



A LEVEL

Drama and Theatre

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Report on the Examination

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General

In this first series of the reformed Drama and Theatre A Level qualification, examiners reported seeing many students' papers that reflected a confident understanding of the precise demands of Sections A, B and Section C of this paper. As always, there was a considerable range in the quality in students' responses seen.

It was obvious that teachers had worked hard to ensure that students were fully *au fait* with the requirements of the new-style questions although, as is to be expected with a new specification, examiners reported seeing instances where students appeared to be a little uncertain of how to approach individual questions.

One issue that examiners reported again and again was where students had used the Specimen Assessment Materials, perhaps as a mock exam in school, and had failed to appreciate that these would not be the actual questions set in the live paper. This was particularly true of Section C. Here, students were answering on live or streamed theatre productions without the benefit of having notes with them. Some diligent and/or insecure students had apparently chosen to memorise one or two of their practice answers and these were reproduced, in full, in their answers with little regard for the specific focus of the live paper and with no evident attempt to shape their pre-learnt material to serve that focus.

A significant number of students started their answers to Sections A and C with a summary of their intentions, some at significant length. In this preamble, they rarely did more than identify the sections of the play or production that they would be looking at. These intentions rarely attracted any credit.

Many students, sometimes the same ones, then wrote extensive conclusions which reiterated the points they had made in the body of their answers. Both approaches wasted time and added no additional information to their responses.

Conversely, in all three sections, students were occasionally guilty of providing absolutely no context for their ideas, as they launched directly into offering a series of practical ideas or production details that, as a result, made little sense.

A number of students wasted valuable time and space in their answers to Section A and B by referring to the rehearsal processes that they might undertake in preparing a role. Rehearsal techniques are not required in this paper as all questions assume that the directorial, design or performance ideas invited refer to texts *in performance*. We are looking for the 'finished article' from the director, designer or performer, rather than a role or scene in rehearsal.

Unfortunately, a significant number of students used insecure, inappropriate or colloquial expression in their answers and there was restricted use of text in action in both Sections A and B. Many appeared unfamiliar with specialist terminology and referred to aspect such as 'the bottom corner of the stage' or 'backstage centre' as if these were perfectly acceptable terms.

Students also betrayed a complete lack of understanding of the term 'gait'; which many used as if interchangeable with 'stance' or 'posture'. Many students wrote about 'standing in a low gait' (or a high one) for example, which is meaningless, as well as impossible, as a gait is a mode of walking. Others used the term as a verb, as in 'I would direct Victor to gait away from Yerma'.

There was an overuse of the word 'proxemics' by students who did not have a clear understanding of the term which lead to some sentences that did not make sense such as 'I would close/increase/decrease my proxemics' instead of writing the more comprehensible and natural

use of stage space indicated by ‘I would move closer to Thea’ or ‘I would move downstage, away from Truffaldino’. This term also appeared unhelpfully in answers in Section C.

Invention is one of the key discriminators on this paper which is why it is so disappointing to come across examples of centres where student answers were so similar as to suggest a taught ‘centre’ response, which resulted in a lack of personal engagement with the tasks set.

One of the least effective approaches to the requirements to refer to social, cultural and historical context is for an entire cohort to begin their answers with the same ‘pellet’ of historical information which is dropped into the introduction without, in any discernible way, informing the rest of the answer.

Examiners reported a resurgence of the learnt introduction which became more obvious when that introduction also contained misunderstandings or misuse of language. One set of students, for example, without exception, referred to Hedda Gabler as the ‘titular character whose plight (sic) for freedom in nineteenth century Norway’ was at the core of the play.

Unfortunately, in Section B, although this error was not as prevalent as it had been in the legacy papers, there were still some students who made the mistake of answering on an extract that they had ‘created’ themselves, referring to corresponding page numbers in their own texts, rather than using the printed extract in the question booklet; this significant error resulted in very low achievement. This error occurred most frequently in relation to *Metamorphosis* where students referred to the very opening of the play.

