

GCE

Drama and Theatre

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **H059**

OCR Report to Centres June 2017

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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H059/05 Exploring performance

General Comments:

There were a range of responses across the questions and across the mark scheme for both Sections A and B. Centres generally have a clear and effective understanding of the rubric of the specification and have prepared their candidates effectively. Whilst one or two candidates misinterpreted the rubric of the paper – this was down to the individual's choices on the day and clearly not a whole centre issue.

Interpretation of the question is an issue for some learners particularly at this level when questions are more complex and may have more than one focus.

There were no examples of misinterpretation of the requirements of the paper with all candidate responses adhering to the format of the paper, answering both questions from their chosen theme. There were few examples of learners tackling a theme and then answering the questions from another theme. However centres are reminded that it is vital to ensure candidates are fully prepared for the format and requirements of this paper.

All candidates answered 3 questions although the length of those answers varied considerably. Some work reflected the fact that learners were ill prepared for the exam having not studied the play in sufficient depth, but these were few. Levels of knowledge and understanding varied as would be expected. Questions which said an actor or a character – often led candidates to discuss more than one character or actor. Popular choices were Question 3 and 4 – with Joe Egg and Caucasian Chalk Circle being popular texts.

The specification requires considerable knowledge and understanding of at least two plays even though the questions are focused on either the opening scenes or three scenes from the text. It is clearly stated in the specification that the opening scenes of the play are considered to be no more than the first 10 minutes of the performance. There were examples of candidates clearly going beyond this and discussing more of the play. However ideas which fitted the question were credited. The focus is there to support and guide candidates in providing ideas which are in-depth and creative with regard to specific moments within a production of the text.

There were examples of essays where candidates wrote long introductions discussing the playwright and summarising the plot of the play. This is only considered useful to support a point being made in response to the question and beyond the first opening sentences of an essay is seen often in exam essays as time not effectively spent. Those candidates who clearly outlined their argument and view of the question moved more quickly and smoothly into relevant discussion which resulted in stronger work. Some candidates did fall into the trap of retelling the story either because they were ill prepared for the exam or because they were not able to give ideas about their own production of the text in response to the question. In preparation, centres are reminded that the questions are about theatrical interpretation and presentation and not simply analysis of texts.

Answers ranged in length and candidates need to be careful not to misuse the time of the exam. There were some examples where the candidate had spent too long on the response which they clearly felt more confident about and not enough time on the other questions. This tended to be answers for Question 7 where responses discussed a wide range of theatrical elements. However overall there were few, if any, examples of candidates not attempting to answer the three questions required.

Certain texts were more popular and this included Black Watch, Hamlet, Oh What a Lovely War, A Day in The Death of Joe Egg, Caucasian Chalk Circle, House of Bernarda Alba, Live Like

Pigs, Othello and Frankenstein. However all themes were seen across the scripts submitted and no theme seemed more popular than another.

Others overcomplicated the answer by trying to compare and contrast ideas which were not a requirement of any of the questions.

There are issues with addressing rehearsal techniques and it is clear that there is a need for candidates to prepare more effectively for this throughout the course. Many found it difficult to give ideas which were focused in their impact either in rehearsal or performance. Candidates must be clear on what the effect of the technique they are explaining will be in the rehearsal or development of a scene or role and what the impact then will be on the performance in relation to the question raised.

There were examples of unfocused and unstructured arguments where vague statements were made e.g. “colour was important in those days”. Comments must be enlarged and must be focused on the question. There is a requirement in Section B Question 7 for candidates to provide a developed and sustained line of argument which is coherently and logically structured. There were issues seen with structure, phrasing, grammar and spelling which hindered responses in terms of clarity of ideas and analysis.

There were some examples of candidates not necessarily answering the most appropriate question for the text they have studied and inappropriate choices were seen. Candidates were confused by the term rehearsal techniques and many ended up talking about the end theatrical performance of the scene rather than discussing how they might get there through rehearsals. Centres should ensure a clearer definition is provided and work to develop a range of rehearsal techniques. If the question asks for the discussion of three scenes within the play, this does not limit the candidate to discussing three rehearsal techniques.

Practical ideas as to how things should be done in performance were not always clear with limited or unclear description. Candidates are encouraged to think in terms of creating a precise and clear picture for the examiner.

