

**A LEVEL**

**Examiners' report**

# **DRAMA AND THEATRE**

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**H459**

For first teaching in 2016

**H459/31 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 31 series overview

'Analysing performance' (component 31) is an examined component which consists of three extended response essay questions. The written paper is to be completed within two hours and fifteen minutes. The component is worth twenty per cent 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.

Within the marking grid for this component it should be noted that, unlike H059/05, there is no specific reward for spelling, punctuation, grammar, and presentation. However, 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 and evaluate 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.

Candidates are encouraged to present their knowledge and understanding of the theatrical context for each question briefly in a short introduction. It is clear that some candidates are preparing introductions which are very well written and give an understanding of the context and style of the work but which are not focused on the question. There is an increase in and a return to the use of long introductions across all three essays. Some candidates will write a page of introduction and while the content might be accurate and reflect knowledge and understanding – unless this has a direct impact on the performance of the play and the focus of the question – it is not helpful. Time spent on the main part of the essay is the most important thing within these extended pieces of writing.

### Key point – introductions

There is no expectation that candidates should include an introduction or a conclusion to their work although this is good academic practice.

Introductions should be short, focused on the question and how the candidate is going to answer the question.

### Assessment for learning



Centres may 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. Many candidates need further support in writing at GCE Level. Essays are seen where candidates began sentences with 'and' or 'because' and where candidates use colloquialisms within their writing which do not reflect academic expectations at GCE.

Examiners report that handwriting, spelling, and punctuation does affect their ability to read and understand the work, the argument and details being presented. The standard of punctuation, grammar, spelling being used is therefore an issue which centres should continue to try to address in order for candidates' creative ideas to be understood clearly by the examiner.

As seen in previous series, large numbers 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.

For these atypical scripts, it would be helpful for examiners if the centre would make sure that the candidate use a double space between each line of text and a suitable size 12 font.

Some issues are seen with a minority of these scripts where candidates typing skills hinder the meaning of the work. It is important that any candidates submitting their work in this way should have sufficient skill to ensure clarity and it is recommended that centres work on this with candidates.

### 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.

Centres must make sure that candidates are using academic language and avoiding the use of colloquialisms.

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. Support must be given before the exam for those who wish to word process their work. There is a need to practice this before the exam.

Candidates are able to use subject-specific terminology and many candidates were able to use technical terms effectively. It should be remembered that reference to individual performance skills is considered to be a use of subject terminology. There are examples of candidates referring to diegetic and non-diegetic sound, reference to types of lanterns and the use of birdies, gobos, gels, and dry ice. On the whole examiners reported that these terms are used in support of performance detail and clearly the 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. In some instances, terminology is used inaccurately and is used in a way which hinders the discussion of the performance work.

At times, these references distract from the argument or the point being made and it is important to realise that this is **not** a mandatory requirement of the specification unless the question is focusing on production elements. It is therefore suggested that candidates refer to production elements if they are confident and secure in their knowledge and understanding of those technical elements.

Most candidates are able to reference the type of staging being used. There seems to be a trend to always, in the introduction, refer to the staging type being used regardless as to whether this has an impact on the answer. This is not necessary unless it has a direct impact on the focus of the question.

### Assessment for learning



Centres should continue to develop candidates' knowledge and understanding of technical terminology, production elements and special effects as part of the learning process. However this should be focused on supporting the content of specific questions.

Candidates achieving stronger marks are able to describe what they would want a performer to do with subtlety and imagination describing what they want visually and in detail but with a perception and sense of authenticity no matter what genre or style the performance should be. It is recommended that centres continue to focus on how to break down the elements of performance skills which should be used when discussing how something is to be performed on stage and this is still an area which requires centres to

work with candidates in order to explain how and why things should be done in a certain way on stage. It is this perceptive and highly developed detail which is required. This applies to both A03 and A04.

### Key point – SPAG and handwriting

The focus when marking any question is the performance and production detail of the ideas given. Candidates should ask themselves whether they have created a clear picture in the mind of the examiner.

### 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.

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. Where candidates write about Frankenstein or Othello in both sections – as a set text and as a live/recorded performance seen, this can result in repetition of ideas and points and should therefore be avoided if at all possible.

For example, there are many candidates who write about the birth of the Creature in Frankenstein in exactly the same way. Some even credit the National Theatre's production of the play with the ideas that the candidates go on to describe. This is not in line with the requirements of A03 where candidates should be encouraged to develop and be able *to articulate an informed creative, personal and practical vision and justify decisions through practical exploration of performance texts*. (Please refer to page 24 in the specification).

