

**A LEVEL**

**Examiners' report**

# **DRAMA AND THEATRE**

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**H459**

For first teaching in 2016

**H459/46 Summer 2024 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 is 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.

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## Paper 46 series overview

Overall centres should be commended for their teaching methods and approaches to this component. Many candidates demonstrated an understanding of the text and how it could be interpreted for performance.

The single Assessment Objective to 'Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how drama and theatre is developed and performed', is examined through how *The Crucible* is interpreted for performance to an audience by a director. The directorial approach is central to the response and therefore candidates must have an in depth understanding of the role of a director to be able to respond successfully to the question. An understanding of how an audience would interpret the directorial vision is also key to success.

The sole focus of this component is directorial. Examiners looked for any aspect of the director's function, including an overall concept of what a production would look like, the aim of conveying meaning and/or a message to an audience, staging, blocking, levels, proxemics, semiotics, set design, lighting, sound, effects, costume, props, stage furniture, genre, technology and contexts.

### Successful candidates will have an in depth understanding of:

- the role of a director
- theatre design
- semiotics and how an audience would interpret a directorial vision.

Question 1 gives an extract, which candidates are asked to annotate. Question 2 relates to the whole play. It is therefore to be expected that the extract from Question 1 may be included in the vision for the play in Question 2. Each question is marked as a stand-alone, so there is no penalty for that repetition. However, as the scope of Question 1 and Question 2 is always different then the introduction should be directly related to the particular question.

In Question 1 some candidates write in extensive detail for the first part of the response but then this detail is missing from the annotations. Candidates should attempt to balance the two parts. The first part of the question should outline the vision, explain why and give an outline as to how this can be achieved. The annotations should then provide detailed examples of how this can be achieved.

Confident and excellent papers demonstrate how specific theatrical practices and processes mentioned in the first part are applied in practice in the annotations.

In response to Question 2 many candidates wrote about historical, cultural and political contexts around the time the play was written, social contexts about the central themes and issues, which enabled them to focus on the demands of the question. Many candidates introduced the extract vision for Question 1 and the whole play vision for Question 2 using the key words in the question to focus their responses. Some less successful responses described background and/or biographical information on the play, Arthur Miller, and naturalism without linking to the focus of the question. When this information was made relevant to addressing the question from the directorial viewpoint it was helpful and insightful.

### Successful candidates will:

- focus the introduction on the specifics and key words of each question
- provide detailed annotations for Question 1.

For Question 1 many successful responses frequently referred to the question brief of working with actors to demonstrate the emotions and character dynamics. Strongest responses justified decisions with clear understanding of the context of the scene. Practitioner rehearsal techniques were referred to with a clear understanding shown of how a director works with actors to interpret a scene for an audience. Many responses with references to Millers's naturalistic style and the playwright's intentions achieved well.

**Successful candidates will:**

- refer to how and why they would use specific practitioner techniques.

Some candidates had been prepared with generalised directorial responses, local settings and political interpretations before knowing the wording of the questions. While that formulaic or pre-prepared response is understandable, it can limit candidates' creativity and originality. Centres should not offer candidates ready-made directorial ideas, but help them work towards finding, exploring and presenting their own and practice presenting these alongside focused exam questions. How staging underpins a performance was generally well understood. Whether to use a proscenium arch, thrust, traverse or in-the-round layout was crucial to realising the vision.

For Question 2 many successful responses had clearly considered an in depth and relevant concept. Highly successful responses discussed how the staging of particular moments in the play can convey meaning to the audience as well as demonstrating a deep understanding of the playwright's intentions and the social, cultural and historical context of the original performance. Some successful responses referenced the relevance of staging choices and semiotics for today's modern audience in order to highlight how the themes and context of the play can be accessed. Some successful responses referenced a range of theatre companies and their core beliefs and practices and how they were relevant for their own interpretation and vision. Some highly successful responses referred to a variety of plays and productions that had inspired their own staging ideas. Some successful responses used diagrams to highlight their ideas, others used prose just as successfully.

