

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

DRAMA AND THEATRE

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in
Drama and Theatre

H459

For first teaching in 2016

H459/41-48 Summer 2025 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 responses 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 [Teach Cambridge](#).

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Papers 41-48 series overview

The Drama and Theatre A Level exam is well established now, and teachers are increasingly improving their teaching methods/resources and approaches to this component.

The single Assessment Objective – *demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how drama and theatre is developed and performed* – is examined through how the given set text is interpreted by a director for performance to an audience.

In all papers, Question 1 gives an extract on which candidates are asked to explain a directorial vision and annotate to support their ideas. Those annotations form part of the required response for Question 1.

Question 2 concerns 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. Many responses use identical wording to introduce their directorial vision on the extract in Question 1 and on the whole play in Question 2.

It might be hoped the opening of each question could be more varied and directly related to the particular question. This is because while each question is marked as a stand-alone (so there is no penalty for that repetition) the thrust of Question 1 and Question 2 is different.

On the matter of response openings, many candidates wrote about historical/cultural contexts around the time the play was written, social contexts about the central themes/issues, biographies, backgrounds to events. This kind of opening does not get to the main point of the question. Responses are more successful when they link contextual influences, the history of the text and details on past productions directly to the question.

In *Antigone* (Paper 41), candidates usually made reference to how Anouilh came to write the play, the Sophocles' version, the role of women in society and the conditions in Nazi occupied France under which Anouilh wrote. Many suggested directing productions set in concentration camps, while others had visions of settings relevant for contemporary audiences through references to current conflicts, campaigns and beliefs.

In different ways this was equally true of *Earthquakes in London* (Paper 43) with the focus on environmental earth issues, *The Visit* (Paper 47) dealing with revenge, greed and betrayal and *Woza Albert!* (Paper 48) and its drive on racial equality, hope and societal fairness.

In general, the annotations were both the strongest and weakest elements of responses. More successful annotations contained detailed practical directions for the actors, which helped create mood and atmosphere. Less successful annotations were limited in scope, lacked detail and did not support the discussion of the question posed.

Each play needed to be deconstructed, analysed, dismantled, exposed, explored, experimented with and interpreted before being shaped into a credible performance.

Most candidates aimed for a contemporary setting. This led to some exciting, innovative and unusual ideas for production, locations and genres.

Accessing the marking criteria

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 responses to both questions, there was credit for responses that recognised directing is a layered and usually collaborative process.

Candidates were expected to demonstrate understanding of acting and design, going beyond slavishly following the text's stage directions. The use of contemporary technology, including video games, public opinion, politics and social media to tell the story and explore new ways of communicating meaning was often very effective.

Some candidates discussed budgets that a director might have or wish for. This was a relevant aspect of the directorial vision, as the reality of financing must be addressed, although imaginary limitless resources were accepted as part of the vision.

The specification makes clear that production processes and theatrical practices should be part of the learning. Many candidates referred to Brecht and Stanislavski, some to Artaud and Lecoq and a handful to Boal, Berkoff and Katie Mitchell. The most successful responses showed understanding of how the study of practitioners, dead or alive, had informed their ideas and experiments. Others needed to develop a more detailed discussion of how the practitioners' influence would shape their ideas.

There was an expectation of inspiration drawn and ideas applied from the work of practitioners; some they had seen; some they had actually studied. Their learning from the other AS and A Level components – research into live performances, staging styles and dramatic exploration of the themes – should feed into their responses.

Practical exploration

More successful responses appeared able to draw on practical work that had been undertaken on and around the text as part of the candidate's journey. In contrast, less successful candidates offered superficial or simplistic references to practitioners. Phrases like 'We used a Stanislavski technique', 'Brecht and the 4th wall', 'Artaudian unease' or 'Berkovian ideas' showed neither knowledge nor understanding.

There has been an increase in candidates who argue for an 'immersive' direction for their text. Sometimes this was to be achieved by a thrust stage, a proscenium arch with a thrust, a promenade and/or site-specific setting. One went as far as advocating drenching the audience in blood when Sweeney Todd slashed throats and another that dummies should be hung above the audience in *'The Crucible'* to deliver the 'immersive experience'.

For others, directorial vision included making the audience feel complicit in, if not fully responsible for, the way women were treated (Paper 47, 46, 43, 41), the climate emergency (Paper 43), current conflict in the Middle East and elsewhere (Paper 41, 44, 45, 46, 47), the US President and protest at every level.