### 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.

There is still 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 at this time. Many centres are using digital performance work. The use of digital work is not seen as an issue but it is clear that some candidates benefit from the live engagement with the performance with some discussing the immersive experience that they have during a performance and the atmosphere created by live sound and special effects.

Across the paper and in particular for Section A, there is an increase in the discussion of rehearsal techniques. Candidates clearly have knowledge of practitioners such as Berkoff, Frantic Assembly, Le Coq, Brecht, and Stanislavski. However, it seems that candidates are attempting to discuss this knowledge even though not required by the question and not supportive of the point they are making. If referring to rehearsal techniques used by these practitioners or stylistic elements used by practitioners,

in relation to the performance details that a candidate is trying to provide – this is creditable and effective.

### Key point – avoiding set texts in Section B

Candidates should only refer to a practitioner when relevant to the question or where the use of a practitioner's work will add to the line of development or argument being presented.

### 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.

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"> <li>used short introductions to set their argument</li> <li>gave clear descriptions, explanations, and justification of a range of performance and production details</li> <li>created a clear picture in the mind of the examiner</li> <li>saw themselves in the role of the director/designer/actor</li> <li>selected appropriate scenes to discuss</li> <li>selected the most appropriate text for each question</li> <li>were able to refer to a full range of performance and production skills</li> <li>used subject terminology to support the points being made and fully understood that terminology</li> <li>had a range of live theatre performance experience to make an informed decision with regards to the question being asked.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>used lengthy introductions which discussed the playwright and context of the play regardless as to the question</li> <li>gave a vague description and explanation with little or no justification for the one or two performance and production details given</li> <li>created a confusing picture in the mind of the examiner</li> <li>had no logical structure to the writing or the essay</li> <li>made decisions about what text to use without considering both questions first</li> <li>referred to small number of performance and production skills</li> <li>added in rehearsal techniques because they thought they should</li> <li>added in subject terminology because they thought they should</li> <li>added in reference to practitioners because they thought they should</li> <li>had a limited knowledge and understanding of the text or the characters</li> <li>did not refer to the question at all or the question itself during the answer.</li> </ul>

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 study two texts on one theme (as outlined in the specification) and answer two essay questions. This year there are no examples of candidates answering on texts that are not on the specification. There are a few instances where candidates provided only one essay for Section A having run out of time to complete both essays.

Some candidates write several pages to the detriment of the other answers required. It is important to remember that the candidate is not expected to write about the whole of the text but specific moments to clarify the points they are making.

Candidates can present a perceptive line of development or argument through a more detailed exploration of only a few specific moments or points. There are a number of candidates who managed to provide Level 5 responses in this way.

There is still some sense that candidates try to use prepared answers rather than focusing what they know on the question they are being asked in the exam.

### Key point – the need to establish a line of development or argument

Centres should work on the interpretation of exam questions and the creation of an appropriate line of development or argument within the introduction to the essays.

Generally, candidates show a competent and clear knowledge and understanding of the texts, the context and the characters. Candidates are expected to have studied the opening ten minutes of each text chosen and at least three additional scenes from across the text. Within the specification there is a definition for each set text as to what constitutes the opening scene. Centres may find this helpful to refer to when preparing the candidate in answering questions which should be focused on the opening scenes of the play.

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.

### 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 additional three scenes.

Please note that the specification tells us that centres must study 'at least' three additional 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. More popular than in other series were Love Of A Nightingale and Oh! What A Lovely War.

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.

For example, Question 4 places the candidate in the role of the director or the actor and this, unless stated within the question, is the point of view which the candidate should always take.

The examiners are looking for the candidate to express their creative and theatrical ideas through the text and so ensuring that candidates engage with the scripts chosen and its theme, its context, characters, relationships, and action is a priority.

### Key point – development of performance and production detail

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

Candidates are seen to do well when they understand the question and when they construct a line of development or argument for that question.

At the very least this creates a plan or structure for the work. There is some evidence of candidates creating plans for the work and these are generally short and focused which is effective.

### 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.

As with all questions, credit is given to any references to practical interpretation of the play and candidates are expected to explain what the character was doing and how they were seen to do it.

The majority of candidates are able to apply the knowledge and understanding of their set text directly to this question but there is always a need for centres to focus on the practical interpretation of the texts.

### Assessment for learning



When working with candidates in preparation for this exam – candidates must be encouraged at all times to consider the picture they are painting for the examiner.

