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Candidate Style Answers

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H459/31
For first teaching in 2016

Q7 Level 2 - sample answer with commentary: Hedda Gabler

Version 1

www.ocr.org.uk/drama

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 here: http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242806-unit-h459-31-analysing-characters-for-performance-sample-assessment-material.pdf

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SECTION B QUESTION 7

Analyse a live performance you have seen, outlining the director's interpretation and how effective you think it was. At the start of your answer state the name, venue and date (month and year) of the live performance you have seen. **[30]**

SAMPLE ANSWER

On the 15th September, 2016 I saw a production of Hedda Gabler at the The Edge Theatre.

The director had chosen to use an unrealistic approach to stage Ibsen's play and the stage design did not look like a typical Victorian house. The drawing room was sparse and unfurnished and only contained a few pieces of furniture such as a glass coffee table, an old sofa and two arm chairs.

The action of the play mainly takes place in this drawing room and so the stage remained bleak and empty for most of the production. There were slight movements to new spaces, such as when Hedda went into a back room. However, scenery was not used to show this transition, it was only shown through characters moving to different parts of the stage. It sometimes became a little boring and needed something more detailed to interest the audience.

The play is about a woman, Hedda, who starts to feel trapped by her marriage and commits suicide by the end of the play. It was written in 1890 by the Norwegian playwright. Despite the play being written in a believable way, the costumes did not make the characters look as if they were from the Victorian age. Hedda wore a modern green dress and even wore trousers in one of the scenes towards the end of the play. Her make-up and hair style also seemed more like a present day style. It was difficult to determine which year the director had decided to set the play within but it it was clear that it was not Ibsen's time.

The theatre itself has a proscenium arch stage space and the actors seemed to use most of the space. The floor of the stage was painted to look like floor boards within Hedda's house and a few expensive rugs had been to used to show different areas of the drawing room, such as the seating areas. One of the rugs had frayed edges perhaps to show the idea that the married couple do not have as much money as you may think or that they do not care much about the house.

The director had clearly used semiotics to convey meaning. The actress playing Hedda used lots of hand gestures and facial expressions to help convey her annoyance towards her new husband and his family. The gestures helped the audience to understand Hedda's feelings and sometimes even made the audience laugh which surprised me.

The director had tried to keep a formal relationship between the actor and spectators. The house lights were kept off throughout the production and the audience were not addressed or spoken to. This was as Ibsen would have intended the play to be staged and it meant that we could watch the drama without any interruptions.

Sound and lighting had been used to help add in tension to some parts of the play and to follow what directions are in the script. For example, a beam of lighting was used when Miss Tesman first opens the curtains, to show the daylight entering the room. When Hedda shut the curtains, this beam disappeared. Light was also used on the pistols to help show the audience that they are an important symbol in Ibsen's production and loud gun shots helped to show this even more.

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All in all, the set did help the audience to understand more of the characters and show the director's own intentions or stage directions. The director sometimes followed Ibsen's stage directions and at other points chose to invent her own ideas to help show unhappy Hedda was. By the end, we did feel sorry for Hedda and were shocked by her death even though we knew it was coming.

Level 2

Commentary

There is a basic interpretation of the performance. The candidate has attempted to describe a range of theatrical elements including references to sound, lighting, acting, set and costume. However the detail of the descriptions given remain vague and the critical analysis of each creative decisions limited. Points remain vague and evaluation lacks development. The style of writing and structure of the essay is pedestrian.

Improvements

Improvements might centre around the need for more depth and detail in terms of how things were put into practice on stage and evaluation of that practice.

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