Finally, a general point about lengths of responses. The only limit on what candidates can write is what they have to say, and the time allowed. It has gradually become the case that responses have grown ever longer. A very long response does not necessarily mean that it will be a strong one, although it may be. If candidates focus on the question asked, it may help some to channel their thoughts, gather their evidence and arguments and set out their visions concisely.

What is a Director?

For this exam, candidates need to be clear of their directorial function:

- has responsibility for an overall vision, concept, direction, purpose, imagining, shaping, guiding
- works with performers, designers (of costume, set, lighting, effects, props, staging), venues, stage management and box office
- is often all things to all people in a production while being the creative leader.

Candidates who did well on these papers generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on these papers generally did the following:
- answered the questions posed rather than repeating prepared responses based on previous questions - considered the directorial purpose is to convey meaning to an audience - frequently used examples from the play to support discussion and ideas - demonstrated learning from directorial and practitioner practices and processes and applied them accurately - commanded the language of drama and theatre knowledgeably and with understanding.	- discussed text as a piece of literature rather than as a blueprint for a live performance in front of an audience - began both responses with identical wording and explanation, although some overlap is acceptable - produced very few annotations to the extract in Question 1 or simply repeated the given stage directions - relied solely on the Question 1 extract to provide material for the Question 2 response - provided too much biographical or historical material as an introduction that was not relevant to the specific question.

Paper 44 series overview

Teachers should note that the general points in the Papers 41-48 series overview above relate to *Stockholm* (Paper 44) as they do to all the other texts.

In *Stockholm*, the influence of Frantic Assembly is integral to understanding how the play was created and works in performance. Candidates' use of Frantic Assembly's rehearsing and devising techniques was often patchy. Where they were used and explained as devising and explorative tools, responses were more effective.

To name a Frantic technique does not say much about understanding rehearsing and performing techniques in developing a character. Illustrating the point by explaining how an exercise works tells the examiners so much more about knowledge and understanding.

Other practitioners such as Berkoff or Artaud may be relevant. Again, if there was evidence of practical sessions to underpin learning, it would help candidates in explaining and justifying their ideas.

Pre-prepared responses

As has been reported in previous series, 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 once they have seen the exam questions.

The understanding of how mood and atmosphere are integral to 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, which then had to go beyond that to consider what the characters are doing and saying, especially to each other, in this drama of such agonising intimacy.

The annotations are not just an add on to Question 1, they are fundamental. They can add practical detail to the ideas, they can introduce theatrical processes, contextual influences, new ideas for directing, new interpretations of text, new moves and vocal techniques and demonstrate making creative choices to convey meaning.

Question 2 required candidates consider key moments from the text and explain how they would direct the moments to emphasise their dramatic impact. Most candidates selected three moments, or even whole scenes, which allowed them to amply address the demands of the question. The definition of a 'key moment' was to be decided by the candidate using their perspectives as directors.

An issue for some candidates was that they had prepared a response which did not explicitly answer the questions posed in this series and instead focused on key themes or Lavery's intentions. Clearly key themes and intentions will be relevant to mood and atmosphere and key moments, but they were not asked for in the questions.

Question 1

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

[30]

The question asks for a description and justification of the directorial vision. It requires a specific focus on mood and atmosphere. The annotations should demonstrate how the vision would be brought to life on stage, from page to stage. Atmosphere might relate to the stage ambience, as well as lights, sound, costume, setting and props. Mood might refer to the characters, so covers acting.

The annotations are a significant part of the question and should reinforce ideas and add detail to the suggested plans. They may also introduce contextual influences and theatrical practices and processes.

There is no set style for the layout of annotations.

