

Examiners' report

GCSE

DRAMA

OCR Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1) in Drama

J316

For first teaching in 2016

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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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Paper 4 series overview

The response to this year's paper was positive. Centres commented that the nature and context of the questions were well received, and it was again very evident that most centres had thoroughly prepared candidates for this for exam. The general overall quality of candidate responses was again good, which reflects the excellent work that centres are completing to thoroughly prepare candidates for the exam.

All examiners commented very favourably on the quality of the work presented for examination in all nine questions and it was evident that most candidates were well informed and often highly detailed in their responses. Many question responses reflected a depth of knowledge and understanding and it was clear that centres had engaged in much excellent practical preparation and exploratory work. This had allowed candidates to explore and develop a very sound base of knowledge and understanding of their chosen text and it was clearly evident from the majority of candidates' responses, that they knew their texts very well indeed.

It was also pleasing that all seven set texts had once again been used by centres. '*Blood Brothers*' was again the most popular choice of texts used, although again there was some increase in the use of some of the other six texts. In general, many candidates had performed effectively with fewer candidates again scoring very low marks. It was also noted many times by all examiners that most candidates had coped well with the requirements of this examination and were very well prepared for all potential aspects of the paper.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• had prepared for all aspects of the exam well • read the questions carefully and responded appropriately to the specifics of each • offered a level of detail required to meet the mark requirements of each question • did not over answer questions and run out of time • had a clear understanding of how a director, actors and designers work to communicate ideas in performance • understood and used theatrical terms and concepts appropriately • showed a good understanding of a variety of technical, directional and performance aspects • gave precise ideas, supported by justification linked to the text and plays seen; meaning, themes, ideas, characters • linked response back to their understanding of question, text and play seen.	• used responses from previous years' papers to respond to questions • gave a pre-planned response rather than answering the specific question • gave overly detailed responses to a question with a low mark • mis-read the question or did not answer the question • missed the opportunity to use the keywords from the exam questions to keep the question in focus • lacked explicit detail in their work and • missed the relevance of keywords and/or responded to a different aspect entirely • did not complete the earlier questions in Section A • used detailed description within responses but did not answer the question • offered vague descriptions when trying to support opinions on the live theatre review • had little understanding of the difference between description and analysis • did not understand what the term 'designer' meant.

Section A overview

This section of the examination requires candidates to study and explore one chosen text from a list of seven plays identified within the specification. There are eight questions, each requiring a different response to a variety of skills needed to explore, develop and perform their chosen text.

Candidates need to develop a good knowledge of the whole of the play from a director, actor and designer perspective with understanding informed by the original intentions of the playwright: the context of when it was written in relation to the social, cultural and political context; the creative challenges of the text for the director, actor and designers and how they could be met; the impact of the text on an audience and the potential responses to key moments; the role and impact of characters within the piece; the use of semiotics, signs and signals; how characterisation can be explored, developed and presented in performance.

Many candidates had developed their understanding in most areas of their chosen text and their responses within the exam were often well informed and creative, with many candidates often successfully giving full and developed responses to most questions. Many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding and justified/explained their responses in this section. It was once again evident that centres had fully prepared candidates for all potential areas of study in this section and encouraged candidates to be concise with their responses to early questions. Candidates were generally good at offering a level of detail required to meet the requirements of each question and responses were often precise, well-constructed and informative.

Question 1

1 From the list below, select the character from your performance text.

Suggest **two** props the actor could use during a performance.

Explain briefly what the use of the prop shows the audience about the character.

<i>Blood Brothers</i>	Mickey
<i>Death of a Salesman</i>	Linda
<i>Find me</i>	Verity
<i>Gizmo</i>	Ben
<i>Kindertransport</i>	Faith
<i>Missing Dan Nolan</i>	Pauline
<i>Misterman</i>	Thomas

Name of character

Prop 1

What the use of the prop shows the audience about the character

.....

