Qualification Accredited

OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

A LEVEL
Candidate Style Answers

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H459/31
For first teaching in 2016

Q2 Level 3 – sample answer with commentary: Oh What a Lovely War

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

© OCR 2017

SECTION A QUESTION 2

Discuss how conflict could be heightened through the use of props and set design. Justify your ideas with examples from at least three scenes of the performance text you have chosen for this question. **[15]**

At the start of your answer write the name of the performance text you have chosen. Choose 1 of the following:

Theme 1: Conflict

Hamlet – William Shakespeare

Black Watch – Gregory Burke

Necessary Targets – Eve Ensler

The Long and the Short and the Tall – Willis Hall

Oh What a Lovely War – Joan Littlewood

SAMPLE ANSWER

Conflict is shown in many forms throughout Joan Littlewood's play. One of the first portrayals of conflict is seen in the Overture when the MC announces the 'ever popular war game' that is about to commence.

The title the 'War Game' suggests to the audience something dark, yet the juxtaposition of the words 'war' and 'game' also conveys an element of absurdity in something serious. This is exactly what is needed to be shown through staging and props for this part of the play. It is supposed to be a satire-making something serious seem funny. As the Pierrots enter for this War Game, make-up (white painted faces) could be used to show their clown status - this would demonstrate the element of the game. However, the make up could also be used to show their fool-like status. They could also carry props which help to show this side of their character - perhaps traditional props a clown would use: flowers that squirt water, balls to juggle with etc. However, their lips could be painted in such a way to show a down-turned smile, to convey the opposite idea to the humorous clown - these figures represent the innocent tragic fools who have no control over their lives. They should look sad which could contrast their jovial movements and games. They could also all wear poppies to symbolise the death of the soldiers in this war, such a symbol would create a more sombre tone.

Throughout the performance of the 'War Game' in the first part of the play, the actor representing Germany needs to convey the idea of underlying conflict or tension to show the idea that this conflict will progress. This actor could therefore wear exaggeratedly large boxing gloves and keep moving these around in front of the others as he talks - he needs to give the impression that he has ambitions to take on the rest of the world. Yet, at this point, he should not be considered to be too dangerous, he should seem more comical rather than 'heightened' or tense.

As the play progresses, the conflicts escalate and the play should become more serious rather than absurd. The MC whistles and a 'screen' comes down on the stage. This screen is a prop that should form an integral part of the staging. The screen is used to project war time images, statistics, facts etc. Therefore, this screen would completely contrast the absurd elements previously seen in the War Game such as the clown-like characters or absurd props. The screen needs to show the reality of the conflict and show the audience that this was not just a game, it is real life. Therefore, the screen should be large and tower over the actors. It should be positioned in the middle of the acting space and, when something is projected onto it, the audience will have no choice but to look at it. The screen should help events seem much more than a game and should create a sombre tone within the piece and show the conflicts are now serious. It should serve as a counterpoint to the characters and this is the moment when the conflict should be 'heightened.'

© OCR 2017

Sir John French's first appearance in Act One needs to convey certain messages about the officers that were controlling this conflict. Littlewood wanted to use her satire to convey strong messages about the people in charge of the soldiers. Therefore, this character has to appear absurd and ridiculous. When French and Wilson first appear in a car on their way to meet the French general, a large prop of a children's car (one that looks like Noddy's car) could be used for the officers to travel in. Littlewood wanted to characterise the officers such as French as upper-class idiots who had no regard for the soldiers in their control. French seems completely pompous and even conveys the ideas of tensions between the officers of the allied forces, as he complains that the French officers are 'mostly tradesmen'. When Sir John French first meets General Lanrezac, French could keep trying to stand on the many 'bumps' and hills that he complains about in terms of the French roads, in an effort to gain a higher, more superior position. In contrast to the other soldiers, French should also be painted as a clown, however, his painted smile should be in the upright position to show that he has no regard for the misery of the soldiers in the trenches and is constantly smiling.

