

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H459

For first teaching in 2016

H459/31 Summer 2022 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers are also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

To support student revision, advance information was published about the focus of exams for Summer 2022 assessments. Advance information was available for most GCSE, AS and A Level subjects, Core Maths, FSMQ, and Cambridge Nationals Information Technologies. You can find more information on our [website](#).

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Paper 31 series overview

Analysing performance' (Component 31) is an examined component consisting of three extended response essay questions which are to be completed within two hours and fifteen minutes. The component is worth 20% of the qualification.

The following assessment objectives are covered by Component 31:

- AO3 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how drama and theatre is developed and performed.
- AO4 Analyse and evaluate their own work and the work of others.

There is an expectation that candidates can construct an argument using the questions given, structure an essay which addresses the argument in a coherent manner and analyse performance detail.

Most candidates are able to structure their written work using paragraphs and there is evidence of candidates using introductions and conclusions in their work. Centres are reminded that there is no reward, unlike H059/05, for spelling, punctuation, grammar and presentation. There is no expectation of an introduction or a conclusion although candidates should be encouraged to present their argument briefly. There were many examples where candidates used lengthy prepared introductions which took time away from the argument required within the question on this exam paper.

Key point - Use of introductions and conclusions

There is no expectation that candidates should include an introduction or a conclusion to their work.

Assessment for learning



Centres might find it useful to work on interpreting and starting essay questions as part of the learning process with a focus on immediately introducing the question and the argument rather than giving context and background information..

It is expected that spelling, use of subject terminology, punctuation, grammar and handwriting should not obscure the argument and evidence used within an essay. In some instances, examiners report that handwriting did affect their ability to read and understand the work and therefore the argument and details being presented. The standard of punctuation, grammar and spelling being seen, continues to be an issue which centres should work to address. Some candidates are still using “and” and “because” to start a sentence or paragraph.

There has been a clear attempt in some centres to develop the use of subject specific terminology and terms such as diegetic and non-diegetic sound were seen to be used alongside reference to types of lanterns and the use of birdies and gobos and gels. Use of this terminology is helpful when the candidate is fully aware of what is meant and how it adds to the moment on stage, otherwise it is confusing and was seen to distract from the argument at times. Focusing on the use of terminology within performance skills is something which centres should consider moving forward. For example, breaking down the idea of vocal skills and body language into all of the possible separate elements. It is clear that a large number of candidates are still struggling with adding sufficient performance detail to their work to reach the higher levels on the marking grid. Centres might want to look closer at this so that candidates are able to describe and justify detailed use of performance skills. It is this perceptive and highly developed detail which is required. This applies to both A03 and A04.

Assessment for learning



A focus on how to discuss and justify performance details in a perceptive and highly developed manner is necessary throughout delivery of the specification.

As seen previously, a large number of candidates took advantage of the opportunity to present their work as a word -processed document and centres are reminded that special arrangements for candidates where this is deemed necessary can be made with the exams officer within the centre itself.

Key point - SPaG and handwriting

Centres should make sure that candidates are given the support and guidance required in order to use subject terminology with accuracy and to continue to improve on standards of skills such as spelling, grammar, punctuation and presentation.

Special arrangements for candidates where it is deemed necessary for work to be word-processed should be made in order to make candidates responses to the exam clear to examiners.

There were no infringements of the rubric this year but centres are reminded that none of the set texts in this component can be performed for assessment in the 'Exploring and performing texts' or the 'Practitioners in practice' components and candidates are not permitted to have access to the text in the examination.

While writing about a set text under both Section A and Section B is not restricted within the rubric of the component – it can be self-penalising for candidates. It would be advisable for centres to avoid this in the future. Several candidates wrote about Frankenstein in both sections – as one set text and as a live performance seen. This can result in repetition of ideas and points and should therefore be avoided.

Key point - avoiding set texts in Section B

Centres are advised to study the performance of a text which is not one of their set texts.

On the whole across this written paper, there is a need for the candidate to have a wider experience of theatrical performance, conventions and techniques to draw on and it is strongly recommended that whenever possible more opportunities to see a wider range of performance work is provided. This may be live performance or using a digital platform if Covid remains an issue.

Assessment for learning



Centres should provide opportunities for candidates to experience a wider range of performance work whether live or recorded in order to develop a more extensive range of creative ideas and theatrical understanding.