**Successful candidates will:**

- have a creative theatrical concept that they can relate to the focus of the question
- have an in depth understanding of the work and methodologies of a range of practitioners.

The *Crucible* needed to be deconstructed, analysed, dismantled, exposed, explored, experimented with and interpreted before being shaped into a credible performance. This requirement led to some exciting, innovative and unusual ideas for production, locations and genres. While it is not expected that each one of the four strands in the level descriptors grid will be in evidence in equal measure in both responses, there were marks given for responses that recognised directing is a layered and usually collaborative process.

The specification makes clear that production process and theatrical practices should be part of the learning. For Question 1 many successful responses detailed the practitioner techniques they would use to work with actors, explaining what and why in specific moments. For example, Frantic Assembly, Stanislavski, Katie Mitchell, Brecht, Lecoq and Berkoff. Some successful responses described how using specific techniques would help the director and actors achieve the desired semiotics for an audience to engage with the extract.

For Question 2, some successful responses referred to productions they had seen and therefore inspired their own vision and choices, for example, Katie Mitchell's naturalistic style to deal with feminist themes and expressionistic design concepts from practitioners such as Edward Gordon Craig.

The handwriting of a small minority of candidates presented a challenge for examiners and it was noted that several opted to type their work, although most of the annotations needed in Question 1 were handwritten. Centres may wish to give thought in future sessions to advising candidates on handwriting or word processing.

Some candidates considered a contemporary audience and chose a different setting from the playwright. That is perfectly acceptable provided it is justified and examples from the text support proposed ideas. Many candidates referenced current social issues, for example, misogyny, patriarchy, the 'me too' movement and abuse of women and girls in the wider world.

This is not a play to be taken at face value as it is rich in layers of psychological complexity. The central theme of the supposed possession by the devil of young girls and the subsequent horrors that befell a community was understood by most candidates.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>considered that the directorial purpose is to convey meaning to an audience</li> <li>frequently used examples from the play to support their discussion and ideas</li> <li>demonstrated learning from directorial and practitioner practices and processes, methods, techniques and applied them accurately</li> <li>commanded the language of drama and theatre knowledgeably and with understanding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>wrote generalised comments such as 'I would use V effect' without justifying how and why</li> <li>gave a general commentary on directorial choices and did not focus the response for Question 1 on how they would direct the actors to show the character dynamics and explore emotions</li> <li>discussed text as a piece of literature rather than an explorative tool for performance</li> <li>demonstrated little knowledge and understanding of theatre practitioners.</li> </ul>

### Assessment for learning



- Try out a variety of staging options for a particular scene. Evaluate and discuss the differing actor and audience relationships and how intentions and meaning are changed in each option.
- Use techniques and ideas from a wide range of practitioners such as Brecht, Stanislavski, Boal, Artaud, Grotowski, Berkoff, Katie Mitchell and Punchdrunk to interpret a particular section. Evaluate the effect the different techniques have on communicating meaning.
- Direct your peers in particular sections and try them out in front of an audience. Evaluate the success of the techniques used.

## OCR support



The OCR resources for this component and for *The Crucible* in particular are invaluable and can be found here on [Teach Cambridge](#)

## Resources



The Guardian article on *The Crucible*: [‘the perfect play for our post-truth times’](#)

## Question 1

- 1 As a director, describe and justify your vision for directing the actors in this extract to create character dynamics and explore emotions. Annotate the script to show how you would do this.