A centre, when marking work, should ask themselves can they see clearly what the candidate is trying to achieve on stage and will it work effectively as theatrical performance.

## Question 1

### Theme 1: Conflict

Choose **one** performance text for **each** question. At the start of your answer write the name of the performance text you have chosen.

Use **one** performance text in your answer to **each** question. Use 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 How would you direct your actors to show conflict through the combination of voice and physicality in **at least three scenes** of the play you have studied?

[15]

The question was understood by candidates and it is was clear that they should explore how they would show **conflict** using a range of **voice and physical skills**.

The most important expectation is that the candidate explains the way in which things are to be done on stage. This demonstrates their theatrical understanding as well as their understanding of the text.

Candidates would be expected to discuss the conflict which might be physical, mental, or perceived conflict and to explain in detail how this would be shown on stage using a range of vocal and physical skills. This might include a discussion of volume/projection, pitch, intonation, rhythm, tone, inflection, diction, pace in terms of vocal skills and facial expression, movement, body language, gesture, use of eye contact, posture, proxemics and stage position, gait, speed and pace of movement, physical contact/interaction in terms of physical skills.

There were some examples where candidates talked about production elements rather than focusing on performance skills and this is not required for this question.

The marking grid asks for a detailed, highly developed and excellent understanding of conventions, forms, and techniques, of creative and artistic choices in order to convey meaning to an audience and many candidates were able to answer this question with detail and creativity.

Most responses were practical in their approach although there were some that focused on the play and the character rather than on practical interpretation on stage. It is the practical performance ideas and interpretation which is required in this qualification. Centres are reminded that candidates are writing about a practical subject and therefore the response should focus on describing a practical outcome.

## Assessment for learning



A helpful technique might be to encourage candidates to talk as though they are the director by using the words 'I would want the actor to....' or '...as the director, I would...'

## Question 2

- 2 As an actor, explain what range of performance skills you would use to play a character of your choice from the text you have studied. Refer to **the opening scenes** in your response. [15]

Candidates generally found this question to be accessible and were able to answer the question. Some candidates discussed more than one character which was acceptable and most focused on scenes which could be considered to be the opening scenes of the play. Answers were mostly written about Hamlet, Cammy in Black Watch or J.S. in Necessary Targets.

A range of well-developed performance ideas were presented effectively and confidently in many essays seen.

This question was answered with developed and highly developed coherent performance and production details across many candidates. With the exception of The Long, The Tall and The Short, all texts were seen in response to the question.

As with Question 1, the requirement was that candidates discuss a full range of performance skills including volume/projection, pitch, intonation, rhythm, tone, inflection, diction, pace in terms of vocal skills and facial expression, movement, body language, gesture, use of eye contact, posture, proxemics and stage position, gait, speed and pace of movement, physical contact/interaction in terms of physical skills.

As with Question 1, there were some examples where candidates talked about production elements rather than focusing on performance skills and this is not required for this question.

To meet Level 5, candidates are required to provide a detailed, highly developed essay demonstrating an excellent understanding of conventions, forms, and techniques and of creative and artistic choices in order to convey meaning to an audience. Examples of Level 5 work were seen with candidates responding with confidence, detail, and creativity.

## Question 3

### Theme 2: Family Dynamics

Choose **one** performance text for **each** question. At the start of your answer write the name of the performance text you have chosen.

Use **one** performance text in your answer to **each** question. Use a **different** performance text for each question.

*King Lear* – William Shakespeare

*A Day in the Death of Joe Egg* – Peter Nichols

*The Caucasian Chalk Circle* – Bertolt Brecht

*House of Bernarda Alba* – Federico García Lorca

*Live Like Pigs* – John Arden

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

- 3 Select a main character in the play you have studied and explain the range of performance skills needed by the actor playing that role. Refer to **the opening scenes** of the text you have studied.

[15]

This question was answered well by many candidates with some particularly successful responses on *King Lear* where there was a strong and effective knowledge and understanding of the opening scene of the play.

Candidates referred to a developed range of performance skills. There was a good understanding of the family dynamics and the different characters and relationships across each of the texts. There were some examples where candidates talked about production elements rather than focusing on performance skills and this is not required for this question. In some instances this would be self-penalising. Interaction of the character with production elements might be appropriate if used to demonstrate the role at a specific moment. For example *King Lear* might overturn his throne to show his anger and frustration.

Candidates did well when they focused on specific ideas for the interpretation of the role which they could describe and explain in detail and with clarity.

