One of the lines I chose was "I can feel it beginning to rot." I chose this as I thought it expressed his situation, the literal rotting of his body, the deterioration of his family and his humanistic mental state.

To explore characterisation we performed 3 main Gregor moments from within the play. Firstly, I acted as if I was utterly exhausted. My posture was terrible; I was all slumped over with a glaze over my eyes, presenting how emotionally and physically drained Gregor is. To show his progression, I lowered myself extremely close to the floor and glued my body to the ground, with random, jagged limbs uncomfortably sticking out at awkward angles. I became Gregor by dragging out the line "But what if all the quiet, the comfort, the content were to end in horror?" I chose this line as it foreshadows Gregor's unfortunate ending, his last months of life, and his death, are horrific. Gregor's life has been quite dreadful due to the amount of hard work he trawls through day in day out just to keep his family in comfort and content, therefore I felt like this line was appropriate. For the last image, I intertwined myself in the scaffolding and blurted out with anger, the line "I'm not an animal." I wanted to give the audience a glimpse of how Gregor views himself, a revolting animal still clinging onto every tiny part of his previous state, but miserably failing.

To explore the role of non-verbal communication I examined Mrs Samsa in the debate of going into Gregor's room to move furniture. I portrayed her character as very indecisive and nervous, due to the thought of seeing her son in such a horrific state and to Mr Samsa's reaction if he found out. I did this through the use of body language, facial expression and gestures. My body language was reserved, with constant rubbing of the hands and shaking movements. It was very secluded as if I was feeling very nervous and frail. My facial expressions showed pure disgust when I entered Gregor's room and when deciding whether to enter the room, the expressions were despondent, as if I was discouraged to enter due to the confusions and consequences on my mind. To test non-verbal communication we hot seated each other, trying to understand the characters thought process and feelings through our non-verbal movements. I evaluate that during this process my gestures used were extremely important in order for the audience to understand my position. I waved my arms in the air and then quickly retracted them, showing how I was in two mind frames about the situation. These gestures suggested how in some ways I was passionate about seeing Gregor and then how I remembered the implications of the situation and withdrew.

To explore visual, aural and spatial aspects of the performance we created a performance focusing on Page 1. We invited people from outside, into our performance to represent the isolation the family has from society due to the fear of Gregor's condition. We had Gregor hidden in the shadows to add mystery to our performance; as we couldn't see Gregor, we couldn't understand what he was becoming. This was much like how the family view him, as it is a situation that is unimaginable. He was then overshadowed by Greta, as she is in her parent's eyes, and as she protects him. Our set consisted of upturned blocks to show chaos and the lack of time they had to look after the house; it could have also been perceived that Gregor has created the mess due to a misunderstood outbreak in his bug like state. We had the audience sitting in a small, tight space to represent how Gregor is trapped in his room, and so they can sympathise with him. We had Mrs Samsa and Greta as narrators throughout the piece: this showed them as lower characters than Gregor, and added more focus to his transformation. Ellie and I represented a clock behind the scene, fitting with dialogue – this reflects how time is ongoing in the situation, and there was no set time for the struggle to end.

While exploring language, we focused on speech exchanged between the Samsa family. We particularly focused on Gregor's speech with direct comparison to other characters within the play. It's clear to see that Gregor is the most educated out of his family, through his complex language – "I sensed the growing agony of their burden." Throughout the text, Gregor has speaks only in first person and speaks of more intricate ideas such as the appreciation of music and his determination for his family (such as sending Greta to the conservatorium) and against his current physical state. I focused on changing his language on page 117 to be more fitting of his emotional state at this point of his metamorphosis. I wanted the audience to be able to understand the pain behind his words. For example, "my f-f-ug-ugliness, protects Greta," presents the idea that he still has the humanistic values and love for his family. When presenting these lines to an audience, I wanted his use of slang, swearing and simplistic words to create a bond where those watching could sympathise with his pain. This meant that audience members could connect with Gregor as a human with emotions, rather than as the beetle his family believe he is now.

To explore vocal awareness I focused on my tone, pitch, pace and volume when performing a plot précis with my group. I used multirole and played both the character of Gregor and The Clerk. I chose these two characters as they hold completely contrasting characteristics and I thought that this would give me more to work with, in terms of vocal variation. When I played Gregor, I used broken dialogue to express the deterioration of his life, as well as his language. On lines such as "you're blaming me!" I struggled to pronounce my words and form sentences, but when I finally managed, I blurted them out with frustration. With words such as "can't," "move" and "rot." I spoke with a revulsion that Gregor would find apparent at this time in his metamorphosis. This in turn reflected his self-pity, which the audience could see through the strain of certain vocabulary and the low pitch I spoke in. This contrasts with The Clerk, as I portrayed his character by speaking with an aggressive, sour tone. I raised my voice, and spat my lines with viciousness. I wanted to show his authority and power of his workers, so I spoke in a low voice to show my stereotypical manliness. I chose to do this as from my research I believe it is clear that masculinity is associated with power, and I wanted to portray the clerk as strongly as possible. I also spoke fast to get the commands out quickly to show he wanted things fast paced.



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