

**A LEVEL**

**Examiners' report**

# **DRAMA AND THEATRE**

---

**H459**

For first teaching in 2016

**H459/44 Summer 2024 series**

# Contents

Introduction .....	3
Paper 44 series overview .....	4
Question 1 .....	8
Question 2 .....	8

## 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.

### Would you prefer a Word version?

Did you know that you can save this PDF as a Word file using Acrobat Professional?

Simply click on **File > Export to** and select **Microsoft Word**

(If you have opened this PDF in your browser you will need to save it first. Simply right click anywhere on the page and select **Save as . . .** to save the PDF. Then open the PDF in Acrobat Professional.)

If you do not have access to Acrobat Professional there are a number of **free** applications available that will also convert PDF to Word (search for PDF to Word converter).

## Paper 44 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 *Stockholm* 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 dream of what a show 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 wrote 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/processes mentioned in the first part are applied in practice in the annotations.

For 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, Bryony Lavery, first performances, Frantic Assembly and well-known examples of Stockholm Syndrome 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 2, some very successful responses related their directorial vision to current issues as well as the historical understanding of Stockholm Syndrome with a clear understanding of abusive and toxic relationships and the views, behaviours and attitudes of our current society around them and related this to the choices they would make as a director.

Some successful responses demonstrated a deep understanding of the psychology of coercive control and manipulation relating to current issues, such as social media and the pressure of presenting a perfect life and linked this to design and directorial choices in specific moments. Some highly successful responses discussed how they would demonstrate, through specific staging choices, how modern technology can exacerbate pre-existing mental health issues, for example, Kali's paranoia and anxiety.

#### Successful candidates will:

- demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of Stockholm Syndrome and the psychology of abusive relationships, including recent research and current knowledge of the issues at hand.

*Stockholm* 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, Brecht, Le Coq, 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, Punchdrunk's immersive style and lighting design concepts from practitioners such as Paul Constable.

#### Successful candidates will:

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

With their learning from the other AS and A Level components, experience of and research into performances, staging styles and dramatic exploration of the themes, there was an expectation of inspiration drawn and ideas applied from the work of practitioners, some they'd seen, some they'd actually studied.

Illustrations of processes and theories could be implicit, if explained. In *Stockholm*, the influence of Frantic Assembly is integral to understanding how the play was created and works in performance. The use of Frantic Assembly's rehearsing and devising techniques was sometimes vague. Where they were used and explained as devising and explorative tools, responses were more effective. 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 limits candidates' creativity and originality. Centres should not offer candidates ready-made directorial ideas, but help them work towards finding, exploring and presenting their own.

Some candidates considered a contemporary audience and set their extract and/or whole play in a different setting from the playwright. That is perfectly acceptable provided it is justified and examples from the text support proposed ideas. Many candidates referred to current issues about domestic violence and abuse.

### 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 Frantic Assembly.

The understanding of 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.

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.

The play is rich in layers of psychological complexity. The central theme of the supposed perfect couple and the surprising twist as to who is the abuser in the toxic relationship was understood by most candidates. The captor/captive relationship and the fluttering moth were generally understood. The more perceptive responses probed this syndrome.

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



- Work through a number of Frantic Assembly techniques, exclusively from the directorial viewpoint. Evaluate the success of communicating meaning.
- 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 including for *Stockholm* can be found on [Teach Cambridge](#).

## Resources



An additional resource that you might find useful is [Frantic Assembly's](#) own resource on their original production of *Stockholm*.

## 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.

## Question 2

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

Question 2 asked for an explanation and a justification for demonstrating the historical, social and cultural context in staging a performance of *Stockholm*. 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 retrospective jealousy, control, manipulation, love, obsession, entrapment, power and abuse. If they were discussed through their staging ideas, then learning and cross fertilisation of ideas were 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 1

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

As a director, I would stage my performance of *Stockholm* to highlight the contexts of the play. Historically, the play represents the creation of the term 'Stockholm Syndrome', created due to victims of a robbery protecting and defending the people that threatened them. I would show this through my staging by creating this idea of Todd being trapped by Kali. Socially, the focus is on the relationship of the two characters - how the relationship is abusive and destructive. I would show this through the ~~extra~~ use of physical theatre.

To represent this theme of Stockholm Syndrome and the feeling of Todd being trapped, I would use a proscenium arch to stage my performance of *Stockholm*. This reflects the play's context as Scott Graham was inspired by watching one of his friends and their partner argue, they closed the door on him meaning he couldn't get involved, he could only sit and listen. I want the audience to be in this position, a proscenium arch distances the audience from the couple, the audience feel useless as they watch the destruction and abuse unfold. This also adds to the idea of Todd being trapped as the audience cannot help him, he is isolated with Kali on stage as the audience are quite literally out of reach. To further this theme of Stockholm Syndrome, on the stage space, set pieces such as doors and windows

will emphasise how Todd is trapped. The windows would be on the flats at the back of the stage, they are painted as if the view out is just to a bare brick wall, and bars are painted on the window. This adds to Todd's isolation, but this could also reflect the play's historical context and how the robbery victims were trapped and hidden away - much like Todd. To add to this idea, the door would be like a vault door, this can also suggest that Todd and Kali are hiding their relationship as it isn't traditional and wouldn't be accepted by society - they must hide it away. This could represent the idea of not knowing what happens 'behind closed doors'.