## Exemplar 1

leading to Adela's death. As an actor playing Bernada, I would use a loud, ~~deep voice in order to~~ relatively deep voice in order to portray Bernada as the clear leader of the family dynamic who gives orders that must be followed. For example, when opening the play with the line 'Silence!', I would make sure that it is loud enough to instill fear in everyone in the house, as well as ~~speaking~~ speaking with a quick pace to ~~start~~ communicate to the audience that her instructions are clear and concise, implying that she does not need to speak for long to be listened to and obeyed, showing her control over all the other characters. Additionally, by varying my tone before and after the villagers leave, it would convey to the audience the idea that she looks down on other members of the village and feels the need to show that her family is 'superior' to them. For example, I would speak at a slower ~~pace~~ pace and a less menacing tone,

		pausing occasionally the thing, semiotically
		portraying Bernada as a real person
		with feelings <del>to refer to contrast her</del>
		<del>threatening</del> <del>monotone</del> and who feels more
		relaxed when not around other people.
		This would contrast her vocally when she
		addresses the people at the funeral, using
		a monotone and even-paced voice to
		create the idea of order, showing that
		she has to be seen as in complete control
		by others whereas she may not be in
		reality which is shown later in the play
		by the collapse of the family dynamic.

Exemplar 1 shows an excellent knowledge and understanding of the text and the context of the play. The work is well structured and coherent with clear knowledge and understanding of the character and effective performance details. The focus in the extract is on use of voice and the candidate is able to explore the use of pitch, tone, pace, pauses, volume – explaining how these are used on stage and justifying why with reference to the context. This would be a Level 5 response.

## Question 4

- 4 As a director, what theatrical methods would you use to bring out the social context of the play you have studied? Refer to **at least three scenes**. [15]

In response to this question, candidates explored a full range of theatrical methods including set, costume, lighting, props, sound, special effects and acting. Examiners were able to credit candidates with the discussion of any type of theatrical method including detailed acting skills and even rehearsal methods.

While candidates clearly understood the social context of the set text including the social expectations placed on characters – such as in *Live Like Pigs*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *A Day in The Death of Joe Egg* – some found it difficult to express this in terms of performance or production details.

Some focused more on a discussion of the social context of the piece and this did not then translate into any theatrical methods or details.

On the whole most candidates were able to discuss a performance of their set text and understand how the social context could be represented on stage through a variety of methods. Candidates referred to the social context of *A Day in The Death Of Joe Egg* and the idea of lack of understanding of disabilities and its impact on the family, the hypocrisy experienced and the role of women in the context of the play. Those that studied *King Lear* discussed the role of the king and the expectations placed on his daughters as women and as his heirs and those candidates who had studied *Live Like Pigs* identified the social barriers for travellers and the class divide.

## Question 5

### Theme 3: Heroes and Villains

Choose **one** performance text for **each** question. At the start of your answer write the name of the performance text you have chosen.

Use **one** performance text in your answer to **each** question. Use 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.

- 5 How would you perform the role of a villain to show the complexity of the character? Refer to **at least three scenes** from the play you have studied. **[15]**

Candidates found this question accessible and were able to answer the question referring to either one or more characters.

Some candidates made the question more complicated than it needed to be and found themselves discussing the complexity and development of the character more than the villainous traits shown by the character.

There is for example no requirement to discuss heroism versus villainy and it was clear that many got caught up with the idea of showing complexity rather than discussing how the character was villainous.

Examiners were able to credit ideas which demonstrated both the changes in a character and their downfall into villainy and therefore their complexity and the idea that some characters are just villains.

Many discussed the argument of villainy and heroism in *Frankenstein*, *Amadeus*, and *Love of the Nightingale*. There were some interesting debates about the villainy of both the Creature and Victor, *Amadeus*, and Mozart. A range of well-developed performance ideas were presented effectively and confidently in many essays seen.

However particularly when answering on *Frankenstein*, centres need to try to encourage candidates to develop their own, original creative ideas as examiners reported that a number of candidates were simply using ideas which they have seen in a production of the text.

Often candidates who rely on what they have seen find it difficult to make their ideas clear because they are not thinking the work through or engaging with the work with their own knowledge and understanding of theatre and theatrical conventions – there is a tendency therefore for these essays to be sweeping rather than detailed and to be therefore self-penalising.



There is also evidence of ideas discussed in class which are then repeated by a number of candidates while this is perfectly acceptable – it is clear that some candidates have engaged with the ideas and understood the class discussion in full while others express the ideas less effectively.