There are two sections within Component 31: Section A and Section B both marked out of 30 totalling 60 marks for the component and making 20% of the total qualification.

Section A Overview

The candidates have studied two texts on one theme (as outlined on page 17 of the specification) and will answer two essay questions. This year there were no examples of candidates answering on texts that were not on the specification. There were some examples seen of candidates using the wrong question for the texts and theme they had studied. Some candidates did realise their mistake and started their answer again with the right script and question but clearly this impacted on their use of time within the exam. Where candidates were seen to answer using the wrong question – the work was marked and wherever possible credit was given for any relevant discussion or analysis presented.

Candidates are expected to have studied the opening ten minutes of each text chosen and at least three extra scenes from across the text. Centres are reminded that this is the minimum requirement and that this might not always give the candidate sufficient knowledge and understanding to answer the questions within the exam. It is more beneficial for candidates to have a knowledge and understanding of the whole text. This gives the candidates more to draw on when planning the answer to the questions on the exam paper.

Key point - the need to study the text as whole

Candidates would find it helpful to have a full knowledge and understanding of the script rather than just the opening ten minutes and an extra three scenes.

Please note that the specification tells us that centres must study “at least” three extra scenes. Limiting the candidates’ studies to just three scenes can restrict their answers depending on the question.

The selection of scenes can either support or restrict the success of the final essay.

The most popular texts as seen by examiners this year have remained consistent with previous sessions, with candidates answering using ‘King Lear’, ‘Frankenstein’, ‘Othello’, ‘Hamlet’, ‘Live Like Pigs’ and ‘A Day In The Death Of Joe Egg’. Less popular were ‘Love Of A Nightingale’ and ‘O What A Lovely War’ with very few if any candidates using ‘Caligula’ this series.

Candidates need to engage, understand and enjoy the text they are studying. Candidates write creatively and perceptively about scripts which they have enjoyed reading and can see themselves directing or performing the work on stage as a live performance. This is the role which the candidate needs to place themselves in when writing about the scripts. Ensuring that candidates engage with the scripts chosen and the theme is a priority.

Key point - the need to study the text as whole

Candidates should see themselves in the role of director and must be encouraged to make decisions in detail with regards to the text studied.

Candidates were seen to do well when they understand the question and when they construct an argument for that question – plan what they are going to do and have some structure to the work.

Key point - Use of introductions and conclusions

There is no requirement for an introduction to the text, its history or the background of the playwright or performance of the work.

It is recommended that candidates avoid lengthy introductions which do not focus on the question.

| Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following: | Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following: |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used short introductions to set their argument. • Gave clear descriptions, explanations and justification of a range of performance and production details. • Created a clear picture in the mind of the examiner. • Saw themselves in the role of the director/designer/actor. • Selected appropriate scenes to discuss. • Selected the most appropriate text for each question. • Were able to refer to a range of performance and production skills. • Used subject terminology to support the points being made and fully understood that terminology. • Referred briefly to rehearsal techniques which clearly supported the point and the argument. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used lengthy introductions which discussed the playwright and context of the play regardless as to the question. • Gave a vague description and explanation with little justification of one or two performance and production details. • Created a confusing picture in the mind of the examiner. • Had no structure to the writing or the essay as a whole. • Made decisions about what text to use without considering both questions first. • Referred to small number of performance and production skills. • Added in rehearsal techniques because they thought they should. • Added in subject terminology because they thought they should. • Had a limited knowledge and understanding of the text or the characters. • Did not refer to the theme of the question at all or the question itself during the answer. |

Question 1

Theme 1: Conflict

Your answer to each question should be about **one** performance text you have studied from the list below. You must write about a **different** performance text for each question.

Black Watch – Gregory Burke

Hamlet – William Shakespeare

Necessary Targets – Eve Ensler

Oh! What a Lovely War – Joan Littlewood

The Long and the Short and the Tall – Willis Hall

Write the name of the performance text at the start of **each** answer.

- 1 As an actor, explain how you would show conflict with other characters in at least **three** scenes of your chosen performance text. **[15]**

This is a straightforward question which asks the candidate to discuss conflict within the text between as many characters as they want to discuss. Answers were seen on all texts except *The Long and The Short and The Tall*.