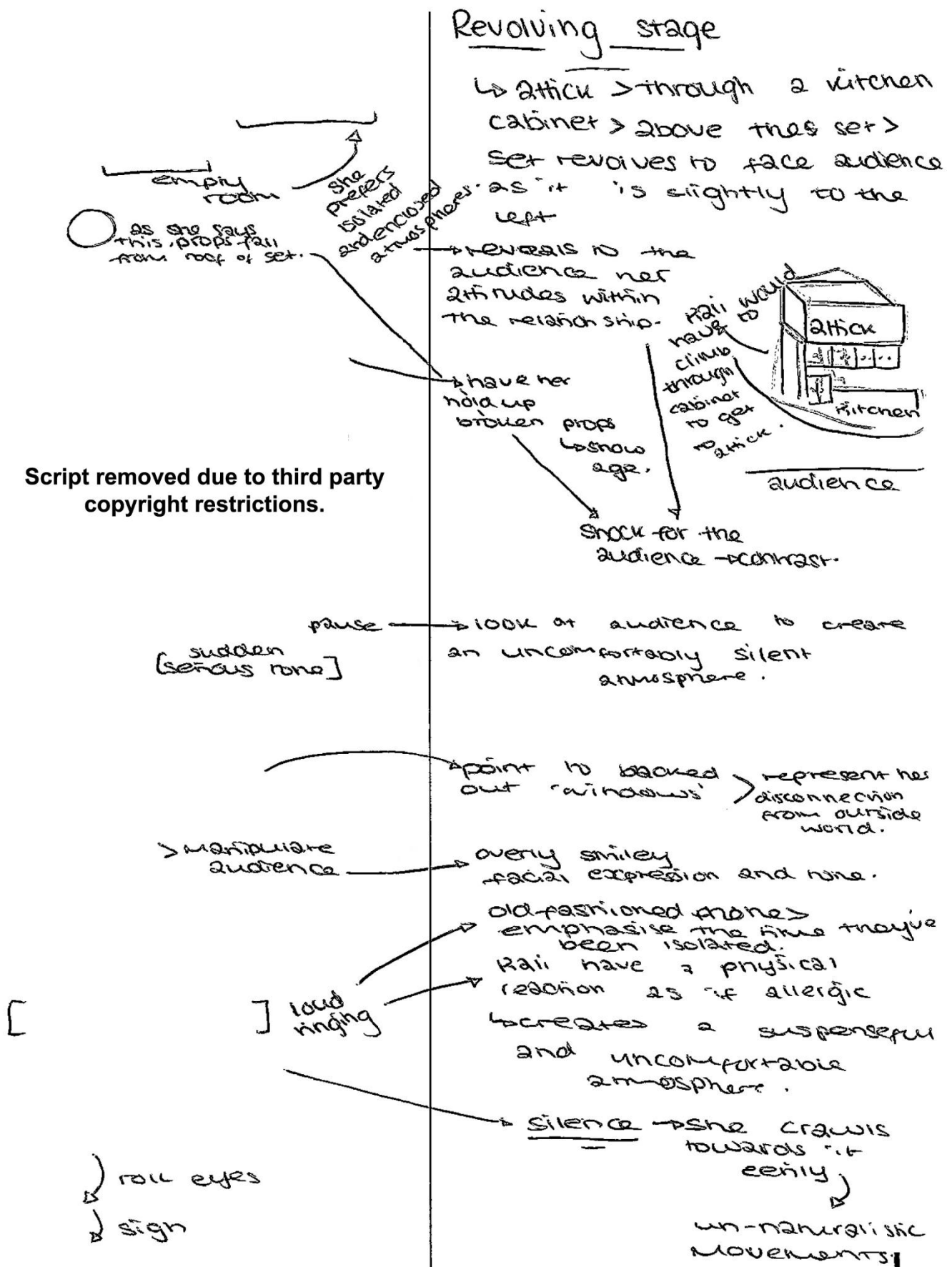
The response should show how making creative choices may convey meaning to an audience.

Exemplar 1

Stockholm written by Bryony Lavery and
 worked with Scott Graham from Frantic
 Assembly presents a non-stereotypical ~~re~~
 abusive relationship of the characters of
 Todd and Kai as the woman is the abuser.
 Through the themes of jealousy and manipulation
 contrasting with love and passion to showcase
 the cyclical cycle of abuse in a relationship.
 Lavery was inspired by Stockholm syndrome
 from the bank robbery which is clear
 through Todd's love for Kai despite the abuse.

Exemplar 1 is an example of an opening paragraph in a response that went on to achieve 55 out of 60 marks. It sets the background, mentions Frantic Assembly and raises points which will be addressed. It does not mention mood and atmosphere specifically at this stage, but it quickly moves onto that in the next paragraph.

Exemplar 2



Exemplar 2 shows one way of handling the annotations, part of Question 1. All candidates are different in their approaches, not all draw sketches, some write all over the text, some write tightly composed phrases, instructions from a director to an actor. All are valid. This one begins to address mood and atmosphere.