Prop 2

What the use of the prop shows the audience about the character

.....

[4]

This question was answered well by the majority of candidates. Most candidates identified two appropriate props and then explained what each showed about the character.

What did candidates do well?

Most candidates structured their response in appropriate detail and addressed the question in a way which allowed them to clearly state their chosen prop and then concisely describe what each showed about the character. Only a few candidates had not used the character listed. If the wrong character was used, no marks could be given.

What did candidates find a challenge?

Any potential prop was acceptable. However, some candidates offered costume; wellies, ripped shorts, dress. No credit could be given here as they are clearly an item of costume and not a prop. Also, some candidates described the use of the prop rather than what it shows.

Exemplar 1

Name your performance text Blood brothers

1 From the list below, select the character from your performance text.

Suggest **two** props the actor could use during a performance.

Explain briefly what the use of the prop shows the audience about the character.

<i>Blood Brothers</i>	Mickey
<i>Death of a Salesman</i>	Linda
<i>Find me</i>	Verity
<i>Gizmo</i>	Ben
<i>Kindertransport</i>	Faith
<i>Missing Dan Nolan</i>	Pauline
<i>Misterman</i>	Thomas

Name of character Mickey

Prop 1 a slingshot as he uses it later while playing

What the use of the prop shows the audience about the character Mickey uses this when he playing with ~~me~~ Linda and Edward.

Prop 2 a gun

What the use of the prop shows the audience about the character ~~nickel~~ Mickey hides the gun when him and Sammy rob a gas station and at the end when he kills Edward.

[4]

The example listed shows clearly how the candidate has responded appropriately to the question for identifying a prop, but describes when the prop is used, rather than what it shows. No marks for what it shows could be given.

Point for learning - Always read the question.

Reading the question fully should be impressed on all candidates by centres. When responding to any question, always respond to the key wording, with specific examples as necessary.

Question 2

2 Choose a character from your performance text.

Name of character

As an **actor**, describe how you would show **two** relevant emotions during the closing scene/section of your performance text.

Emotion 1

.....

.....

.....

Emotion 2

.....

.....

.....

[4]

This question was answered well by most candidates. Candidates accurately identified two appropriate emotions and explained how they would perform/communicate this in performance. Any moment from towards the end of the play was accepted.

What did candidates do well?

Examiners reported most candidates structured their responses in appropriate detail and it was noted that most candidates were concise in their detail on this question for the marks available. Most candidates discussed valid emotions and offered creative ways of performing these.

What did candidates find a challenge?

Only a few candidates did not respond appropriately to this question, tending to describe why the character would be like this, e.g. angry, sad, with no reference to how they would show this. No credit could be given unless an aspect of performance (how the candidate would show the emotion) was stated.

Question 3

- 3** Choose a character who appears in the **opening scene/section** of your performance text.

Name of character

Describe how an **actor** playing this role could use the way they sit or walk to show the audience **three** things about this character.

Way of sitting or walking 1

What it shows the audience about the character

.....

.....

Way of sitting or walking 2

What it shows the audience about the character

.....

.....

Way of sitting or walking 3

What it shows the audience about the character

.....

.....

[6]

This question was answered well by many candidates. Most candidates identified three potential ways of sitting/walking, and then explained how each showed something about the character. Most candidates offered a specific or implied way of sitting/walking, which was acceptable and most explained what this would show the audience, often with clear understanding. A character from the opening scene/sections should have been used, but any moment of the play that they appear in was acceptable.

What did candidates do well?

Most candidates structured their response in appropriate detail with the most successful addressing the question in a way which allowed them to clearly state their chosen way of sitting/walking and then concisely explaining what each could show the audience about the character.

What did candidates find a challenge?

Most candidates fully answered this question, however some described actions which were clearly not sitting or walking and no credit could be given for these, e.g. kneeling, laying on the floor, running or dancing. Some candidates also did not identify what the action could show the audience. No credit could be given if there was no appropriate aspect of what this shows stated.