It is vital to remember that this is a discussion of practical ideas. The candidate must have an effective and detailed understanding of the texts but must not fall into the trap of analysing the text alone. Each of the questions leads to discussion of the performance of each play and the use of a range of theatrical elements to prepare for that performance or present that performance. Candidates must be secure in their ability to discuss creative performance/production ideas and how these ideas then convey meaning to the audience. Questions are looking for knowledge and understanding of how to create meaning on stage with imagination and theatrical insight and perception.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

This question asked the candidate to discuss at least 3 scenes from the play in relation to how a character dealt with conflict. The focus of this might be how that character managed the conflict or sought to resolve it. Answers focused on how characters created conflict as well which was taken as acceptable. Some candidates answered using more than one character and this is acceptable. The expectation here is that the candidates would put themselves in the role of the director and explain how they would want a character to manage or resolve conflict within specific moments of the text. Some learners found it difficult to identify moments of conflict with the scenes which was unexpected as this is the theme of the section and should be the focus when studying the text.

Some candidates discussed the conflict within the scene but not in terms of a character and their ability or inability to resolve or manage it. Some did not focus on the idea of conflict at all whilst others provided very specific ideas as to how to stage specific moments to develop the impact of the conflict. Some candidates referred to internal conflict and gave ideas including music and staging. Where candidates focused on rehearsal techniques in order to develop conflict – answers remained weak and the focus on the question was lost. Knowledge and understanding of the genre, style and text was seen.

Question 2

The focus of the question was on the character's ability to overcome conflict and how this would be shown through the actor's use of physical expression. Most candidates referred to more than one character which was considered acceptable if focused on conflict. There was a clear knowledge of the text and the conflict within the texts generally with clear staging ideas. Some well written answers were provided with detailed and theatrical ideas.

Some used *Oh What a Lovely War* and discussed the MC's performance in terms of how he managed conflict. At times the links were tenuous although credit was given when the answers were coherent. At times there was a loss of focus on the physical expression of the performance.

There were some examples of unfinished answers here and a lack of focus on the question. Some candidates looked in detail at the full range of physical expression available to an actor and this often led to focused practical ideas with clear structured argument.

Many answers still referred to lights, staging, props, costumes and plot with no exploration of physicality.

Appropriate reference to facial expression should be made. Some candidates went on to talk about voice and vocal quality which is not appropriate.

Question 3

A question which required the candidate to look at the relationships of a character within the family and then discuss how rehearsal techniques might be used to explore and develop those relationships. At a basic level this required candidates to identify different relationships and discuss how the actors might rehearse appropriate scenes.

Some essays were written with no reference to rehearsal techniques at all. Reference was made to performance ideas such as tempo and events. At times rehearsal techniques were referred to but not necessarily discussed in terms of what will happen in the rehearsal and/or intention. There was generally effective knowledge of the text but some examples were seen of work which covered more than the 3 scenes required.

Interpretation of rehearsal techniques was rather weak. There was a lack of understanding as to how rehearsal techniques can help explore the differences in the relationships. There is a lack of knowledge and understanding of what rehearsal techniques add to the performer's work and candidates find it hard to explain rehearsal ideas appropriately/effectively. Ideas are not always clearly explained.

There was little focus on physical expression although appropriate techniques included essence machines, thought tunnels, use of mime, subtext, magic if, given circumstances, thoughts in the head, physicalisation, levels of tension, role reversal and hot-seating.

Clear introductions were given to the text but then little focus on the question. Knowledge of the text, the characters and the emotions was shown by some but others fell into simply recounting the story.

Question 4

The question requires the candidate to understand where the power sits within the family and whether this changes or not and when it changes and how. These changes are then to be explored in terms of the pace of action which might include reference to physical movement, use of stage space, vocal and physical techniques.

As stated in the question, the focus should be on the opening scenes whereas some candidates went on to discuss Act 2 or Scene 4. Centres are reminded that the specification clearly states that the opening of the play is considered to be the first 10 minutes of a performance of the play. Reference was made to some rehearsal techniques in relation to pace and credit was given here for answers which were appropriate and effective although rehearsal techniques are not required by the question.

At times reference to family was rather broad with the villagers of the opening scene of *Caucasian Chalk Circle* being referenced as family.

Discussion was rather pedestrian in these answers and ideas lacked a range of knowledge. There was a lack of precise detail in terms of theatrical process and few skills and techniques were explored. Knowledge and understanding of the text was shown and the relationships but limited justification of ideas in terms of changes of pace.