Question 2

- 2 As a director, explain and justify how you could stage a performance of *Stockholm* to emphasise the key dramatic moments of the play. [30]

The question requires candidates to explain and justify their directorial vision for the whole play, in this case through the key dramatic moments. Most candidates choose up to three moments to illustrate their points. The extract in Question 1 may be used as a key moment.

The response should show understanding of how the play is structured and may be interpreted and/or performed. Most will use contextual influence and theatrical practices in their response.

Exemplar 3

- ⑤ - first meeting - hearing each other /
- ⑥ - ansaphone messages /
- ⑦ - the letter /
- ⑧ - the basement

10

- 2 As a director, explain and justify how you could stage a performance of *Stockholm* to emphasise the key dramatic moments of the play. > [30]

As a director, I would use a combination of design and acting to emphasise the dramatic moments within the play taken place between the toxic pair, Todd and Bali.

A ^{key} dramatic moment in the play that I would emphasise within my direction is the letter from Todd's mother in the opening of the play. This moment is extremely important to the play as a whole, as it demonstrates the isolation of Todd from his family, alongside the effect of Bali's manipulation on his attitudes. I would have the letter come down from a string on set closer and closer to the actor portraying Todd, however I would ensure that it remains out of reach to demonstrate the idea that freedom and communication is just out of his grasp. I would have a bright light on the rotating letter to create a compelling visual aspect to the object. I would have Todd as drawn to the letter, whilst always staying just a step behind it. As Bali enters and the letter reaches the floor,

Exemplar 3 is an example of an opening response to Question 2, which was given 23 marks out of 30 available for the question, which is on the cusp of design threshold A. It starts with the selection of a particular key moment and explains what it is about and how to highlight it. There are candidate notes to themselves at the top of the page. Many find a few jotted notes helpful to aid their thinking as they write.

OCR support



The OCR [Delivery guide: Deconstructing texts](#) for this component and for *Stockholm* in particular are invaluable.

Frantic Assembly's own resource, [Stockholm | Frantic Assembly](#), on their original production, is a must for every teacher to see.

Assessment for learning



Besides reading and discussing the play text, candidates can work through a number of Frantic Assembly and other drama exercises, exclusively from the directorial viewpoint.

They can use techniques and ideas from Brecht, Stanislavski, Boal, Artaud, Grotowski, Berkoff and Katie Mitchell in turn to interpret a particular section.

They should be encouraged to direct their peers in those particular sections and try them out in front of an audience.

Paper 45 series overview

Teachers should note that the general points in the Papers 41-48 series overview relate to *Sweeney Todd* (Paper 45) as they do to all the other texts.

In *Sweeney Todd* beyond Grand Guignol, music hall or the penny dreadfuls, there are no particular practitioner influences to expect. Sondheim's notes and Harold Prince interviews should be helpful to candidates, which explain how the musical was created and works in performance.

To name a Stanislavski, Berkoff or Artaud technique does not say much about understanding rehearsing and performing techniques in developing a character. Illustrating the point by explaining how an exercise works tells the examiners so much more about knowledge and understanding. Again, if there was evidence of practical sessions to underpin learning, it would help candidates in explaining and justifying their ideas.

Pre-prepared responses

As has been reported in previous series, 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 once they have seen the exam questions.

The understanding of how mood and atmosphere are integral to 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, which then had to go beyond that to consider what the characters are doing and saying, especially to each other, in this drama of blood-drenched horror and madness, including the asylum inmates.

In this text there is the added directorial decision of where to place the band or musicians if they are being used. They become either part of the visible stage setting or are hidden in an orchestra pit, behind the scenery or placed up high on a gantry.

The annotations are not merely an add on to Question 1, they are fundamental. They can add practical detail to the ideas, they can introduce theatrical processes, contextual influences, new ideas for directing, new interpretations of text, new moves and vocal techniques and demonstrate making creative choices to convey meaning.

In melodrama there is no specific practitioner to explore. However, many tried to make their productions 'immersive' and so cited Punchdrunk Theatre since immersive is an increasingly popular contemporary format. Site-specific performances in old, deserted buildings were often imagined as was setting it in-the-round or on a thrust stage to bring the audience closer to the bloody action.