This question was answered with developed and highly developed coherent performance and production details across many candidates. Candidates were able to apply the knowledge and understanding of their set text directly and effectively.

At times examiners reported reading work where the focus of the question was not quite in line with what was required and that this suggested that candidates may have been relying on answers which they had previously completed. While practice questions help, candidates should not solely rely on remembering what they have completed before as more often than not this does not answer the question given in the exam on the day.

## Question 6

- 6** How would you use design elements to enhance key dramatic moments? Refer to **the opening scenes** of the play you have studied. **[15]**

By far, most candidates used *Frankenstein* and *Amadeus* to answer this question.

For those who answered using *Frankenstein*, there was a varied response to the question largely due to the influence of the National Theatre production of *Frankenstein*. Unfortunately, a large number of candidates relayed the ideas seen in this production. Some struggled to describe that they saw effectively and this often resulted in an answer that was considered at best to be competent. Some candidates even credited this performance in what they wrote while using the ideas seen.

Other candidates did try to add to the ideas seen in this version and this was reasonably successful and demonstrated some creativity.

Some candidates produced ideas which demonstrated their own interpretation and in general these were clear and effective interpretations engaging with theatrical ideas and bringing together a wider range of experiences.

In the same way, candidates were heavily influenced by the version of *Amadeus* they had watched.

Candidates were able to identify design elements but struggled with making decisions as to what would be considered as dramatic moments within the text. It is therefore important to make sure that candidates have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the text in order to select moments which would support this question.

## Exemplar 2

As Iago and Rodrigo talk, Iago reveals a key part of his plot against Othello, claiming he will disguise his true feelings. As this is an extremely significant and dramatic moment within the play, I would add the sound effect of a low hum, which gives the audience the idea of a sinister impression that villainy is taking place, and creates sinister undertones. Furthermore, a green spotlight will appear stage right, the colour of which not only making it hard to make out the actors, adding to the mysterious tone, but also foreshadowing the idea of jealousy and how Iago will manipulate this feeling.

Moreover, black cloaks will be used as costume in this scene, emphasising secrecy as the conversation must have taken place at night. To add to this, the cloaks further allow the actors to control where and how light hits them. With the ability to cover their face, dramatic tension is heightened as Iago, the villain, appears to have complete control.

~~Additionally, I would add projections of animals on~~

\* The positioning of this light also indicates the facade that Iago is going to put on: a bystander, when he is really completely in control

Additionally, I would use projections of animals on the back wall, which should also project onto Iago's face. This foreshadows Iago's predator instinct as well as his inhumane view of others and human feelings, <sup>overall</sup> ~~even~~ heightening the dramaticity of the moment.

Exemplar 2 shows an excellent knowledge and understanding of the text and the context of the play. The work is well structured and coherent with clear knowledge and understanding of how design elements can be used to enhance meaning in performance. The focus in the extract is on the use of lighting and sound, costume, and projections. The candidate is able to describe what they would want and justify why the ideas might be used in order to explain what meaning would be conveyed within the performance. This would be a Level 5 response

## Section B overview

Candidates in this section, 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 response, candidates must provide the name of the performance, the venue, and the date (month and year) the performance was seen. It is difficult to ascertain as to whether some candidates were talking about productions which they have seen on a digital platform or productions which they saw before starting their course. It would be useful for centres to ask candidates to identify this clearly. This does not have to be part of the introduction of the essay although most candidates did do this. Again candidates who gave a long introduction run the risk of wasting time and should be encouraged to state what they saw, when and where and to then refer to the question which in this case was asking the candidate to discuss the themes of the play.

Candidates who wrote clear structured essays which talked about what had happened on stage in performance did well. However, there were a number of examples of candidates who were clearly able to write effectively with a detailed understanding of the performances they saw, producing effective analytical essays which did not lead into sufficient performance detail and in some examples no performance detail at all. This would not then have met the assessment criteria within the marking grid for Section B which at all levels requires the '...analysis of creative and artistic choices..'. A clear description of what those choices were is required for the examiner to understand and credit the analysis, explanation, and evaluation of those choices.

A candidate must think in terms of creating the picture of the performance for the examiner in detail in order to reflect work which is excellent and consistently detailed with a highly developed level of understanding. Equally those candidates who have experienced a larger range of live performance work throughout the course show a deeper understanding of theatrical conventions and techniques.