[30]

This question is not in two distinct parts, the explanation and the annotations are marked holistically. Annotations should generally support and expand on the account of the vision described in the opening. The question asks for a description and a justification of the directorial vision. It requires specific focus on exploring emotions and character dynamics. The annotations should demonstrate how the vision would be brought to life on stage, from page to stage. If examiners felt as they read the response that they could visualise the extract on stage, that it worked, that it achieved the directorial vision and demonstrated the requisite emotions and character dynamics and that it was a series of credible ideas, then they gave marks for responses accordingly. How directors' creative and artistic choices influence how meaning is communicated should be demonstrated in this response. Some candidates drew lines across page from text to note. Some used annotations to mention influences from practitioners they'd studied. The explanation needed a justification of the vision, using evidence from the text to support their argument for their interpretation of character dynamics and ways of exploring emotions. The annotations should support and may add to their concept.



## Exemplar 1

- 1 As a director, describe and justify your vision for directing the actors in this extract to create character dynamics and explore emotions. Annotate the script to show how you would do this.

[30]

my directorial vision for this extract is to show how institutionalised power imbalances lead to injustice. The key themes that are addressed in this scene are religion, power, ~~corruption~~, and misogyny as these are shown to be the prime reasons as to why corruption and the false accusations of innocent people have taken place in Salem. This scene is important as it marks a point where some of those in positions of power, Danforth and Hale, ~~realise~~ begin to realise that witchcraft may have not existed in Salem and so are planning ~~to~~ to conceal this idea and keep order. It is clear that character dynamics have shifted between ~~creating~~ the people of the court as strained emotions and fear are conveyed whilst the dynamic between these people and ~~the presence of~~ Elizabeth has also changed, with ~~their~~ their fate being determined by her ability to persuade Proctor to confess, highlighting a shift in power balances.

In order to convey the tension and fear that the court holds of losing power, I would direct the actors to use ~~emotional~~ tense body language and ~~short~~ fast-paced sentences whereas Elizabeth would remain more relaxed due to her lower status, having already ~~expected~~ been anticipating her

1 own hanging. I would also use Viola Spolin's status technique, giving different levels of status to each character ~~in order~~ in order to explore the changing status between the characters throughout the extract.

3

1

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Parris should speak at a fast pace with little pausing in order to convey his desperation to shift the blame onto others. The word 'Abigail' should be emphasised with a louder volume to show that although Abigail has left Salem, she is still an easy person to lay ~~the~~ blame on due to her lower status as a woman, showing that she is still being marginalised due to misogyny.

Danforth<sup>s</sup> portrays his fear of the court being overthrown differently by using a loud voice and pausing between each word to create emphasis. This will portray ~~his~~ the rising tension between <sup>these</sup> characters and his denial in admitting that the court could be in ~~the~~ trouble.

Parris should turn to Danforth ~~and~~ when speaking of God as to try to provoke guilt in Danforth by using religion in order to convince him that the court is at risk. This shows the power that religion held in the Puritan Salem community and how by using religion, injustices could be made.

Hathorne should use a high pitched voice and quick pace with frantic gesture in order to show his desperation. However, this should be said at a lower volume, showing that he knows he will not ~~turn over~~ I

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4

Whilst proposing this plan, Parris should become lighter in body language, ~~using~~ exhibiting 'passionate' on Leech's seven levels of tension. This would show a rising sense of hope that he won't be found as corrupt and hence that he only cares about himself and not for the many innocent people who will suffer as a result of this.

During this passage, I would ~~create~~ create slowly ~~close~~ nearing proxemics between the two characters as Danforth approaches Parris. This would create tension for the audience, showing the breakdown of their relationship as Danforth uses his power as head of ~~the~~ the court to make the final decision.

This line should show a stark contrast between Parris' open and confident body language from before as he uses closed body language and a lot of pausing within these lines to show that he is upset...

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5

... This will show that Parris can no longer rely on his high religious position as the Reverend that he used ~~to~~ as an advantage in order to allow the arrests of innocent people, showing a collapse of his power that he relied on and hence his terror that he will meet the same fate as those in lower power.

— This line should be said with an anguished tone and a loud volume to portray his anger that they no longer ~~can~~ have as much power over the people of Salem that they previously did.