Candidates were able to discuss conflict appropriately and some more perceptive answers discussed “inner conflict” as well. Most answers were focused on three specific moments within the texts which meant that candidates had the opportunity to explore the scenes in specific detail.

Those candidates who scored highly on this question were able to describe and explain how the conflict would manifest itself on stage in the use of a range of specific performance techniques.

There is no requirement to discuss the whole text, although ideas must work within the context of the piece as a whole. The exam questions are designed to encourage discussion of focused moments on stage and in this series it seems that generally candidates understood this.

The question does not require discussion of production elements and there were no examples of candidates discussing production elements rather than the acting although there were some examples of work which did explore how production elements might enhance the acting in specific moments. These would be creditable where they interacted effectively with the discussion of the acting seen.

There were examples of detailed discussion of performance techniques and skills to be used but on the whole examiner’s are seeing essays which reflect Exemplar 2 – in order to extend beyond this, centres must press candidates to look at moments on stage in more depth and detail practising how to analyse what would happen on stage more closely.

Assessment for learning – focus on detailed performance and production elements



There is a need for the candidate to know a range of theatrical and performance skills and techniques which they can break down to explore all the elements of a skill such as vocal techniques, body language and facial expression.

Key point - development of performance and production detail

Candidates need to describe in detail how something would appear in performance. They need to clearly state the point they are making, describe what they would like to do and create a **detailed** picture in the mind of the examiner.

Key point - reference to rehearsal techniques

Candidates should only refer to rehearsal techniques if the technique supports the performance detail. In Exemplar 2, it would be relevant to discuss the use of emotional memory and the impact it would have on the moment discussed.

Key point – reference to practitioners, playwrights and contexts

Reference to practitioners is only relevant and rewardable if their ideas and work has a direct impact on the performance detail.

Question 2

- 2 As a director, explain how you would focus the audience's attention on important moments of conflict.

Refer to **either** the opening scenes **or** the closing scenes of your chosen performance text. [15]

The question is reliant on the text chosen to answer it. Most candidates made an appropriate choice but some had clearly only looked at Question 1, answered it and then moved on to Question 2. The outcome of this was that the choice of text for Question 2 was not appropriate largely because it did not include obvious conflict within the opening or the end scenes.

Encouraging candidates to make the right choices within the exam is always going to be difficult and is about preparation before the exam series.

Assessment for learning



It is vital that in preparation for the exam, the centre spends time interpreting questions with the candidates and guiding them towards suitable choices.

Most candidates were able to justify their decisions and present an argument that the examiner could accept for the conflict within the opening or closing scenes. Good examples were 'Hamlet', 'Necessary Targets' and 'Black Watch' whereas some candidates struggled with the conflict within the opening scenes of 'Oh What A Lovely War'.

The question is designed to be approached as if the candidate was the director of the play – and the answer should therefore give the candidates directorial interpretation of the text. This interpretation could include performance skills or production elements or both depending on the whether the opening or closing scenes are chosen.

The range of the discussion may therefore vary and examiners given marks for acting, set design, lighting, sound, props, use of space and any other relevant production elements.

On the whole candidates responded well to this question but some focused only on the acting. While marks were not deducted for this type of answer – some candidates missed an opportunity because they did not either realise the scope of the question or had chosen the text which was not as suitable for this 2nd answer.

Key point – choosing the text for each question

Candidates often appear to struggle with putting the right text with the right question to allow themselves the chance to develop an effective discussion or argument. This is something that should be practised by centres for the examination.

Question 3

Theme 2: Family Dynamics

Your answer to each question should be about **one** performance text you have studied from the list below. You must write about a **different** performance text for each question.

A Day in the Death of Joe Egg – Peter Nichols

House of Bernarda Alba – Federico García Lorca

King Lear – William Shakespeare

Live Like Pigs – John Arden

The Caucasian Chalk Circle – Bertolt Brecht

Write the name of the performance text at the start of **each** answer.

- 3 As an actor, explain how you would create tension within the family dynamic if you were playing a role in your chosen text.

Refer to at least **three** scenes.

[15]

The requirement of this question is that the candidate discusses at least three scenes. There are no limitations on what scenes or the length of the scenes but the idea is to try to focus the answer and to encourage in-depth and detailed discussion of three scenes.