Both of the set text sections of the paper require students to reveal both creativity and an understanding of the whole text of their chosen plays through the medium of a focus on the **precise demand** of their chosen questions. Section A questions offer a choice of perspectives on the set plays (director, performer or designer) while Section B answers require that each perspective must be adopted in relation to precise demands.

Section C always requires precise focus on the demands of the question. Questions in this section focus upon what directors, performers and designers wish to communicate through their work and how the audience experience and respond to their work.

Section A – Drama through the Ages

A note on stipulated sections

The questions in Section A frequently stipulate how many sections of the play students should refer to in their answers.

The definition of what constitutes a ‘section’ appears as a preface to the questions and for the purposes of this exam, a ‘section’ is defined as a continuous unit of action, interaction, monologue or dialogue extending beyond a single page of text.

Where questions stipulate ‘**two** sections’, students will not gain credit for writing about **more** than two. Where questions stipulate ‘**at least two** sections’ students will penalise themselves if they fail to write about at least two sections.

A note on transpositions

In both Section A and B students need to remember that any suggested transpositions of the action of the play from the playwright’s intended setting and/or period needs to be robustly justified and needs to work for the play as a whole.

If attempted, transpositions must also be relevant to the thrust of the question and not simply offered as a form of context in the introduction to the answer.

Many students underachieved in this series as a result of insisting on lengthy discussion of a proposed transposition that was either frankly irrelevant to the focus of the question or was unconvincingly defended.

Texts where transpositions were frequently included, but rarely added to the quality of the answers, included *Antigone*, *The Servant of Two Masters* and *Much Ado about Nothing*.

Sophocles: *Antigone*

Question: 01

This was one of the most frequently answered questions on the paper. There was an understanding of context in the majority of answers. Some pre-prepared identical introductions added little to the answers.

The role of the 'Seer' in Greek society was often explored productively. Weaker answers indicated historical context, but without focus on the question. Good answers embedded understanding of social, cultural and historical context throughout their answers, making this relevant to direction or performance.

A re-telling of the narrative of the Oedipus trilogy attracted little credit.

Good answers were focused on the question demands, which required ideas for creating 'significant impact' from 'Tiresias' appearance and interaction with other characters.'

Some students wrote only about Tiresias's interaction with Creon, ignoring both the boy and the Chorus.

Some students presented Tiresias as an ordinary old man in tatty clothes and claimed, improbably, that this would have a 'significant impact' on the audience.

Others were more inventive and considered how impact might be created through costume and make-up as well as through performance strategies.

The best answers framed their responses in the context of the substance of the exchange between Creon and Tiresias and Tiresias' purpose in visiting Creon to avoid disaster both personal and national.

In weaker answers, Tiresias' longer speeches were often discounted with students restricting themselves to quoting the short lines on his entry, a fragment from the stichomythic exchanges with Creon and his parting lines but ignoring his actual prophecy which tended to minimise the 'impact' intended.

The best answers integrated Tiresias' prophecies into their answers and wrote about the delivery of many individual lines of text revealing a more developed sense of the 'significant impact' his appearance has.

Those who chose to write as a director often availed themselves of the opportunity to take the wider view and included much of the confrontation between Creon and the prophet, including Creon's insulting attitude towards the reverend old man and his enraged responses.

There were a number of partially justified and unlikely transpositions, including transposing *Antigone* to a tall ship and transposing it to the interior of a tepee. In the latter example, there was some justification in the “mystical” portrayal of Tiresias, this interpretation was unlikely to work for the whole play, however.

Many students failed to acknowledge Tiresias’ physical blindness.

Question: 02

This question attracted answers from a handful of students. Some had misread or ignored the question’s demands and simply offered designs for set (or costume or lighting or sound, in some instances) without considering the need to accommodate the action or to create an appropriate atmosphere.

Some students did not consider the requirement to offer designs for **at least two** separate sections of the play. Some students were quite deliberate about this and stated that they were using one permanent setting.