I would use physical theatre when staging my performance to highlight the play's social context of an abusive relationship. I would specifically use lifts to communicate this abusive relationship. Lifts represent support and trust, but they can also be scary and dangerous and I believe this reflects an abusive relationship, Kali and Todd in particular. In the beginning, when the two are unpacking their shopping, I would have Todd lift Kali gently and slowly up and over his shoulder. His touches are loving and caring, he makes sure she is safe. I would then murder this lift during the fight scene, but this time Todd quickly and roughly lifts Kali, his touches are cold and harsh. This contrast shows how unpredictable an abusive relationship can be. There can be moments of,



love and warmth, but also moments of danger and fear. This is impactful to the audience as it adds to the idea that they can't help them, they can only watch on as the couples downfall begins. They are forced to watch as the two fight and hurt each other, but this use of mirroring reminds the audience that the two aren't always like this. In the mirroring of the lifts also suggests how an abusive relationship is like a constant cycle that a couple are stuck in, once the fight is over, it becomes love again. This idea is also suggested by the movement of the seasons throughout the play.

The context of gender and gender expectations are highlighted throughout the play. When staging my performance I would emphasise this idea through levels and lighting. Overall, I would try and have Kali's actor at a higher level than Todd to represent her dominance and his submissiveness. The couple go against traditional gender roles as it is the woman who is dominant, and the man is weaker and beneath the woman. For example, before the fight scene as Kali's anger begins to build, I would have Kali approach Todd, and as Todd backs away I would have him slowly sink to the floor. This use of levels further Kali's power and Todd's vulnerability (which is traditionally the other way around).

Throughout my performance, I would use lighting to show this unconventional power dynamic. When Kali is dominant, the lighting is purple, as purple represents her as a character (jealous and powerful) but it also represents femininity - emphasising how Kali is a powerful woman and dominant over her male partner. So as Kali approaches Todd and he slowly gets to the floor - the lighting is a harsh purple. In the few moments when Todd gains power (such as smashing the clock), the lights change to grey, representing the power shift. Todd is represented by the colour grey as it's a colour of isolation and guilt but also weakness which is a typical trait associated with women. My lighting represents both their power dynamics but also the context of gender.

Overall, I would use set, physical theatre, levels and lighting to represent the historical, social and cultural contexts of Stockholm. I would highlight the theme of Stockholm Syndrome, the idea of an abusive relationship and its constant cycle and focus on gender and how the pair's power dynamic is unconventional, as it is Kali (the female) who is dominant.

A confident introduction outlining the historical context of Stockholm Syndrome directly linking to their directorial vision of using physical theatre for staging and how this will highlight Todd's entrapment in the relationship. Placing the actor and audience relationship in the discussion from the outset, demonstrating how staging choices influence the experience of the audience. Set design ideas linked to and reflect contextual influence of being trapped by captors. Physical theatre semiotics are discussed as to how and why the director has chosen specific moves for the actors in order to communicate the context and message to the audience. The discussion of traditional gender roles and how this would be subverted through the use of levels demonstrates confident understanding of the social and cultural context of the play. Lighting ideas are justified and demonstrate an understanding of how these can be used to highlight issues and communicate meaning to an audience. Contextual influences are discussed and there is some confident understanding of how the play is constructed and may be staged. The argument is supported by references to the text and was given Level 4.

---

# Supporting you

---

## Teach Cambridge

Make sure you visit our secure website [Teach Cambridge](#) to find the full range of resources and support for the subjects you teach. This includes secure materials such as set assignments and exemplars, online and on-demand training.

**Don't have access?** If your school or college teaches any OCR qualifications, please contact your exams officer. You can [forward them this link](#) to help get you started.

## Reviews of marking

If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our post-results services. For full information about the options available visit the [OCR website](#).

## Access to Scripts

We've made it easier for Exams Officers to download copies of your candidates' completed papers or 'scripts'. Your centre can use these scripts to decide whether to request a review of marking and to support teaching and learning.

Our free, on-demand service, Access to Scripts is available via our single sign-on service, My Cambridge. Step-by-step instructions are on our [website](#).

## Keep up-to-date

We send a monthly bulletin to tell you about important updates. You can also sign up for your subject specific updates. If you haven't already, [sign up here](#).

## OCR Professional Development

Attend one of our popular professional development courses to hear directly from a senior assessor or drop in to a Q&A session. Most of our courses are delivered live via an online platform, so you can attend from any location.

Please find details for all our courses for your subject on **Teach Cambridge**. You'll also find links to our online courses on NEA marking and support.