— By using the Stanislavski rehearsal technique of units and objectives, the actor playing Danforth would see that his objective is to gain control of the dwindling power in the court to be able to maintain control over the people of Salem, as he knows he can due to their ~~lesser status~~.

— The words 'men' and 'heaven' should be emphasised, with Danforth ~~to~~ gesturing with a firm point upwards towards the sky and also ~~the~~ to the other characters. This ~~shows~~ ~~the expectations that~~ emphasises to the audience the idea that because they are male and are highly religious, they have a lot of power.

Turn over

6

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A pause should be created after Herrick leaves with Danform and Hale avoiding eye contact with each other whilst fidgeting. This will convey to the audience the tension in their relationship that was previously strong as they worked together at the beginning of the play

Hale should show his exasperation at Danform in here, using big gesture and raising his volume throughout the line.

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7

5

7

— This line should be said with a high pitch with lots of movement in his body language. This would show the audience how ridiculous Hale finds Danforth's question to be in this moment, ~~breathing~~. simultaneously, Danforth should roll his eyes and turn away, ~~conveying the~~ communicating the idea that he doesn't believe Hale is taking the very serious situation of their corruption being revealed seriously.

— Elizabeth should state this line quickly after Danforth has finished with a confident tone as to portray the idea that she is constantly in fear that they will ~~not~~ show her injustice again as they did when they falsely accused her, due to her lower power as a woman.

— Hale should speak slowly and clearly, ~~and~~ pausing to gulp in between lines to portray his nervousness that Elizabeth will not do as he wants and hence his fear that she, having lower status, will be able to overtake him.

Turn over

8

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- Hale should raise his voice at Elizabeth and approach her with open and strong body language in order to show his higher power and dominance over her, using this to his advantage
- These lines should be said rushed in order to show Danforth's desperation to convince Elizabeth. He should say the word 'woman' with disdain in order to emphasise the fact that she is still of a much lower status than him and hence has to obey him.



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Elizabeth should hold a closed off body language with a lots of tension as she fears the power of these men ~~as~~ As a woman of lower status who has been convicted of being involved with the devil, she knows that she must do as she is told as so this line should be said with a soft and quiet tone of acceptance.

The introduction in Exemplar 1 outlines the directorial vision and the main themes the candidate wants to highlight through the character dynamics and emotions. The context of this point in the play is made relevant to the interpretation. Viola Spolin's status technique highlights how the director would work with actors to achieve the dynamics and emotions in relation to status in the scene. The annotations describe and justify the choices made by the director with reference to the emotions and dynamics between the characters. Stanislavski's rehearsal techniques and Lecoq's levels of tension help the candidate to explain their rehearsal process and the description of techniques are followed by justifications linking to the emotions and character dynamics the director aims to communicate to the audience. The question is discussed with knowledge and understanding of how creative choices convey meaning and how characters' dynamics are crucial in the extract. The annotations add a confident level of detail on the direction of the extract and show a sense of how the play can be interpreted. Level 4, 24 marks.

## Question 2

- 2 As a director, explain and justify how you could stage a performance of *The Crucible* to highlight the historical, social and cultural context of the play. [30]

This asked for an explanation and a justification for demonstrating the historical, social and cultural context in staging a performance of *The Crucible*. Some candidates discussed the original performance context, some discussed the relevance of the themes and issues of the play for a modern day audience, some approached the question as a mixture of past and present. All of these approaches were absolutely acceptable. A wide range of staging styles were presented with a wide range of focus from set to costume to rehearsal techniques used with actors to stage specific moments. Some of the key issues and themes highlighted were religion, female oppression, power and abuse. If they were discussed through their staging ideas, then learning and cross fertilisation of ideas was well placed and could be given marks. In many cases candidates had been taught to focus on three or four scenes, which may include the given extract, to represent the whole play to answer Question 2. This is entirely acceptable. For success we needed an explanation of a vision to direct the whole play, a justification for the vision using text evidence to support their argument, how the whole play is to be staged and a justified view on historical, social, cultural and political context.