Loss of focus on pace in some essays, even those that started off well. Discussing clearly the shifts of power and how pace of voice and movement could help to convey this. Some essays identified these changes of pace but were unable to develop further. Some candidates struggled to link pace and family dynamics, whilst others were able to make connections between the family dynamic and class and pace.

Other essays demonstrated a clear knowledge of pace and how to reflect it with specific examples and reference to the text.

Question 5

The response requires an understanding of the impact of a costume design on the audience and how costume is used to reflect character – in this case focusing on the heroism of that role. It is necessary therefore to identify an appropriate role from the text studied. Some candidates struggled with this identification. Well-argued points were accepted across all texts as to who was a hero and why.

Most candidates were able to explore costume changes within different scenes of the play explaining how and why the costume might change to reflect the different stages of heroism displayed by the character. Good answers were able to explore the heroism of the role and how this was shown in the costume worn. Ideas were creative and well-argued engaging with the question throughout and demonstrating clear analysis. Appropriate reference was made to hair as well as costume and this was credited if appropriate.

Some candidates found it difficult to provide effective descriptions or analysis of the costumes suggested. More detailed descriptions were required. There was a reliance on reference to colour of costume at times and it remained unclear as to what was really being worn.

Where learners were struggling with the identification of a hero within their text - answers were obviously weaker. There was reference made to the creature's vulnerability as a baby in his nakedness and special effects on his skin but the argument as to whether he was a hero was often confused.

Question 6

As opposed to identifying the hero, in this question, there is a need to focus on the villain within the play. Most candidates identified Iago in Othello and the creature in Frankenstein. There was a need to make a link between being the villain and the use of voice to show this villainy. Many learners went beyond describing the use of voice for which credit might be given if the vocal reference was seen to directly link.

Some work made reference to specific lines and motivations reflecting knowledge of the role. Some examples created specific meaning within a production with reference to and description of volume and tone. However descriptions of vocal techniques was not always detailed – e.g. a mocking tone and candidates need to be encouraged to analyse what makes a mocking tone of voice.

Question 7

Most candidates gave the dates and performance venue as required within the specification. The question was accessible for all and answers seen covered the whole of the mark scheme. Some candidates were able to provide clear examples from the performance seen with analysis and evaluation which was focused reflecting knowledge and understanding of the text. Strong answers confidently discussed in detail, a range of elements with competent understanding in terms of their impact on the performance and audience and this was directly related to the play. Clear knowledge and understanding of the style of the production is required with detailed evaluation and critical analysis of specific theatrical and creative elements. A well-written essay where a full range of theatrical elements are discussed should be provided. There was generally a clear focus on the questions throughout answers although critical analysis was not always balanced. Most candidates were able to discuss the directorial aims and intentions.

Weaker work gave analysis and evaluation which remained under developed. At times there was more focus on the play itself and not on its theatrical presentation. Some candidates focused on one or two main ideas in a performance and did not go beyond this. There were examples of repetitive ideas and phrasing which was not clear. Some examples given of performance work were sweeping generalised statements lacking in detailed discussion. Statements were made but not always explained so ideas remained vague and points made were not always clear with the examiner unable to see what the candidate was trying to explain. Some candidates struggled to understand why things were done or how they were done on stage. This led to essays which were confusing to read. Points being made need to be clearly stated. Specific evaluation of ideas seen is required and this should be linked to the meaning of the play.

Candidates need to understand what meaning was conveyed to the audience and to be able to use appropriate technical terms to explain that meaning. It is not sufficient to describe what was done but candidates need to be able to explain how or why something was done as it was.

Examiners reported some excellent examples of helpfully labelled diagrams to illustrate the points being made however there were also many examples of diagrams being used merely to take up space and these added little to the development of the argument.

On the whole candidates had chosen appropriate performance work to discuss which provided them with a range of theatrical elements to discuss as required in the question.

Some candidates chose to answer Section B first and often these were strong answers but at times this was detrimental to the Section A answers as less time was given to this section. Some centres chose to write about a production of one of the set texts which is allowed within the specification. This focus did not always produce better work and most candidates did well in this section when talking about a production which clearly inspired them. Some essays reflected that an appropriate discussion has taken place within the centre and in many instances this supported discussion was helpful.

In Section B, A03 is taken into account where there is a need to provide a developed and sustained line of argument which is coherently and logically structured. Examiners found that some answers were hindered by issues with spelling, punctuation and grammar and centres must look carefully at this requirement in preparation for the next series. Candidates are expected to be able to correctly spell and use subject/theatrical/performance terminology within their written work.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

Education and Learning

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

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Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553

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