

AS LEVEL

Exemplar Candidate Work

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H059

For first teaching in 2016

Exemplar 8:

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 8

SAMPLE ANSWER

Metamorphosis

Whilst looking at Berkoff we explored non-naturalistic, abstract techniques fundamental to total and physical theatre including aspects of mime. We experimented using both on and off text examples, juxtaposed with live sound effects and minimal narration to help make the actions absolutely accurate and precise on a large, exaggerated scale. When applying Berkoffian techniques to Metamorphosis, we used the breakfast scene on page 97, adding in onomatopoeic speech to convey the sounds of eating in an attempt to make the scene more grotesque and uncomfortable for the audience. Onomatopoeic sounds for eating and drinking included "slurp", "glug", and "crunch". Our scene was heavily choreographed and stylised much like Berkoffian theatre who massively utilise rehearsal time. This was inspired by Berkoff's interest in Artaud's Theatre Of Cruelty. I feel Berkoff's techniques were very effective within the breakfast scene. This is because the heavily choreographed, unison movements and onomatopoeic speech help emphasise the grotesqueness and make the atmosphere more awkward and uncomfortable for the audience, similar to how I feel the Samsa household should be portrayed.

When exploring the social context of the play, we explored the theme of isolation in regards to Gregor's character and society's expectations. We created a modern realistic interpretation with Gregor now as a drug addict. Gregor is living in a household known to social services, which fails to acknowledge his existence, yet continues to carry on as normal. Mirroring how the Samsa household operates. We chose a drug addict because they are not considered 'normal' by societies standards and are often frowned upon, similar to how Gregor is viewed in the play or how Kafka was viewed as being a 'sub-human' as he was a German Jew. We also experimented with a contrast to stereotypes present in Metamorphosis. In the play Mrs Samsa is often shown as the inferior, traditional housewife appropriate to how women were viewed socially when Berkoff adapted Metamorphosis in 1969. However to show how views have evolved and women are now more equal, Mrs Samsa was portrayed as the main character and leader of the household often giving out orders to Mr Samsa. This was effective as it was a contradiction to the original play and a more accurate view of women in today's society. An example of this in our piece was that I, as Mrs Samsa overruled Mr Samsa's decision to get rid of Gregor and instead sent him to rehab.

I explored the characterisation by picking pieces of Gregor's dialogue from Metamorphosis to show Gregor's physical transformation.

The first moment I chose was from page 82 "Always tired - travelling day in, day out" Whilst delivering this line I decided it was at Californian on the levels of tension. This was to show Gregor is completely exhausted with no energy due to being an overworked salesman and provider of the family. I used body language to show he is not fully awake, covering my eyes as if to gesture keeping the light from getting in.

Another piece of dialogue I chose was "perhaps I'm too hideous ever to see her again." At this point Gregor has fully transformed into a beetle. Therefore I created contorted and sharp edges with my limbs whilst intertwined in the scaffold tower. This was to show Gregor's discomfort and the pain he's constantly in. The dialogue shows Gregor is upset that he hasn't seen his mother, blaming himself because of his appearance. Therefore I decided Gregor should hide his face from the audience, as he is embarrassed. Whilst delivering the line I used a quiet volume and solemn tone to express Gregor's upset on the situation.

We interpreted the "Ballet of the stools" on page 98 literally with the ballet being performed by movements of the stools rather than by the actors. In this scene we wanted to show a power struggle between Mr and Mrs Samsa, with Greta acting as the moral high ground often caught in the middle. To represent this we used the levels of tension, beginning with alert, followed by tragic and finishing with catatonic. Reflective of the rhythm and story line ballets often follow. To show who had the most power would be symbolised by levels and who was standing on the chair. To reflect the quick tempo ballet can follow, our movements and timing reflected how we interpreted the character's heartbeats and emotions to be. For example "Don't raise your voice in this house!" at this point I as Mrs Samsa am releasing all of my built up anger therefore the chairs were rattled very quickly. By not using polished movements or clean, unison choreography we demonstrated that our interpretation was a form of unconventional ballet. This symbolised the chaos of the Samsa household, visually enhanced and mirrored by using a large number of chairs scattered around our stage.