Examiners noted that students who answered this question sometimes failed to include a sketch and some failed to comment on a single moment from the play where the design would be used by the actors.

Shakespeare: *Much Ado about Nothing*

Question: 03

This was the more popular of the questions on this play.

The most frequently chosen scenes included Act 2, Scene 3 and Act 3 Scene 2. Students were, of course, also free to choose both of their two separate sections from Act 2, Scene 3, which is a long scene and certainly long enough to accommodate two distinct ‘sections’ as defined on the question paper.

Many students chose to write about playing Benedick and there were several highly inventive responses which focused on the ease with which his ‘friends’, exploiting Benedick’s high opinion of himself, ‘reeled him in’.

Many students took delight in engineering increasingly absurd poses for Benedick to assume, as he edges closer to the tricksters, while trying to appear ‘invisible’, dodging behind fountains or statues. In one student’s answer, this involved a kind of ‘grandmother’s footsteps’ game with Benedick, clutching pieces of foliage torn from bushes in the ornamental garden, ‘freezing’ amidst examples of topiary, whenever Don Pedro or Claudio looked around the ‘garden’.

The question did not specify the nature of the designs to be undertaken, if the design perspective was selected, so students took advantage of the opportunity to write about set design for the section in Act 2 and costume design for Benedick’s new ‘dress to impress’ style costume for the Act 3 scene.

Act 2, Scene 3 lent itself particularly to inventive set designers to create suitable hiding places for Benedick to eavesdrop on the ‘conspirators’.

As expected, some students took inspiration from a variety of famous productions and here some valid transpositions were suggested. Christopher Luscombe’s English Country house interior setting at the RSC may have prompted students’ use of a Christmas tree as the ‘centrepiece’ for Benedick to hide behind. Other students opted for an Indian colonial setting and designed a paved

courtyard with shuttered windows and balconies above. Delightfully absurd moments were created as Benedick appeared now at one window, now at another, peeping through louvered doors, tracking the movement of the men below as they sauntered along the path.

Some students produced good sketches to accompany their designs while others either failed to provide sketches or offered very crude drawings.

Students should be reminded that they need to be able to discuss and communicate their chosen designs, using appropriate technical vocabulary and referring to the relevant design fundamentals.

Question: 04

There were fewer answers to this question.

Scenes most frequently chosen were from Act 5, Scenes 1 and 4.

Some students wrote about Act 4, Scene 1, as one of their chosen sections, interpreting Hero's 'supposed death' to be her 'swoon' when confronted with Claudio's accusations.

A few good answers were seen which offered a reasonable balance between the two chosen sections. Many answers, however, failed to develop a clear directorial perspective and some suggestions tended to be narrative or discursive rather than practical. Some students restricted themselves to exploring only one or two lines of text; such responses were self-limiting.

Where students focused on scenes from Act 5, Leonato was generally depicted as a kindly old man and students tended to define their preferred effects as creating sympathy for Leonato. If students began their answer referring to the halted wedding scene, they tended to have a harsher interpretation of the role and to wish to create shock for the audience at the father's willingness to believe instantly in the slander and to disown Hero.

Good answers offered some precise performance detail and showed a secure understanding of Shakespeare's intentions in presenting Leonato, wrestling with his miserable situation and facing up to the ruined reputation of his only daughter.

There was some good work seen on the dramatic revelation of the conspiracy and Leonato's reactions (both verbal and non-verbal) to Borachio's confession of guilt and to Claudio's wretched apology.

Some students created a kind of dark comedy from Leonato's relationship with his brother, Antonio.

Unfortunately, in several students' work, chosen sections of text were insufficiently developed and there was a restricted sense of overview.

Some students failed to provide any context for their suggestions, instead, plunging straight into a series of underdeveloped performance ideas without identifying the situation on stage or explaining who the characters are.

Some students wrote from the perspective of a performer rather than a director.