## Exemplar 2

As a director, I would specifically use a preshow as well as key moments in Act 3 and Act 4 of *The Crucible* to display the context of the play. Through these moments, I would aim to not only show the hysteria taking place in Salem in 1692, but also recognise the relevance that it has to today's society as well as the 1950s, the time when Miller wrote the play.

I would use a preshow before Act 1 to ground the play in its historical setting. To do this, I would have the actors playing the girls slowly walk onstage one by one reciting the Commandments. I would have this done in complete darkness to show the secrecy of this moment and to increase the intensity, immediately highlighting to the audience the importance of the ten Commandments. Moreover, I would then use torchlights held by the other cast members offstage to illuminate the stage before discordant music begins to play and the girls dance in a slightly jerky and disturbing manner. When this takes place, I would have the torches begin to move, slowly illuminating different parts of the stage. By doing this, I would aim to create a searchlight effect with the lighting. This effect, plus the jerky movements and discordant music, would be used to show the audience that what

the girls are doing is prohibited and meant to be viewed as wrong by the audience. This links to the historical context, as it immediately shows the audience the oppressive and confining nature of Puritan society in 1692, while also setting the girls up in opposition to the rest of the characters in the play, making the audience immediately mistrustful of them. Moreover, their wrongdoing would appear more clear through Parris' entrance during this prologue, at which point, I would instruct the girls to flee the stage, apart from Betty, who I would have collapse and be lifted into the air by other cast members. By doing this, I would show that the girls are aware of their wrongdoing and therefore should be viewed in contempt for it, while also showing Betty's reaction as one of fear as she knows she is going to be punished. Moreover, by having her lifted into the air, I would suggest witchcraft to the audience, as later, in Act 1, the belief is that she flew - a moment I would allow the audience to see and judge for themselves. ~~Through this, I would~~ In addition, while the girls are dancing, I would have them use Laban's theory of movement to explore freedom from their oppression. I would ask them to move freely rather than in a bound nature as they do for the rest of the play, ~~to~~ in order to reinforce the idea that they are in direct opposition to the values of the Puritan society in which they live.

Through this, I would show the girls ~~are~~ as rebellious and an opposing force to the stable nature of Salem's society, showing the audience that disrupting forces can easily emerge and twist themselves into being the norm - as can be seen in the Red Scare in the 1950s, at the time Miller wrote *The Crucible*.

I would ensure that I use key moments from Act 3 to display the cultural context of the time and the danger of increasing hysteria and fanaticism. In this scene, I would have the girls seated stage right, with Proctor stage left and Danforth centre stage, acting as a mediator between the two opposing sides. However, when Proctor shouts at Abigail 'How do you call heaven? Whore! Whore!', I would have him stride over to her, grabbing her hair and dragging ~~her~~ her centre stage before shouting the second 'Whore!' into her face. In this moment, I would have the other girls scream and run to hide behind their chairs while the men in the court run to pull John from Abigail. Through this moment, I would aim to show the intensity of emotion and the timeless nature of violence and the agonised need for the truth to be known. Here, I would have John breathing heavily to show him hatred and anger for Abigail. However, ~~the~~ when Proctor states 'I have known her sir', I

would have him speak in a much softer and more defeated tone, showing Proctor as a broken man willing to sacrifice his good name for his wife's benefit. In this moment, I would aim for the audience to feel deep respect for Proctor, as his reputation is forever tarnished by his admission - a fact that continues to be true in modern society, as seen by the damaging effects of the McCarthy trials on people's lives and professions. Moreover, I would also use Act 3 to display the danger of fanaticism and hysteria, as Abigail uses the 'yellow bird' to feign witchcraft being used against her. Here, I would have Abigail have a tremble in her voice as she asks 'why do you come yellow bird?'. In this moment, I would have her walk slowly to centre downstage, the girls following her downstage until they form a line - a united front preventing the judges from seeing the truth of what is going on. Here, I would ask Abigail to employ Artaud's breathing technique, becoming more laboured in her breathing as her "fear" increases, causing the tension to rise drastically. Moreover, I would aim to disturb the audience through this part of the play, as I would want them to see the ridiculous nature of the pretence while being shocked that the judges are taken in by it. To highlight this, I would have the girls start shaking, first a little, then I would have it increase more and more.