Question 4

- 4** As a **sound designer**, explain **three** sound effects you would use to show the social, historical or cultural context of your performance text. Give examples from your performance text to justify your answer.

Sound effect	Social, historical or cultural context
1	
2	
3	

[6]

It was evident that centres had explored a huge potential for a variety of sound effects in performance and candidates were fully aware of many different types. The question states that examples from the performance text were needed. It was acceptable for candidates to offer specific examples from a moment or implied aspects of social/historical/cultural aspects from the text in general.

What did candidates do well?

Most candidates were concise in their responses, listing three potential sound effects clearly and how they would use these to demonstrate an aspect of social/cultural/historical context. Only a few candidates responded with an overly detailed response which was far more depth than was required for the marks available

What did candidates find a challenge?

Some candidates clearly listed a sound effect but described when they would use this and did not address what was asked for by the question; to explain how you would use these to show the social/cultural/historical context of the play.

Question 5

5 You are **staging** your performance text on a stage of your choice.

Name the type of stage you would use

Explain **three** advantages and/or disadvantages for performing your performance text on this type of stage.

Advantage/disadvantage

.....

.....

Advantage/disadvantage

.....

.....

Advantage/disadvantage

.....

..... [6]

This was a similar question to last year's paper and it was surprising that responses to this question were varied. Most candidates answered with good knowledge and understanding of their chosen staging type and clearly identified generalised practical advantages/disadvantages for using this type of staging in a performance. However, a majority of candidates did not offer any links as to how this staging style could affect their chosen text, which prevented them achieving a Level 3. It was acceptable for candidates to discuss any staging type for this question.

What did candidates do well?

Many candidates described in detail the staging style and described a range of examples for the advantage/disadvantage for this. The best responses linked this clearly to their chosen text, revealing a sound knowledge and understanding of how this could affect their chosen text with specific scene/moment examples selected to illustrate this.

What did candidates find a challenge?

Candidates did not link the choice of staging specifically to their text. To achieve a Level 3 mark, candidates needed to identify a potential advantage/disadvantage for using a staging type and link this to a specific moment/aspect from their text. Many candidates did not reference the play studied at all within their response.

Question 6

- 6** Choose a **main** character whose appearance changes in your performance text.

Name of character

Explain how you would use **costume**, **hair**, **makeup** or **masks** to show the change of appearance for this character in two scenes/sections from your performance text. You can use a combination of costume, hair, makeup or masks, or just one of them.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [8]

Candidates could offer a response which discussed one or all four of the design aspects listed. Responses to this question were often strong. Most candidates answered with good knowledge and understanding of how design can be used to show a change in character, most focusing on costume.

What did candidates do well?

Many candidates described in detail how and what costume (especially) they would use to show a change in character appearance with examples of clear character knowledge and understanding to enhance this. The best responses linked this clearly to the chosen specific scene/moment and selected examples to illustrate this.

What did candidates find a challenge?

Some candidates only discussed one scene/section, which prevented them from showing a change in the design aspects. Others offered a complete overview of the characters' costume throughout the play with no reference to the change in appearance.

Question 7

- 7 As a **director**, explain how you would direct **one** key moment in your performance text to create a sense of **sadness** for the audience.

Key moment

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [8]

There were many excellent responses to this question. Most candidates answered with good knowledge and understanding of the role of the director and clearly identified how they would direct their chosen moment to create sadness. Many candidates again solely focused on the use of technical aspects but did not offer any direction of the actors/performers, which prevented them achieving a higher level.

What did candidates do well?

Many candidates described in great detail how they would direct their chosen moment with a range of examples offered for this. The best responses linked this clearly to the direction of the actors and how they would use the actors to enhance the sense of sadness, with specific directorial examples selected to illustrate this.

What did candidates find a challenge?