Goldoni: *The Servant of Two Masters***Question: 05**

This was the less popular of the two questions, the overwhelming majority approached the task from the perspective of a director and the question was generally not answered particularly well.

Students often referenced the play's origins and Commedia influences, and some used these effectively to justify an interpretation (or at least a starting point) for directing Pantalone and Dr Lombardi.

For others, the Commedia background was simply used as a 'bolted on' introduction to satisfy the requirement to reference social, cultural or historical context.

The main issue with the majority of answers to this option was that ideas offered just weren't funny. There was an over-reliance on Pantalone's stooped posture or Lombardi's 'fat belly' to provide all of the comedy in the selected scenes. This was a shame as there are several scenes where the interaction of the two old men offers abundant opportunity to create comedy, especially in the Lee Hall version.

Often, text references were brief and/or infrequent, with most attention spent on Pantalone's shuffling and Lombardi's waddling in the Commedia-inspired 'stock character' designated formation. Students also appeared to find the notion of characters falling over on stage to be potentially hilarious.

Better answers managed to find sections where the two characters weren't *just* interacting with each other but had other characters present, for example, in Act 1, Scenes 1 and 2 in their reactions to the arrival of Truffaldino or in Act 3, Scene 12 where the two *vecchi* help to reconcile Clarice and Silvio; making a more varied kind of comedy, with a range of interactions, easier to realise.

More than one centre's answers transposed the play into 1960s London, but without clear justification, explanation or success.

Not enough answers were seen from a costume designer's perspective to make useful comments about student achievement.

Question: 06

As is to be expected, in the new style questions, where reference to social, historical or cultural context is a requirement of the specification, most answers began with a section on the play's original context.

Many students offered pre-prepared material on Goldoni, his move away from traditional Commedia, the role of the innamorati, etc. This is not a criticism. Better students manage to embed such material into the body of their answers or to be more selective in the material that they included. Students should not be writing a page – or even half a page – of pre-prepared historical context before tackling the focus of the question.

Better answers used the stock character as a way of showing the innamorata's character traits in Act One, but then explored the ways in which Clarice developed into a more mature character in Act Two; which was an interesting approach. Better answers also included frequent text references which were used as a vehicle to demonstrate Clarice's character and therefore determine and achieve the students' intended audience responses.

Where students did identify a preferred response, it tended to be a mixture of annoyance and comedy. It is difficult to imagine an audience member really being annoyed by Clarice, while they are being entertained by her comical self-centredness.

Weaker answers relied on Clarice's childish tantrums throughout, raising the question of just how much sobbing and bawling a girl can do. These answers frequently only picked one brief moment from each of the two sections selected.

As the question referred to audience response to Clarice 'during the course of the play' it was to be expected that students would refer to something from the beginning, a section from the middle and a section from the latter half of the play. This expectation was only occasionally met.

Ibsen: *Hedda Gabler*

Question: 07

This was the less popular of the two questions on this text, but the responses generally showed some reasonable understanding of the two characters and almost all of the students who chose this question answered from the perspective of a director.

Examiners reported seeing examples of misunderstanding of the precise relationship between Thea and Hedda prior to Thea's appearance at the Tesman's new home and there was also misunderstanding of their relative social spheres.

Many students appeared to believe that Hedda is much older than Thea, despite Thea saying that Hedda was only 'a year superior' to her at the school that they both attended in their youth. There were similar misapprehensions about Thea's class which was often mistakenly described as 'working class'.

Even when students had selected a directorial perspective, they frequently, and legitimately, spent some attention on the contrasting costumes of the characters. This, once again, often revealed some misunderstandings as Thea is highly unlikely to be wearing scuffed boots and/or patched or soiled skirts.

When students wrote about the social, cultural or historical context of this play they not infrequently referred to nineteenth century Norway as a patriarchal society and considered Hedda's position within that society, where men were dominant, and women were expected to occupy a domestic sphere and to take no active part in that society beyond child-bearing and rearing.