To explore vocal awareness we experimented with using pitch and pace. The intonation signifies to the audience that Gregor is tired as he has little energy to speak with any form of excitement. We explored this by using a slow pace and low pitch, which is stereotypical of being tired and depressed. It is also relevant to the fact Gregor is bored, as his life of a salesman is repetitive and he has nothing worth getting out of bed for. Therefore lacks any intriguing qualities in his tone. Whereas using a high pitch and a quicker pace adds far more excitement to the dialogue that is not appropriate for Gregor's character or his state of mind. However

this would be more appropriate for the ending of the play where the family are happy, as Gregor no longer burdens them. As a group we then worked in the style of the practitioner Berkoff, using an onomatopoeic delivery of our lines. We explored the line "Just slam the door and leave me in the darkness." The word "slam" allowed us to imitate the action by using a slow pace to lengthen out the "ss-lll-a" to show the part of the action where there is a pause and silence. Compared to the fast paced and loudness of the "M". The "darkness" signified loneliness, fear and silence therefore the delivery of the line was a lot more timid and quiet in pace and volume compared to the opening of the sentence.

The language used during Gregor's monologue on page 117 is juxtaposed to what is expected of Gregor's speech during his transformation. At this point we are aware Gregor is transitioning into a dung beetle and his family can't understand him. Therefore we expect harsh and slang language to release anger and because I believe a dung beetle would have less intelligence than a human. Gregor is a well-spoken and developed character with a large amount of speech, using words like "Conservatorium". Whereas the family are 2D characters associated with Brechtian theatre using basic language often to state what they want, "Gregor!" "Cash!" As well as short sentences often in third person (narration), eg. "He thought" developing the concept of non-naturalism, as it is not conversational dialogue. We then had the task of re-writing the monologue to include language we would expect from a beetle. I added in aggressive words (swearing) and changed words such as "I am" to slang like "I aint". My choice of basic language was to make Gregor appear less intelligent, enhancing on the idea that his family can't understand him. Also to create an accurate representation of what I believe a beetle would say.

We wanted to interpret the play from Mr.Samsa's perspective, our exposition was heavily based on non-verbal communication, primarily focused on mime and facial expressions. To enhance what the audience already know of his character being in complete control, we used heavily choreographed and stylised movements. By using unison and robotic movements it showed the rest of the family as Mr.Samsa's puppets. To show the character traits of Greta, I mimed playing a violin (a key passion often mentioned in *Metamorphosis*). The repetition of this exaggerated the idea that each character has a certain niche and in order to keep Mr.Samsa happy they need to abide by it. To show Greta as the obedient character I wanted to portray her as to exaggerate Mr.Samsa's power: I used harsh pauses and my elbows to create sharp edges in my rhythm. This was to show I didn't have the grace and fluidity a violin player has when performing but instead I more mirror actions associated with puppets. To further develop the idea of being a puppet I used a neutral facial expression for the performance to represent that she wasn't capable of emotion.

Whilst focusing on the exposition, we mainly experimented with how it looks visually. We wanted to create a non-naturalistic adaptation. Using lighting and minimal props including a white cloth, we were able to separate the stage. This was to create the effect of Gregor being isolated. Through the use of proxemics we enhanced what the audience are already aware of about Gregor's distant relationship with his family. We experimented with lighting and a white sheet, creating a cyclorama to give the effect of Gregor being confined and claustrophobic in his room, similar to the play. However we decided to use lighting to instead create silhouettes, allowing us to mime and have symbolic movements for characters, influenced by total theatre. Linking to the feeling of isolation the shadows also made Gregor look like an alien, showing him to be different. This was achieved as the positioning made Gregor's neck look elongated, the shadow also helped make movements appear more sharp and rigid making the audience feel unsettled whilst experiencing the exposition reflecting the mood of the Samsa's.



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