The Christmas scene, whilst the German and English soldiers exchange gifts, is an important scene when discussing the idea of conflict. Unlike previous moments in the play, this moment should be portrayed in a poignant and sensitive manner without exaggeration or absurdity because this scene highlights the humanity in the midst of all of this conflict. Therefore, staging should be used to help make this scene more poignant and make the audience feel more involved. Whilst the rest of the play does require an improvised, even exaggerated style of performance, this moment shows a temporary halt in conflict and should be treated more seriously, it shows the human side of the war and the humanity of the soldiers. Therefore, stage space could help the audience connect to the idea of how, in the midst of this conflict, there is humanity. To make the audience feel connected to both sides of soldiers, a thrust stage could be used. The English soldiers should be positioned on the edge of this thrust, near to the audience, as if it is the edge of their trench. The German soldiers should then be positioned in the auditorium, possibly at floor level beneath the thrust stage, as if this is their trench. This use of staging will break through the fourth wall and allow the audience to feel involved in the action and share this moment of humanity in close proximity with the soldiers. For a moment, they should seem like humans rather than performers or clowns as they are seen as previously. The audience must understand the humanity involved in this conflict.

In conclusion, the use of props and staging does need to help convey Littlewood's ideas and to contrast reality with the absurd. Whilst real details are used in the play such as the real World War One songs, the harsh images of the war, or the chilling statistics of war, these should be used next to absurd props. The audience should, at one minute laugh at an absurd prop and then be brought back to a crashing reality when they see a harrowing, emotional image or fact.

Level 3

Commentary

There is reference to props but not really to set design. Ideas are not clear or explained in full detail. Reference to the boxing gloves and the projection screen are effective ideas but the reference to Sir John French whilst giving lots of ideas is not clear as to how it links to conflict. There is knowledge and understanding of the style of the play but ideas remain unexplained and vague with some ideas poorly explored for example the use of thrust staging in relation to the German trench. The examples given are generally relevant to the question and there is a secure and competent knowledge and understanding but it lacks a clarity or focused line of development.

Improvements

Improvements would centre around the need for a clearer structure to the argument and more detailed focused explanation.

© OCR 2017

The small print

We'd like to know your view on the resources we produce. By clicking on the 'Like' or 'Dislike' button you can help us to ensure that our resources work for you. When the email template pops up please add additional comments if you wish and then just click 'Send'. Thank you.

Whether you already offer OCR qualifications, are new to OCR, or are considering switching from your current provider/awarding organisation, you can request more information by completing the Expression of Interest form which can be found here: www.ocr.org.uk/expression-of-interest

OCR Resources: *the small print*
OCR's resources are provided to support the delivery of OCR qualifications, but in no way constitute an endorsed teaching method that is required by OCR. Whilst every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the content, OCR cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions within these resources. We update our resources on a regular basis, so please check the OCR website to ensure you have the most up to date version.

This resource may be freely copied and distributed, as long as the OCR logo and this small print remain intact and OCR is acknowledged as the originator of this work.

OCR acknowledges the use of the following content:
Square down and Square up: alexwhite/Shutterstock.com

Please get in touch if you want to discuss the accessibility of resources we offer to support delivery of our qualifications: resources.feedback@ocr.org.uk

Looking for a resource?

There is now a quick and easy search tool to help find **free** resources for your qualification:

www.ocr.org.uk/i-want-to/find-resources/

www.ocr.org.uk/alevelreform

OCR Customer Contact Centre

General qualifications

Telephone 01223 553998
Facsimile 01223 552627
Email general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

OCR is part of Cambridge Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge. *For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored.*

© **OCR 2017** Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England. Registered office 1 Hills Road, Cambridge CB1 2EU. Registered company number 3484466. OCR is an exempt charity.

Cambridge Assessment

LLOYD'S REGISTER · LRQA ISO 9001

UKAS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS 001