One aspect that some candidates commented on was the recurring tongue-in-cheek humour in the whole show. Some saw it as so ridiculous and over the top, it could only be presented as comedy, which was a valid line of reasoning.

Question 2 required candidates consider the key moments from the text and explain how they would direct the moments to emphasise their dramatic impact. Most candidates selected three moments, or even whole scenes, which allowed them to amply address the demands of the question. The definition of a 'key moment' was to be decided by the candidate using their perspectives as directors.

An issue for some candidates was that they had prepared a response which did not explicitly answer the questions posed in this series and instead focused on key themes or Sondheim's intentions. Clearly key themes and intentions will be relevant to mood and atmosphere and key moments, but they were not asked for in the questions.

Question 1

- 1** As a director, describe and justify your vision for directing the actors in this extract to create atmosphere and mood. Annotate the script to show how you would do this. **[30]**

The question asks for a description and justification of the directorial vision. It requires a specific focus on mood and atmosphere. The annotations should demonstrate how the vision would be brought to life on stage, from page to stage. Atmosphere might relate to the stage ambience, as well as lights, sound, costume, setting and props. Mood might refer to the characters, so covers acting.

The annotations are a significant part of the question and should reinforce ideas and add detail to the suggested plans. They may also introduce contextual influences and theatrical practices and processes.

There is no set style for the layout of annotations.

The response should show how making creative choices may convey meaning to an audience.

Exemplar 4

'Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street' is a grand-guignol style musical thriller directed by & written by Stephen Sondheim, and explores themes of revenge, murder, psychotic obsession and corruption. This extract greatly builds the tension of the musical as it leads up to its climax, and to Todd's final act of revenge against the Judge that an audience has seen him obsess over frantically throughout the play, while simultaneously revealing the Beggar Woman's tragic backstory as Lucy Barker.

To create atmosphere and mood, I would want to create great contrast between moments of stillness and quiet, such as Anthony and Johanna's song, and the Beggar Woman's Call for the Boodle and moments of great chaos, such as the lunatics to create an unsettling, sinister atmosphere that shines through even in moments of calm, as the audience constantly feel a sense of foreboding. Todd's previous reveal of his plan for Anthony and the Judge creates almost a Brechtian sense of dramatic irony, building ~~ten~~ the tense, uncomfortable mood as the audience knows what is going to happen, but the characters don't, keeping the audience constantly on edge. As a director, I would also want to create a mood of sadness and pity for the Beggar Woman as she cradles her baby, so would direct an actor to become gentle and motherly, sobbing quietly to contrast her usual deranged, wild character.

Exemplar 4 is from the opening page of Question 1. It mentions contextual background and some summary of plot and then gets into mood and atmosphere. The first directorial point is the contrast between moments of stillness and quiet and moments of chaos. Given the extract, that is a good start. It goes on to receive 27 marks out of 30 and overall shows real understanding of how creative choices convey meaning.

Exemplar 5

Thrust stage, Lovett standing centre stage
and moving fast pace around with

tone goes
~~pitch~~
from serious
to soft and
concerned.
my intention
is to show the
audience
rising
climax and
overwhelm them.

Script removed due to third party
copyright restrictions.

score the audience.

high nails on
chairs
screak with
pitch

breaks with wall
by Brecht holds
out shaking
hand towards
audience; looking
to the audience for
help, shows her
vulnerability.

wide gait and weight on
ball of feet to show how she's
ponied and alert. Inspired by
lerog and his level 5 tension
'alert' to show a lot is at
stake. A wide gait to show
how Lovett is trying hard to
find Toby because she does not
want her plan of selling human
meat pies to fail. This
links to Son of Nemo's intention
because he wanted this scene
to make the audience
anxious if they get caught. Her
posture would be forward with
her spine bent to show how
Toby is smaller than her and
she has maternal instincts. This
links to how she is widowed
and wants a family, linking to
her super objective inspired by
Stanislawski. This relates to how
in 1846 London to have enough
money and income for a family is
hard and comments on how she
finally feels the time is right.
washed lighting which creates
shadows of the unknown and mystery
which links to how London in 1846
there was little security.
through bent knees and hand on
floor to show her crawling.
→ shows how she is low status
and a victim of poverty. This
creates an intense atmosphere
because there's so much movement
it's overwhelming to the audience
creates a dark melancholy mood
because of the immoral actions by
Lovett and Toby might be revealed
to Toby, showing dramatic irony.