The focus of the question is how the actor would create tension within the scenes. Most candidates understood this focus on tension although many discussed the family dynamic rather than focusing on the creation of tension. On the whole the outcome of the family dynamic proved to be tension and all examiners accepted the candidate's interpretation of tension. This was particularly relevant in relation to 'Live Like Pigs' and 'Caucasian Chalk Circle'. In 'Live Like Pigs', tension and the family dynamic was often discussed as the difference of the Sawneys from the rest of society or their difference with their neighbours, the Jacksons, rather than the dynamic within their own household.

Examiners were looking to credit answers which used a range of performance skills and techniques to create the atmosphere within the family and this should have been focused on an atmosphere of tension. Therefore candidates did well on this question if they were able to describe and justify what they wanted to see on stage from their actors in terms of creating tension within the family dynamics. All ideas were accepted if clear, justified and engaged with the idea of tension and family dynamics.

Most candidates seemed to understand in some depth the family dynamics within the texts although some struggled with *Caucasian Chalk Circle* where it is more difficult to identify family dynamics within the opening scenes. Examiners accepted that the relationship between the farming communities in the opening of the script could be seen as family dynamics. Some candidates were able to discuss the relationship between Natella and her husband, the Duke and his brother, their son and of course Grusha but some candidates seemed to ignore the fact that Natella and Michael were family.

The question is straight forward and on the whole candidates appeared to understand the question, chose appropriate texts and characters to explore while relating this to the family dynamic. Although many did not focus on the tension but simply on the relationships within the family dynamic.

Exemplar 1

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| 3 | | <p>The House of Bernarda Alba was written by Federico Garcia Lorca. The rural trilogy contains themes of dominance, social class and power which was also a re-occurring theme throughout the text. Federico Garcia Lorca was a homosexual man and during the time the play was written, being gay was considered as "illegal" causing Lorca to be executed before finishing the play. 1913 Spain was parliament tradition of full cultural liberalism, which liberalism is considered as one of the key themes through the family dynamics.</p> |
|---|--|--|

A long introduction as given in Exemplar 1 is not rewardable. It is recommended that candidates explain their understanding and approach to the question and keep the opening to the essay to two or three sentences at the most. Time spent on the main part of the essay is the most important thing within these extended pieces of writing.

Exemplar 1 shows an introduction which includes knowledge of the play and its context but which does not address the question being responded to, and in fact seems to start to respond to a question about political messages within the play rather than Question 3 which it was trying to focus on.

In Exemplar 1, while clearly the candidate has knowledge to share, there is no rewardable material in terms of the question. The candidate has made significant reference to the themes of the play and the historical context of the playwright. Centres should note that there is no reference to the context of the play or playwright within the marking grid.

Reference to a practitioner might be useful to explain or justify an idea for performance but there is no credit for exploration of the practitioner in this part of the qualification. Examiners are encouraged to give marks when the use of a practitioner or rehearsal technique adds to the argument or idea being presented. However too often the reference becomes the point being made rather than supporting the point being made.

Key point - references to practitioners, playwrights and contexts

Reference to a practitioner or the playwright or the historical context of a play is only useful when directly related to a specific point in the argument of the question.

Candidates do well when they focus on performance detail and not what happens in rehearsal however if rehearsal techniques have a direct impact on the performance detail, then it might be relevant to discuss in brief rehearsal work.

Misconception



Candidates do not have to add rehearsal techniques to achieve the higher criteria.

Candidates do not need to add reference to practitioners, playwrights and contexts to achieve the higher criteria.

Centres should note that none of the questions posed require discussion of rehearsal techniques, the criteria within the marking grid does not refer to rehearsal in any way. Some candidates were still writing only about what they would do in rehearsals and made no attempt to feed this work into the final performance.

Key point – reference to rehearsal techniques

References to rehearsal techniques are useful when directly related to a specific point in the argument of the question.

Examiners reported seeing a number of well written essays which were able to analyse the text in detail but which gave no reference to how it would be done in performance – and this is what is required by the criteria within the marking grid. Exemplar 2, while a valid point is being made in the extract which would be given marks, the response remains basic against the marking grid as there is no development of the point in terms of how it was done within the performance.