This prompted some students to contrast the two female characters in terms of their contributions to a society where Thea's nurturing personality allowed Loevborg's talent to flourish and produce a remarkable manuscript while Hedda's egotistical and destructive influence over him led to the death of that exceptional talent.

Perceptive students saw past the superficial exteriors of the two women; 'Hedda strong, Thea weak', and looked at the more fundamental contrasts between them.

These students considered elements such as Thea's courage in leaving her husband, and an unhappy marriage, to follow Loevborg, compared with Hedda's cowardice in having embarked on a marriage that she did not want and being so afraid of scandal that she would not do anything to change her situation.

The apparent strength and forcefulness that Hedda presents much of the time, compared with the apparent timidity of Thea, were also discussed with more perceptive students seeing these as exterior characteristics that belied Thea's inner strength and Hedda's fearfulness.

The best answers selected Mrs Elvsted's arrival in Act One, her re-appearance in Act Two and towards the end of the play, providing a clear overview of not just their contrasting characters, but the changing dynamic of that contrast.

Question: 08

This was the question that attracted most of the students who had studied the text.

It is here that a further reminder is necessary that students should be advised not to enter the examination hall with a pre-prepared answer to their set texts in their heads.

The question set referred to revealing Hedda's 'changeable moods'. A huge swathe of students simply ignored this focus and wrote about Hedda's complex character or about her need for power or about her thirst to manipulate all around her. However well written these answers were, however well supported from the text and however ingeniously performed the role was, answers that did not focus on Hedda's 'changeable moods' could not gain a mark in the 'focused and considered' band because they were **not** focused on answering the set question.

Even where students recognised what a 'mood' is – excited, playful, mischievous, sorrowful, despairing – the word 'changeable' posed a further challenge for many students. These students grasped 'mood' but then wrote about Hedda's mood in one section of the play, for example in Act Two in conversation with Brack, and then her mood in an entirely different, later scene, for example when she sends Loevborg to his death, without apparently seeing the rapid changes of mood that can occur in Hedda within just a few lines of dialogue in the same scene.

Some students who saw the need to identify rapid mood changes offered alternative interpretations of the text in order to accommodate this and had Hedda being positively joyous with Aunt Juliana initially, so that they could then change her mood to one of irritation when she sees Aunt Juliana's hat and then change again to being 'loving' with Tesman when Aunt Juliana leaves.

Such an interpretation ignored the sarcastic undertone to Hedda's lines with Aunt Juliana and her obvious irritation with Tesman when he asks her to call his aunt 'Auntie Juju'.

More perceptive students saw Hedda's shifting moods as manifested in Act 2, for example, when Hedda happily enjoys talking intimately to Loevborg then is soon irritated by Loevborg's clear admiration of Thea's courage. In a destructive mood, Hedda finally persuades Loevborg to have a drink, in order to punish both him and Thea for their apparently strong relationship. Others focused on Hedda's moods fluctuating wildly in Act 4, when her excitement at the thought of Loevborg's 'brave, beautiful' act turns to shock when Brack tells her the truth and then to horror at the realisation that she is now in Brack's power before attaining a form of calm before shooting herself.

It is a shame to have to report that some misguided students overloaded their answers with repetitive references to Hedda's position in the social/historical context of Norway's patriarchal society, to such an extent, that their focus on the question, whether accurate or misguided, was barely perceptible.

Brecht: *The Caucasian Chalk Circle***Question: 09**

This question attracted considerably fewer responses than Q10.

Of primary concern was that students often failed to explicitly state their 'preferred effects' – the focus of the question – and even when they did so, these tended to be generalised or expressed in terms of the application of Brechtian theory (which often revealed insecure or faulty knowledge of the practitioner's ideas and practice).

Aside from wishing to 'alienate' the audience through a variety of epic techniques (a term rarely understood in relation to this question), students chose preferred effects of sympathy or even empathy, relating to Grusha's 'desperate' situation.