The annotations in Exemplar 5 provide a directorial vision, with instructions for actors to begin to achieve the mood and atmosphere. There are initial mentions of Lecoq, Stanislavski and Brecht. It should be said that not all candidates who produce such detailed explanations on the first page have the time to complete all annotation pages with the same depth and information.

Question 2

- 2 As a director, explain and justify how you could stage a performance of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* to emphasise the key dramatic moments of the musical. [30]

Candidates are expected to explain and justify a directorial vision for the whole play, in this case through the key dramatic moments. Most candidates choose up to three moments to illustrate their points. The extract in Question 1 may be used as a key moment.

The response should show understanding of how the musical is structured and may be interpreted and/or performed. Most will use contextual influence and theatrical practices in their response.

Exemplar 6

As a director, explain and justify how you could stage a performance of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* to emphasise the key dramatic moments of the musical.

[30]

Musical Miller

Sweeney Todd is a play written by Steven Bochco in 1987. ~~Todd~~ Sweeney Todd is a dramatic bell curve opera with a melodic drama which was popular at the time. The play ~~was~~ is originally set in Victorian London. Following the life of Sweeney Todd who seeks revenge. Set during the time of social injustice during the Industrial Revolution, the people he seeks revenge on represent those of a higher class. It refers to the drastic class divide of the groups. Sweeney represents the working class, trapped in poverty, who have no choice but to turn to a life of crime as he is too poor. He exploits the corrupt justice system. By using a range of semiotics and acting skills here dramatic moments can highlight the key themes.

One dramatic moment of the musical Miller is the opening.

Exemplar 6 is an example of a response that receives 18 out of 30 marks for the question. It contains some vague comments, such as 'popular at the time'. It makes some general, basic comments on contextual influences. It references semiotics and acting skills, without exemplification. Only in the final sentence of the page does it address key moments, rather than key themes. Nonetheless, it is generally a reasonable way of starting the response off.

OCR support



The OCR [Teacher guide: Sweeney Todd](#) is invaluable for this component.

The Northern Ireland Opera and Lyric Theatre have a useful [resource pack](#) from their production of the show, Sweeney Todd.

Assessment for learning



Besides reading and discussing the text, candidates can work through a number of practitioner inspired exercises, exclusively from the directorial viewpoint.

- They can use techniques and ideas from Brecht, Stanislavski, Boal, Artaud, Grotowski, Berkoff, Kneehigh and Katie Mitchell in turn to interpret a particular section.
- Candidates can be encouraged to direct their peers in those particular sections and try them out in front of an audience.

Paper 46 series overview

Teachers should note that the general points in the Papers 41-48 series overview relate to *The Crucible* (Unit 46) as they do to all the other texts.

For *The Crucible* many took inspiration from practitioners such as Lecoq, Boal or Katie Mithcell. However, to name a Stanislavski, Berkoff or Artaud technique doesn't say much about understanding rehearsing and performing techniques in developing a character.

Illustrating their point by explaining how an exercise works tells the examiners so much more about knowledge and understanding. Again, if there was evidence of practical sessions to underpin learning, it would help candidates in explaining and justifying their ideas.

A few referenced the current TV broadcasts of the final series of *The Handmaid's Tale* to illustrate a religious-bound society that had spiralled out of control (Gilead). Others cited closed societies in other places and times, especially those that suppressed the rights of women and girls.

Pre-prepared responses

As has been reported in previous series, 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 once they have seen the exam questions.

The understanding of how mood and atmosphere are integral to 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, which then had to go beyond that to consider what the characters are doing and saying, especially to each other, in this drama of such intense emotion, hysteria and awful consequences.

The annotations are not simply an add on to Question 1, they are fundamental. They can add practical detail to the ideas, they can introduce theatrical processes, contextual influences, new ideas for directing, new interpretations of text, new moves and vocal techniques and demonstrate making creative choices to convey meaning.

Many candidates placed huge crosses and/or symbolic nooses as part of the setting for both the extract and the key moments. Some suggested video projections to reinforce the terror and tyranny of group-think, emulating the McCarthyism of the 1950s, and the puritan context, graphically.

Question 2 required candidates consider the key moments from the text and explain how they would direct the moments to emphasise their dramatic impact. Most candidates selected three moments, or even whole scenes, which allowed them to amply address the demands of the question. The definition of a 'key moment' was to be decided by the candidate using their perspectives as directors.