Directors predominantly work with the actors/performers. Many candidates did not offer any direction in relation to this and concentrated solely on technical aspects. Also, some candidates were very clear how they would direct their chosen moment, however there was often no insight into how they would use this to create a sense of sadness within the moment.

Question 8

- 8 You are the **actor** playing a character of your choice from your performance text.

Name of character

After learning your lines, explain how you would **prepare** to perform as this character **before** the performance.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... **[8]**

Responses to this question were varied. Most candidates answered with good knowledge and understanding of a character. However, many candidates did not respond appropriately to the aspect of the question 'prepare' and did not offer appropriate planning/rehearsal aspects, which prevented them achieving higher levels. Candidates referenced many potential preparatory techniques and often discussed using theatre practitioner techniques with great authority with the highest scoring responses discussing how this preparation would impact on their potential performance.

What did candidates do well?

Many candidates described in detail how they could use a range of rehearsal/preparation techniques, often with examples of clear character development. The best responses linked this clearly to how they could use a range of rehearsal techniques to develop their chosen character.

What did candidates find a challenge?

Candidates concentrated purely on how to perform the chosen character with no reference to preparation. Also, candidates listed a variety of potential preparation techniques but offered little or no link to how they would use these practically to aid character preparation.

Section B overview

This section of the examination required candidates to study, evaluate and analyse the design aspects from their chosen performance and review why/how the design impacted on them and the audience. The quality of responses from candidates for Section B was generally strong with many candidates having much to say about the design in the performance they had watched. The best responses had fully explored the wording of the question, focusing on design, and how this created drama for the candidate and the audience.

In general, it was clear that many candidates were well prepared for this question. As in previous years, the choice of play was highly varied and many incorporated the use of digital performances, which is perfectly acceptable. One aspect noted this year by examiners is a growing number of centres who choose to focus on streamed performances or seen live theatre works of professional companies that could have limiting factors or restrictive elements to write about for candidates, for example pieces that are very challenging for the actor but use minimal or no use of set, costume and props, etc. Centres need to make sure that their choice of performance used for Section B, streamed or live theatre performance, gives all candidates enough to write an 'extended' response on, in relation to any element of theatre.

It was pleasing that the majority of candidate responses to this section were often detailed, thoughtful and displayed a full range of subject specific terminology to enhance the responses. Many candidate responses were insightful and balanced often revealing the candidates' understanding of design and how this helps create drama. Unfortunately, there are still a number of candidates answering this question referring to the same performance text to the one they had studied for Section A.

A wide variety of design aspects were discussed and evaluated, revealing a very sound knowledge and understanding of the chosen performance. It was pleasing that there were reports of less 'pre-prepared' theatre reviews this year and more candidates focusing on the wording requirements of this year's Section B question. It was noted that there were a significant number of candidates who offered a response which covered every aspect of the performance in limited depth and did not focus on the specifics of the question, rather offering a generalised overall review of the performance. These responses often only included basic reference to the design. Candidates who did not respond to the question requirements, inevitably often only accessed lower band marks. Many of these candidates also offered an extensive introduction to their response.

Key point call out - use your time wisely!

It is again disappointing that there are still a significant number of candidates who offer an introduction and conclusion to their Section B response which has no relevance to the question at all.

It should be impressed on all candidates by centres that only responses that are relevant to the question can be rewarded by the mark scheme.

Question 9*

9* Evaluate how successful the designers were in creating drama in the performance you saw.

In your answer, you could consider:

- set, space, levels, stage, costume, props, effects, other media
- lighting and sound design
- how effectively the design communicated meaning to you
- how successfully the directing and acting were supported by the design.

You should use appropriate drama and theatre terminology.

[30]

In general, many candidates responded positively to this question. There were many candidates who wrote about a variety of design elements in a creative and fluent manner. However, it was apparent that some candidates didn't seem to understand what the theatrical term 'design' meant. Also, there were still a significant number of brief and undeveloped responses from potentially strong candidates, with examiners noting that this was because the candidate had spent too much time on Section A and hadn't allowed themselves sufficient time to write in detail. There were more candidates this year that focused their response on what they would have done better with lighting, set, costume etc, and only offered very limited analysis about what the performance design was or what they saw.