until they are wrenched away from their line, dispersing among ~~the~~ those in the court, some falling to the ground and all of them screaming and crying out. Through this, I would aim to display the disturbing nature of hysteria, as it takes over and causes what would normally be considered ridiculous actions, to be taken as proof.

In Act 4, I would aim to show the importance and significance of reputation through the character of John Proctor. To show the audience the importance of a man's name and reputation, I would use the line 'Because it is my name!'. At this point, I would have Proctor centre stage, with the others standing in a circle around him, causing an increase in oppressive tension as all the characters' energy is directed inwards towards Proctor. I would have Proctor roar the line, slowly losing energy as he continues after this exclamation until he becomes quiet when stating 'I have given you my soul. Leave me my name'. However, here I would still have him be high intensity, maintaining eye contact with Danforth and clenching his jaw to show his strength of character shining through. Furthermore, I would have him elongate the vowel sound in 'name', stressing to the audience the importance of maintaining his reputation, as it is important in the Puritan society in which he lives. In

addition, after Elizabeth runs to John, I would have him speak to her in a tender, yet firm tone, showing his ~~straight~~ strength of character and resilience. I would then have him lift her over his head before bringing her in for a kiss. By doing this, I would aim to show the audience that Proctor (who I would have stumble as he first enters the stage) finds strength in his reputation and in Elizabeth's forgiveness. Through this, I would aim to show the audience how strength is found in knowing that your reputation is safe and in finding goodness within yourself. While this is clearly applicable to the Salem witch trials in 1692, I would also display it as relevant to the McCarthy trials during the Red Scare in ~~the~~ the 1950s, as reputation could be won or lost in the court.

Overall, I would use a prologue, Act 3 and Act 4 to display the dangers of fanaticism and the importance of reputation both in 1692 and in 1950s America. I would utilise tone of voice, positions on stage and rehearsal techniques to show the audience the manipulation of the court system and of public opinion can and did lead to destruction and blind panic.



The strong introduction in Exemplar 2 outlines links to three historical contexts, the time the play was written, the time the play is set and modern day. Pre-show ideas directly link theatrical conventions of sound, space, movement, atmosphere and lighting to place the play in its historical setting as well as highlighting themes and intended messages to the audience. The Practitioner reference to Laban techniques is then justified by linking the theme of oppression and its relevance to the historical context of the Red Scare.

Proxemics and movement of actors on stage is discussed with reference to the cultural context focussing on the intended semiotics for the audience in specific moments. The directorial vision is explained further highlighting knowledge and understanding of the practitioner Artaud and the effectiveness of breathing techniques to communicate messages to the audience. A very detailed description of how the actor playing John Proctor would use a wide range of acting skills to highlight the theme of reputation in the historical context of the setting and the time in which the play was written.

The question is addressed with a justified production idea that demonstrates excellent understanding of contextual influences, how the play is structured and may be interpreted with the use of several theatrical practices. Level 5, 26 marks.

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- the purpose and benefits of internal assessment
- the roles and responsibilities of teachers, assessors, internal verifiers and moderators
- the principles and methods of standardisation
- the best practices for collecting, storing and submitting evidence
- the common issues and challenges in internal assessment and how to avoid them.

The subject-specific courses are tailored for each qualification that has non-exam assessment (NEA) units, except for AS Level and Entry Level. They cover the following topics:

- the structure and content of the NEA units
- the assessment objectives and marking criteria for the NEA units
- examples of student work with commentary and feedback for the NEA units
- interactive marking practice and feedback for the NEA units.

We are also developing courses for some of the examined units, which will be available soon.

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