Exemplar 2

| | |
|--|---|
| | Another scene where Grusha could create |
| | tension is in the Northern mountains when |
| | she goes to her brother. When she goes to |
| | him for help, he is concerned with the |
| | Daby because Grusha is unmarried. When |
| | he says "my wifes religious" Grusha should |
| | be stood up tall and have a shocked and |
| | disappointed look facial expression and go |
| | from a tall posture to a smaller one with |
| | her shoulders forward and head held down. |

The exemplar essay demonstrates work which will remain basic because of the lack of performance detail. The basic ideas given are workable and the moment on stage is given – what the candidate is describing is some of the mechanics of the moment. If an actress was to perform that moment – then there would be much more detailed thought given to how she would express her feelings, emotion and characterisation at that time.

Some responses did not discuss the performance skills being used in-depth as in Exemplar 3 – these responses would tend to remain within the basic range in Level 2 of the marking grid for A03. The more in-depth approach seen in Exemplar 3 would be rewarded higher up the marking criteria with criteria such as confident and well developed discussion which is reflective of Level 4 or 5 of the marking grid.

Question 4

- 4 Explain how you could use design elements to convey the family dynamics of your chosen text.

Refer to the **opening scenes** of your chosen performance text.

[15]

The question is asking the candidates to discuss their ideas for any design elements which they might choose to use in order to help the audience understand the family dynamics within the chosen play. In studying the text, it is relevant therefore to have asked candidates to have committed themselves to a design concept – an approach that they would take as a director of the script in terms of design. It should be noted that design elements as listed in the specification are set, lighting, sound, props, costume, hair, make-up and puppets. (See pages 3 and 18 of the specification for H459)

Candidates did well on this question if they were able to describe and explain clearly what they wanted on stage in performance and were able to justify detail why they wanted this in terms of how it reflects the family dynamics. For this question it was up to the candidate to decide what that family dynamic was.

All ideas were accepted if they were clear, justified and engaged with the idea of family dynamics.

Many candidates chose to try to use a range of subject specific terminology using lighting and sound terminology such as diegetic and non-diegetic sound, types of lanterns, birdies, gobos and gels. These references were clearly creditable if the candidate was aware of what the terms really mean and was applying the terminology accurately and effectively for the idea being explored. Some candidates clearly understood this but others were simply using the terms they had learnt in class and were not applying them with accurate knowledge and understanding.

Most candidates chose to discuss lighting and sound rather than set and costume. Those candidates that covered a larger range of design elements showed a more in-depth discussion of the family dynamic and were able to discuss in more detail specific moments rather than being limited to just talking about lighting and sound. Again this is about the interpretation of the question.

Centres should make sure that candidates look at all design elements with regards to representing the theme of the text.

Assessment for learning



Centres should make sure that any subject terminology is used effectively and candidates fully understand the terms and how they should be used to support their ideas.

More focus on design elements across the delivery of the course should be encouraged.

Question 5

- 5 As an actor, explain how you would show the heroic and/or villainous qualities of **one** character in the **opening scenes** of your chosen performance text. **[15]**

Theme 3: Heroes and Villains

Your answer to each question should be about **one** performance text you have studied from the list below. You must write about a **different** performance text for each question.

Amadeus – Peter Shaffer

Caligula – Albert Camus

Frankenstein – Nick Dear

Othello – William Shakespeare

The Love of the Nightingale – Timberlake Wertenbaker

Write the name of the performance text at the start of **each** answer.

The question has a wide brief – in that it allows the candidates to choose whether they see the Creature and Victor as heroes or villains or both. The question uses the phrase “as an actor” – and this might imply one actor however examiners have given marks to answers which discussed more than one role/actor. Most candidates focused on the Creature and most highlighted the debate as to whether or not the Creature was a hero or a villain. Some candidates went further than the opening scene of the play and as in all series – stretching the focus of the question has been allowed.

Key point – stretching the focus of the question

While examiners are asked to allow for candidate’s stretching the question beyond its original focus for example – the opening scenes of the text – if a candidate chooses to go further, this can be self-penalising.

The idea behind limiting the question to the opening scenes or three scenes of the play, is to encourage candidates to discuss specific moments in-depth and not to tackle the whole play within the time limits of the exam. It appears that this is not understood by some candidates and centres should make sure that candidates are aware that a detailed discussion of specific moments within the play is what is required.

Candidates who stuck to the opening scenes tended to give a more specific detailed picture of what they wanted to see on stage during a performance of the piece. There is no requirement to discuss the whole text, although ideas must work within the context of the piece as a whole.