In responses that focused on design, many students opted for a 'minimalistic' set 'because that's what Brecht did'. This revealed a misunderstanding of Brecht's work in regard to design and especially of Brecht's designer, Karl Von Appen's quite elaborate designs for this play, which are readily accessed on the internet or in various student editions of this play.

Too many students have been persuaded by TIE groups, who purport to work in a Brechtian style and who offer workshops to A level students, that Brecht was a 'minimalist'. He was not. Nor did Brecht advocate that performers should ever appear in rehearsal 'blacks'; nor did he ever use the phrase 'slap and tickle' in his considerable body of theory that is readily available for students to access.

Where students had no more than a rope outline on a stage, they found it difficult to suggest how the set (or absence of it) might change for the second separate section. In a couple of (rare) cases, students offered some detail regarding the need to make the designs for the houses referred in the scene, to be able to be used to help convey the action and reveal information about the characters. There were some reasonable details relating to the wedding ceremony.

Costume designs tended to be very superficial consisting of little more than Grusha's tattered dress in comparison with The Sister in Law who was, inappropriately, costumed in fine materials with no recognition that her 'wealth' was only relative to Grusha's complete destitution.

Where students attempted a directorial perspective, there was often even greater lack of precision as they seemed to be unable to focus clearly on the demands of the question. These answers tended to do little more than make a brief observation about the narrative. The opening of the section and the wedding were the most popular choices of sections, the latter being dealt with in a way that sometimes revealed only superficial knowledge of the text. Placards were seen everywhere, from hanging round actors' necks to being handed to single members of the audience to hold up. Once again, reflecting a lack of understanding of Brecht's practice.

Students are not bound to perform, direct or design for the play in keeping with Brecht's methods as a practitioner; however, when students claim that they are following Brechtian practice, they need to reflect his practice accurately.

Students took various approaches to social, cultural or historical context in their answers to this question and included a range of issues of varying relevance from lengthy discussions of Brecht in exile, to the most basic of references to epic techniques, many of which were evidently not understood, including *gestus* and *spass*.

Question: 10

This was a much more popular choice of question and one that attracted a wide range of responses, including some very good ones.

Nearly all students attempting it, chose to discuss either the first or second meeting between Simon and Grusha and their encounter at the end of Scene 3. Few went on to consider Simon's role in *The Chalk Circle* and those that only dealt with Scene 3, left themselves at a significant disadvantage as they were only able to demonstrate underdeveloped knowledge of the play.

Preferred effects were commonly related to the need for the audience to like or respect Simon but some weaker responses saw the relationship with Grusha as little more than a 'Mills and Boon' romance. Better answers revealed an understanding of Brecht's intentions in terms of the need for an audience to see this relationship in a positive light in relation to a corrupt class system.

There were some appropriate details regarding Simon's somewhat coy approach to Grusha followed up with some good performance details for his dismay at the discovery of Michael. Weaker responses revealed a lack of understanding of the purpose of epic techniques with some students tying themselves in knots in an attempt to ensure that because 'Brecht didn't like emotion' that the audience wouldn't become involved in the relationship. Consequently, speaking the stage directions, adopting completely inappropriate 'gestus' (again rarely understood) or wearing and swapping the ubiquitous placards served to do little more than show a lack of understanding of both character and Brecht.

Some students claimed, erroneously, that Simon was intended to symbolise 'Hitler Youth' and therefore to be a focus of opprobrium throughout the play.

A few students seemed to misunderstand Simon's intentions in the final scene or failed to recognise Azdak's role in the final outcome. Many seemed to think that Azdak was from the upper classes.

As with Q 09, references to social, cultural and/or historical context ranged from lengthy, generic descriptions of Brechtian theory, life and works to only the briefest of mentions of alienation or v-effekt. Few made apposite points about Brechtian acting techniques in relation to the way in which preferred effects would be achieved.

Fo: *Accidental Death of an Anarchist***Question: 11**

A number of students attempted this question; almost exclusively adopting a director's perspective.