An issue for some candidates was that they had prepared a response which did not explicitly answer the questions posed in this series and instead focused on key themes or Miller's intentions. Clearly key themes and intentions will be relevant to mood and atmosphere and key moments, but they were not asked for in the questions.

Question 1

- 1 As a director, describe and justify your vision for directing the actors in this extract to create atmosphere and mood. Annotate the script to show how you would do this. **[30]**

The question asks for a description and justification of the directorial vision. It requires a specific focus on mood and atmosphere. The annotations should demonstrate how the vision would be brought to life on stage, from page to stage. Atmosphere might relate to the stage ambience, as well as lights, sound, costume, setting and props. Mood might refer to the characters, so covers acting.

The annotations are a significant part of the question and should reinforce ideas and add detail to the suggested plans. They may also introduce contextual influences and theatrical practices and processes.

There is no set style for the layout of annotations.

The response should show how making creative choices may convey meaning to an audience.

Exemplar 7

this extract from Act 1 of
 As a director staging Arthur Miller's 'The Crucible' I would ~~direct my~~ direct my actors to ~~perform~~ create a tense mood and highly emotional atmosphere in order to help achieve my dramatic intention of highlighting the multi-faceted nature of characters and their choices; thus evoking sympathy for them from the audience through this creating of mood and atmosphere.

This extract is extremely significant to the play as a whole and to the mood and atmosphere of the play. ~~Coming early in Act 1 of the~~ Occurring early in the play it works to establish key character relationships and ~~motivations, and as well~~ ^{such as Hale's godliness and Parris' vanity} as developing themes such as Hale's Godliness and Parris' obsession with vanity, as well as developing key themes such as religion, power ~~imbalance~~ imbalance and inequality, and hysteria. Being so early in the play this scene is ~~the~~ one of the first scenes we see the extent of Abigail's manipulation. ^{has a sense of} it ~~is a~~ foreshadowing the emotional and physical harm Abigail will cause through Tituba's continued ~~at end of booklet~~ →

1 Suffering in this extract. ~~which~~ ~~signifi~~
All of these aspects of significance of
this extract ~~mean~~ are made more
impactful through naturalistic
acting on a thrust stage with
naturalistic box sets which allows
actors to be fully immersed in Salem
life and thus ~~more~~ build their
characters in such a pivotal
establishing scene which helps
communicate to the audience my
dramatic intention of ~~demonstrating~~ creating
complex characters and choices and
evoking sympathy from the audience
as well as establishing a tense
mood and highly emotional
atmosphere due to the audience's
investment and immersion in the
characters, their lives and the themes
of the play - everpresent in this
extract

These themes, my dramatic intention
and the tense mood and highly emotional

atmosphere also links to the social, cultural and historical context of both Arthur Miller's writing of *The Crucible* in 1952 and its setting of 1692 Salem. Themes in this extract of religion and social hierarchy link to 1692 Salem where a strict Puritan, ~~and~~ patriarchal society existed. The God-fearing nature of the orthodox Puritan lifestyle means characters have an intense fear of sinning or being perceived as immoral even for relatively 'small' sins. This moral ideology is rooted in misogyny and racism as well as religious ideas as a result the people in Salem are fearful a large proportion of the time both of society and God this links to my dramatic intention of showing the complexity of their characters and rationalising their choices - by showing this historical context - and this context also allows for a tense mood and highly emotional atmosphere to be created as the

stages are so high for characters. On top of this the context of Miller writing 'The Crucible' in the midst of McCarthyism (the Red scare) where fear mongering and hysteria ran rampant and people were encouraged to report their neighbours for any 'wrongdoings' in order to protect themselves shows how parallels are drawn between Salem and Miller's contemporary time and adds a sense of timelessness to the play. (similar themes of hysteria and paranoia can be applied to the COVID pandemic or concerns about Trump's 2024 presidency) this further communicates my dramatic intention and allows a tense mood and emotionally intense atmosphere to be created.

In order to achieve this impact on the audience I would use rehearsal techniques in order to help my actors understand my vision and bring these themes and characters

to life. I would use Stanislavski's seven questions but make it collaborative between me and my actor to establish context and subtext for this extract. For example, for the actor playing Harris in this scene I would ask him to consider not only what is preventing him from getting what he wants but ~~at~~ to split the question into what he believes is stopping him vs what is actually stopping him in order to develop the depth of characters and develop mood and atmosphere. I would also use string of tension to build tense mood and emotionally charged atmosphere exploring where the actors build and climax tension through volume, physicality ~~and~~ or ~~to~~ even silence in order to achieve my dramatic intention and create tense mood and emotionally charged atmosphere.