Key point – discussion of focused moments

The exam questions are designed to encourage discussion of focused moments on stage.

Assessment for learning



Centres are advised to discuss what might be considered as the opening and closing scenes of each text studied.

Candidates who scored highly on this question were able to describe and explain how the heroism or the villainy or both manifested itself on stage in the use of a range of specific performance skills creating a clear picture of the scenes in the mind of the examiner.

Key point

Candidates need to describe in detail how something would appear in performance. They need to clearly state the point they are making, describe what they would like to do and create a **detailed** picture in the mind of the examiner.

Exemplar 3

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | through this conversation, represent doing so in a precise, purposeful fashion to |
| | | represent how he is the engineer of the destruction around him; he is the |
| | | craftsman of artful corruption. As he tells Rodrigo "I am not what I |
| | | am"; he roughly grabs thrusts his face towards his own, abruptly closing |
| | | their proxemics and now enforcing intense eye contact, symbolising his |
| | | extreme need for power and to prove his capabilities. Iago would utilise the |
| | | making 'winning' Laban effort action on this line to show his dedication to |
| | | his craft of cunning, making the audience wary of him. Iago would then |
| | | release Rodrigo to light his cigarette, taking long, greedy draws as he looks |
| | | down sorrowfully, representing him coming to terms with the ugly truths of |
| | | his villainy within his introspection. This shows influence of Stanislavski's Naturalism. |

Key point – development of performance and production detail

Candidates need to describe in detail how something would appear in performance. They need to clearly state the point they are making, describe what they would like to do and create a **detailed** picture in the mind of the examiner.

Key point – reference to rehearsal techniques

Candidates should only refer to rehearsal techniques if the technique supports the performance detail. In Exemplar 2, it would be relevant to discuss the use of emotional memory and the impact it would have on the moment discussed.

Key point – reference to practitioners, playwrights and contexts

Reference to practitioners is only relevant and rewardable if their ideas and work has a direct impact on the performance detail.

Question 6

- 6 Explain how you would use lighting **and** sound design to create heroic and/or villainous qualities in your chosen performance text.

Refer to at least **three** scenes.

[15]

Many of the answers seen for this question, where candidates used 'Frankenstein', were reliant on a number of ideas taken from the National Theatre's version available through digital platforms. More perceptive answers built on these ideas or generated their own interpretations and ideas. However ideas which were described, explained and justified were accepted.

The issue for some candidates was the struggle to then link those ideas clearly with the question being asked. Many answers focused on the Creature's birth within the opening of the play, the rape of Elizabeth, the burning of the cottage and/or the death of Victor.

Candidates should be encouraged to develop their own creative ideas, asked to keep developing those ideas and to justify what they are creating with clear and precise explanation. It would be useful to have considered in-depth how they might use lighting, sound, set and other relevant and appropriate production elements in preparation for the exam. Centres are reminded that the theme of the questions are always going to be based around heroes and villains.

It should be noted that design elements as listed in the specification are set, lighting, sound, props, costume, hair, make-up and puppets. (See pages 3 and 18 of the specification for H459)

Candidates did well on this question if they were able to describe what they wanted in terms of lighting and sound, explained it clearly and justified in detail why they wanted this in terms of how it reflects either heroic or villainous qualities. For this question it was up to the candidate to decide whether to discuss the Creature or Victor or both and whether or not they were heroic or villainous.

All ideas are accepted if clear, justified and engaged with the idea of the hero or the villain.

Many candidates chose to try to use a range of subject specific terminology using lighting and sound terminology such as diegetic and non-diegetic sound, types of lanterns, birdies, gobos and gels. These references were clearly creditable if the candidate was aware of what the terms really mean and was applying the terminology accurately and effectively for the idea being explored. Some candidates clearly understood this but others were simply using the terms they had learnt in class and were not applying them with accurate knowledge and understanding.

Assessment for learning



Centres should make sure that any subject terminology is used effectively and candidates fully understand the terms and how they should be used to support their ideas.

Section B overview

Candidates are required to have seen a live theatre performance. Details on the performances which can be analysed and evaluated for this component can be found on page 62 of the specification.

Candidates must watch this performance during the course of their A Level study.

At the start of their answer they must state the name of the performance, the venue, and the date (month and year) the performance was seen. Nearly all candidates did this.