## Signed up for ExamBuilder?

[ExamBuilder](#) is a free test-building platform, providing unlimited users exclusively for staff at OCR centres with an [Interchange](#) account.

Choose from a large bank of questions to build personalised tests and custom mark schemes, with the option to add custom cover pages to simulate real examinations. You can also edit and download complete past papers.

[Find out more](#).

## Active Results

Review students' exam performance with our free online results analysis tool. It is available for all GCSEs, AS and A Levels and Cambridge Nationals (examined units only).

[Find out more](#).

**You will need an Interchange account to access our digital products. If you do not have an Interchange account please contact your centre administrator (usually the Exams Officer) to request a username, or nominate an existing Interchange user in your department.**



# Online courses

---

## Enhance your skills and confidence in internal assessment

### What are our online courses?

Our online courses are self-paced eLearning courses designed to help you deliver, mark and administer internal assessment for our qualifications. They are suitable for both new and experienced teachers who want to refresh their knowledge and practice.

### Why should you use our online courses?

With these online courses you will:

- learn about the key principles and processes of internal assessment and standardisation
- gain a deeper understanding of the marking criteria and how to apply them consistently and accurately
- see examples of student work with commentary and feedback from OCR moderators
- have the opportunity to practise marking and compare your judgements with those of OCR moderators
- receive instant feedback and guidance on your marking and standardisation skills
- be able to track your progress and achievements through the courses.

### How can you access our online courses?

Access courses from [Teach Cambridge](#). Teach Cambridge is our secure teacher website, where you'll find all teacher support for your subject.

If you already have a Teach Cambridge account, you'll find available courses for your subject under Assessment - NEA/Coursework - Online courses. Click on the blue arrow to start the course.

If you don't have a Teach Cambridge account yet, ask your exams officer to set you up – just send them this [link](#) and ask them to add you as a Teacher.

Access the courses **anytime, anywhere and at your own pace**. You can also revisit the courses as many times as you need.

### Which courses are available?

There are **two types** of online course: an **introductory module** and **subject-specific** courses.

The introductory module, Building your Confidence in Internal Assessment, is designed for all teachers who are involved in internal assessment for our qualifications. It covers the following topics:

- 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.

### How can you get support and feedback?

If you have any queries, please contact our Customer Support Centre on 01223 553998 or email [support@ocr.org.uk](mailto:support@ocr.org.uk).

We welcome your feedback and suggestions on how to improve the online courses and make them more useful and relevant for you. You can share your views by completing the evaluation form at the end of each course.

## Need to get in touch?

If you ever have any questions about OCR qualifications or services (including administration, logistics and teaching) please feel free to get in touch with our customer support centre.

Call us on  
**01223 553998**

Alternatively, you can email us on  
**support@ocr.org.uk**


For more information visit


 **[ocr.org.uk/qualifications/resource-finder](https://ocr.org.uk/qualifications/resource-finder)**

 **[ocr.org.uk](https://ocr.org.uk)**

 **[facebook.com/ocrexams](https://facebook.com/ocrexams)**

 **[twitter.com/ocrexams](https://twitter.com/ocrexams)**

 **[instagram.com/ocrexaminations](https://instagram.com/ocrexaminations)**

 **[linkedin.com/company/ocr](https://linkedin.com/company/ocr)**

 **[youtube.com/ocrexams](https://youtube.com/ocrexams)**

## We really value your feedback

Click to send us an autogenerated email about this resource. Add comments if you want to. Let us know how we can improve this resource or what else you need. Your email address will not be used or shared for any marketing purposes.



**I like this**



**I dislike this**

Please note – web links are correct at date of publication but other websites may change over time. If you have any problems with a link you may want to navigate to that organisation's website for a direct search.



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS & ASSESSMENT

OCR is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored. © OCR 2024 Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England. Registered office The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA. Registered company number 3484466. OCR is an exempt charity.

OCR operates academic and vocational qualifications regulated by Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and CCEA as listed in their qualifications registers including A Levels, GCSEs, Cambridge Technicals and Cambridge Nationals.

OCR provides resources to help you deliver our qualifications. These resources do not represent any particular teaching method we expect you to use. We update our resources regularly and aim to make sure content is accurate but please check the OCR website so that you have the most up to date version. OCR cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions in these resources.

Though we make every effort to check our resources, there may be contradictions between published support and the specification, so it is important that you always use information in the latest specification. We indicate any specification changes within the document itself, change the version number and provide a summary of the changes. If you do notice a discrepancy between the specification and a resource, please [contact us](#).

You can copy and distribute this resource in your centre, in line with any specific restrictions detailed in the resource. Resources intended for teacher use should not be shared with students. Resources should not be published on social media platforms or other websites.

OCR acknowledges the use of the following content: N/A

Whether you already offer OCR qualifications, are new to OCR or are thinking about switching, you can request more information using our [Expression of Interest form](#).

Please [get in touch](#) if you want to discuss the accessibility of resources we offer to support you in delivering our qualifications.