Exemplar 7 shows the overview of a response to Question 1 that was given 27 out of 30 marks and which utilises contextual influences, theatrical practices, processes and practitioners and demonstrates how making creative choices can convey meaning to an audience. It shows understanding of the play, the themes, the messages, the behaviour of the characters and the role of the director in bringing the extract to life.

Exemplar 8

- level tone and clear diction, emphasis on punctuation
- Hale keeps a low volume throughout, he has an unsettling sense of calm ~~showing~~ due to his conviction in his beliefs. At this stage of the play this calmness builds a ^{tense} tense mood and emotionally charged atmosphere.
- Contrasting Hale's measured speech Giles ~~speaks~~ speaks with natural pauses as though voicing his thoughts as they come, his volume fluctuates emphasising this. This contrast builds a tense mood.
- Betty's physicality here is unsettling she is entirely limp with her head lolling back and arms flailing, Hale seems forceful in the way he holds her — the context of Betty and Abigail actually ~~faking~~ faking Betty's illness adds confusion ~~and~~ creates tense mood and emotionally charged atmosphere for the audience.
- This silence would be sweeping everyone on stage stops moving (or their physicality gets smaller) so Betty's fluidity/limpness is jarring + builds tension.
- Change of voice deep, commanding, loud, startling builds emotional atmosphere

Script removed due to third party copyright restrictions.

→ voice is full of terror but edged with anger (a sense of grit) he looks around anxious at others' opinions in Salem like McCarthyism builds tension
links to significance of reputation and neighbors' opinions in Salem like McCarthyism builds tension

Exemplar 8 is the opening page of the Question 1 annotations which accompanied the overview in the previous example (Exemplar 7). They are detailed and add more practical, directorial information to the ideas already put forward. They continue to show understanding of the role of the director, and they address the question about mood and atmosphere.

Question 2

- 2 As a director, explain and justify how you could stage a performance of *The Crucible* to emphasise the key dramatic moments of the play.

[30]

Candidates are expected to explain and justify a directorial vision for the whole play, in this case through the key dramatic moments. Most candidates choose up to three moments to illustrate their points. The extract in Question 1 may be used as a key moment.

The response should show understanding of how the musical is structured and may be interpreted and/or performed. Most will use contextual influence and theatrical practices in their response.

Exemplar 9

To stage the play 'The Crucible' by Arthur Miller I would want to keep it true to the time it was set, whilst also relating it to the Red Scare in the 1950's and even the current state of the world. The key themes I would want to focus on is religion, control, power, feminism and witchcraft. For my staging type I would want to use in the round so the audience can truly feel as though they are a part of what's happening. This correlates to me also using some aspects of Artaudian theatre like using smells, lights etc to make the audience feel a part of the play, to instill the same fear in the audience the people in Salem at the time felt and to overall make them feel empathetic to the victims. To really emphasise this I would have my actors use Stanislavski's techniques and naturalistic style to make the audience feel like these are real characters in front of them. On my stage I would have a ~~light~~ cross that lights up from the floor. In Act 1 I would have it at 75%.

The opening to Question 2 in Exemplar 9 begins to show some consideration of the key moments but also mentions key themes. It references contextual influences, two practitioners and processes and suggests the contemporary audience response to fear. It hints at immersing them, as mentioned in general overview of this exam series above. This response was given 23 marks out of 30, top of confident level.

OCR support



The OCR [Delivery guide: Deconstructing texts](#) for this component and for *The Crucible* in particular are invaluable.

Useful links to the work of contemporary stage director Katie Mitchell are available in the OCR [Delivery guide: Practitioners in practice](#)

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

Assessment for learning



Besides reading and discussing the play text, work through a number of Frantic Assembly and other drama exercises, exclusively from the directorial viewpoint.

Candidates can use techniques and ideas from Brecht, Stanislavski, Boal, Artaud, Grotowski, Berkoff, Kneehigh and Katie Mitchell in turn to interpret a particular section.

Candidates can be encouraged to direct their peers in those particular sections and try them out in front of an audience.

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