Candidates who scored well in this question often responded to, discussed and evaluated many of the following aspects:

Candidates were well prepared for this question, with very clear ideas/plans/structures in place to allow full responses to be given to the wording of the question. The evaluation of the design and their impact on them, as an audience member, was embedded throughout the response.

The impact that design had on the candidates as an audience member was at the heart of the response and it was clearly focused on the design with clear evaluation not description of the impact of the design and how this created/enhanced the drama.

Higher scoring candidates discussed one or a variety of design aspects and evaluated how successful these were in creating drama. Their use of specialist drama and theatre terminology was highly developed and integrated throughout their response. They offered a highly developed understanding of how design enhances the drama to communicate meaning to an audience in a live performance.

The line of reasoning throughout their response was well-developed, sustained, relevant and logically structured and the positive and/or negative impacts of a design were discussed surrounding the performance and the candidates' enjoyment.

Clear examples were offered to support their evaluative statements, focusing on the design and the role/impact of a range of design aspects were used, which were relevant to the performance seen, not dependent on the script.

The impact on them as an audience member was discussed in detail in relation to the use of a range of designs.

What did candidates find a challenge?

Some examples given to support the candidate's analysis lacked specific detail and they struggled to move beyond the lower levels due to a lack of precision in their analysis and evaluation, often making sweeping statements to move onto their next point.

Using the time allocated to this question to its full potential was again an issue for some candidates and some candidates spent a great deal of time describing in detail, the play, plot, key themes/messages given within the piece, but did not link this back to the question.

Some candidates focused on an understanding of the text, rather than evaluating the performance and provided an introduction/conclusion that had little focus on the question. Less successful candidates were descriptive rather than evaluative or offered a 'pre-prepared' response did not adapt this to meet the question's needs. Using subject specific language and terminology was often limited in these responses.

Sometimes basic opinions were expressed on the production which focused on description rather than analysis and a few candidates who had watched a recorded version of a live show, focused mainly on camera angles, lens movement and editing, rather than acting skills.

Some live performances used

Dear Evan Hanson

The Witness for the Prosecution

The Boy on the Roof

Punch

Peter Pan

Frankenstein

Billy Elliot

Things I Know to Be True

Bouncers

Romeo and Juliet

Teechers

To Kill a Mockingbird

An Inspector Calls

The Play That Goes Wrong

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

War Horse

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time

Cinderella

Wonderland

A Christmas Carol

Othello

Hamilton

Macbeth

Falling

Shawshank Redemption

Canterville Ghost

Small Island

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Life of Pi

Matilda

Juliet

Kinky Boots

Hex

Jekyll and Hyde

Cookies on Line

Lord of the Flies

War Horse

Shrek The Musical

Standing at the Sky's Edge

DNA

Rise Up

The Lion King

Annie

Wuthering Heights

Beautiful Thing

Henry V

Everyone's Talking About Jamie

Can I Live?

Exemplar 2

I watched the celebrated performance of Mary Shelley's adapted gothic novel via National theatre Live. It was adapted into a play by Nick Dear and directed by Danny Boyle, the key genre is gothic and naturalism. Nick Dear decided that the artistic intention should be told from the view point of the creature played by Benedict Cumberbatch. The key themes that run throughout the play are "nature vs ~~nature~~ nurture" and "Created or Creator", this play also has many religious and scientific context themes throughout such as Jonny Lee Miller, Doctor Frankenstein, Portraying the Enlightenment, a time when people believed ~~the~~ 'Science over nature'.

Some candidates provided an introduction/conclusion that had little focus on the question. The example candidate response displayed above exemplifies this. The candidate has written an eighteen line introduction, using significant and valuable time that could not be rewarded with any potential marks as it makes only highly limited reference to design.

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