### Key point – the need for detailed descriptions of what was seen on stage

When describing performance work, the candidate must work to create a detailed picture for the examiner of specific moments within the text.

Some candidates chose to write about a production of the text which they have studied for Section A. While there are no restrictions with regard to this in the specification or on the paper – it is not advisable as it might lead candidates into repetition.

### Key point – centres should choose carefully live performance work studied

It is recommended that candidates answer on a performance of a text which is not one of their chosen texts for Section A.

Centres should consider avoiding performances which solely rely on dance or physical theatre.

It is understandable that centres would take students to see a production of the text they are studying but it is not helpful in the development of candidates' knowledge and understanding of theatrical conventions and techniques if this is the only performance they have seen.

## Question 7\*

- 7\* What theatrical methods were used in the live performance you have seen to communicate the message of the play? How successful were these methods? [30]

This was a clear and focused question which would apply to any type of performance work seen by candidates during the delivery of the course and so the majority of candidates responded in with confidence and a well-developed level of detail and analysis.

The expectation of the question is that candidates identify the message or messages within the performance and then discuss in detail how this was emphasised through a range of methods. The message of a production/play can be interpreted as a theme or idea within the production/play and examiners accept that this will be subjective. Theatrical methods can be interpreted as both performance and production skills/elements.

What is expected is that candidates will create an accurate and clear picture in the mind of the examiner in terms of what was seen on stage. This will then lead to an analysis of why it was done this way which is the theatrical methods and what this would convey to the audience in terms of a message. Many candidates were able to start with an introduction which gave their understanding of the question which included the need to identify the message behind the play.

There were some candidates who were only able to discuss the play itself and its narrative and structure and not able to say how things were seen and represented on stage. For some candidates, the focus was on the plot of the piece seen and not on how things were done on stage to convey meaning. Some candidates were seen to be evaluating the structure of the play itself and the writing and not the performance of the work.

The question does ask the candidate to evaluate the theatrical methods seen and it was good to see that some candidates were able to evaluate what they saw. However this at times led the candidates to go one step further and to discuss what they would suggest instead. This was not always valuable and at times meant that the candidate lost focus on the question itself where the candidates should have explored a range of creative and artistic choices made demonstrating perception and highly developed analytical skills.

All productions discussed were appropriate to the answer. These were seen to range from musicals to more physical theatre experiences but all allowed discussion of implied messages and of a range of theatrical methods including acting and performance skills as well as all design elements. Most popular performances explored were *Metamorphosis*, *Things I Know To Be True*, *The Homecoming*, *Woman In Black*, *A Song For Ella Grey*, *Kin* and *Wonderland*. Many centres are relying on digital performance work which is considered to be a live performance which has then been recorded.

It is recommended that centres during the preparation period for Section B, provide candidates with the opportunity to experience a diverse range of performances to make sure that they have a choice of productions to discuss for in Section B during the examination.

## Exemplar 3

		<p>to Daldry's <del>for</del> methods. The Inspector has been used by Daldry as a somewhat of an <del>judge</del> <del>investigator</del> attorney, who has taken <del>these</del> his family to court and pushed them to confess, to take responsibility. This is shown through the gestures of the Inspector, addressing the audience like a jury and holding his hands behind his back, but <del>his</del> use of Daldry's use of spotlights however put <del>the</del> each member of the family under pressure. Bright, harsh light accused to portray their discomfort to their situation, as they never admit responsibility for wrongdoing, and the <sup>light</sup> helps to press and press each character to break, to a certain extent, to <del>the</del> show signs of change. Sheila is the most affected by this. Finally, the use of shadows <del>and</del> through the lampost at the beginning of the play, creating a large silhouette of the Inspector at the beginning, creates a</p>
		<p>supernatural feel to the production. Daldry intended to follow through with this theme, augmented by Priestley, as it gave the character of the Inspector Goole an unnatural feel, indicating the play is not a performance just to be watched, but to be learnt from and messages taken away. This is where Daldry's Brechtian influence is constant throughout the performance, and at a moment in the play when the house lights are turned on. This put the audience under the spotlight, and made us feel exposed. It was a</p>

Exemplar 3 shows a perceptive analysis of creative and artistic choices made in order to convey meaning. The work, as a whole, is developed and explored in detail demonstrating an excellent knowledge and understanding of the production and of how meaning is conveyed in the theatre. The candidate is able to describe what they saw and to analyse and justify why the ideas might be used in order to explain what meaning would be conveyed within the performance. This would be a Level 5 response.

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