To do well across both Section A and Section B of the paper candidates need to:

- understand the question and answer the question given
- discuss the work in performance in detail.

Candidates who wrote clear structured essays which talked about what would actually happen or had happened on stage in performance did well.

However, there were a number of examples of candidates who were clearly able to write effectively and had a very good, detailed understanding of the work and produced very effective analytical essays which did not meet the criteria within the marking grid of this paper. This is because the analysis did not lead into sufficient performance detail and in some examples no performance detail at all.

It is not sufficient within this specification to discuss the text as a piece of literature and to analyse it simply as a piece of literature. There is a necessity for candidates to discuss the convention and techniques of theatrical presentation and directorial interpretation rather than just the meaning of the written word.

Key point – the need to focus on practical performance detail

Centres must focus on the requirement to discuss how the texts are created on stage through theatrical conventions and techniques and directorial interpretation.

Candidates must be encouraged to discuss their creative and theatrical ideas and to describe and justify these in detail enabling the examiner to “see” and “experience” the candidates’ interpretation.

Question 7*

At the start of your answer write the name, venue and date (month and year) of the live performance you have seen.

7* Evaluate the ways **two** contrasting roles were played in the live performance you have seen. **[30]**

This question requires the candidate to describe, explain and justify the details of live performance which they have seen. Those candidates who were able to recall the detail of a performance within specific moments produced stronger work which met the marking criteria at a higher level. This tended to be productions which have been seen recently.

Due to Covid restrictions, many productions were seen and experienced through digital theatre platforms. Clearly this means that candidates may be able to watch a production more than once and make detailed notes. Notable productions seen were 'Jane Eyre', 'The Wedding', 'Things I Know To Be True', 'Wonderland', 'The Mountaintop', 'Woman In Black', 'Twelfth Night' and 'One Man, Two Governors'. Some productions were more effectively discussed in relation to two roles more than others.

The question did produce some issues for candidates and these have been taken into consideration by examiners. The question does not specifically ask for a contrast and comparison of the two characters but where candidates did this – it has been given marks if the discussion added to how the characters were “played”.

The expectation was that the candidate would discuss two roles within a performance and be able to explain how they were “played”. This might include a discussion of performance skills used but also of the production elements used for example – costume and colour.

Some candidates were able to discuss the director’s view of the play and therefore how the roles were to be “played”.

Credit was given to both performance skills and production elements explored in relation to the concept of the two roles.

There was an expectation that the two roles did contrast in some way but they did not need to be compared. While some answers were able to do both, answers that did not could still be given Level 5 marks if the discussion of the performance was perceptive and highly developed.

The word “evaluation” was something that candidates did not feel comfortable with and only a few made specific evaluative comments regarding the success of the performance. Some candidates were able to explain whether the performance was successful in relation to the directorial interpretation and some gave their opinion about the strengths and weaknesses of the performances. Each was given marks and equally those candidates who were seen to describe and explain and not necessarily evaluate - could also have reached the higher level of the marking grid.

Some candidates were not able to evaluate in this way or to give sufficient performance detail. Some were able to describe what they saw on stage but not address the question at all and some simply retold the story.

Clearly retelling the story is not answering the question. Equally a literary discussion and analysis of the roles but no discussion of how this was conveyed on stage is not appropriate and answers would remain basic. Some candidates only talked about one character or only mentioned another character once.

Again the question clearly asks for a discussion of two roles (not a comparison) – if candidates only discussed one role then their answer would remain basic.

Some candidates may have been restricted by the performance they had chosen to study. This could apply to any exam series and any question. It is vital that centres provide access to more than one production for this section of the exam – so that candidates have a choice of productions depending on the question. However arguably the question could have been answered by all of the productions referenced by candidates in this series.

Key point for effective preparation for Section B

Throughout the two year delivery of the course, candidates should be taught how to interpret questions, plan efficiently and write under timed conditions.

Candidates should be encouraged to see a range of theatre and to take detailed notes.

Candidates must be encouraged to make notes during the live performance visit and after. In-depth discussions in class help candidates clarify performance detail and their understanding.

The completion of practice essays have a significant impact on candidates understanding of what they need to do. Essays must be marked against the marking grid and candidates should be encouraged to apply the criteria to their own work.

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