This play's social, cultural and historical context afforded much opportunity for useful discussion. Most students were able to explain the impact of *Commedia* on Fo's ideas and the importance of improvisation and direct engagement with the audience to the style of theatre which he employed.

Some had researched the death of Giuseppe Pinelli and the fierce antagonism between the left and right wing political parties in Italy at the time of writing which lies behind the play.

This information was often used to inform an interpretation to appeal to the 21st century audience. Perceptive students distilled the essence of the play's message about institutionalised corruption, to unearth the universal themes at its heart. Those who wrote of the corruption embedded within the establishment tended to be able to develop a coherent directorial over-view.

The question gave students the option of answering as either a director or as a designer. Those who answered as directors tended to focus more effectively on comedy. There were some lovely ideas for casting contrasting archetypes and for achieving highly stylised acting. Some students really understood the concept of embodying an attitude, as opposed to presenting three-dimensional truth. Slapstick comedy featured widely. One or two weaker direction students did get rather bogged down in the unravelling of the somewhat complex plot, but generally the focus on comedy was maintained and their answers were generally practical.

Less successful were students who answered from a design perspective. There were clear references to character, but costume and make up ideas were just not very funny. One might have thought that the Maniac would have been an obvious choice of character, but many students chose to write instead about the police officers. Attempts to make uniforms and suits amusing were very rarely successful.

One imaginative candidate suggested that Feletti could be played by a man. She also had some super ideas for costume. She suggested that the actor could be bearded with hairy legs and a bouffant blond wig and that fake breasts could be slung round the actor's neck and worn outside outer garments in an amusing attempt to demonstrate the way in which none of the characters in the play are quite what they seem, but none make any real effort to conceal their true identities.

Question: 12

There were many candidates who spent an unwise amount of time explaining the details of the traditional role in commedia upon which *The Superintendent* is based.

Students should be reminded that they are only ever writing for a modern audience. It simply does not make sense to comment, "I would exaggerate my performance so that the audience would be able to identify the familiar features of *Brighella*".

Instead, students need to analyse what it is that *The Superintendent* has to teach a modern audience. One successful student summed this up as being, "A demonstration of the irrepressible stupidity which inflates the chest of the self-important". Most candidates were able to explain that *The Superintendent* embodies institutionalised corruption.

In terms of intended effect, there were a number of possibilities identified. Comedy was most often mentioned, but some students mentioned that they would want the audience to be terrified by *The Superintendent* because he appears to so effortlessly dupe those around him. Only one or two mentioned that his secret fascist leanings would provoke disgust.

A disappointing number of students did not really explain how the performer might use specific skills in order to evoke the stated intended effects. It seemed that some students simply did not know how to write effectively about acting, especially in terms of the application of comic method. There were far too many references to 'open body language', 'medium pace' and 'wide gait' and far too few references to comic timing or to responding, physically and facially, to the unfolding mayhem that occurs in this play.

Most students chose to write about Act 1, Scene 2 and Act 2, Scene 1. A handful wrote about only one scene.

Butterworth: *Jerusalem***Question: 13**

What was noticeable about this question was the zest with which it was answered. It was obvious that students who had studied the play were able to respond to its messages on a personal level and that they understood the issues at its heart.

There were some unnecessarily long preambles which explained in detail the circumstances behind the play's inception. These rarely added anything in the way of marks and had clearly eaten into the time available. Most students were able to explain that the play is not entirely Naturalistic and that, although there is truth in the characterisation, there is a layer of symbolism which Butterworth has carefully crafted.

Johnny's territory was interpreted variously as a place of self-indulgence and excess; a place of squalor and decay and a place of anarchic liberation. One of the more sophisticated answers suggested that, for Johnny's loosely structured gang, the clearing in the woods represented a place of reverence and sanctity. This student went on to suggest that in certain scenes Johnny's role could take on a quasi-religious quality. She explained that he could distribute drugs in the manner of a priest dispensing communion and that there could be a ritualistic quality to the exchanges. The idea of a Christ-like self-sacrifice was also explored in this answer.

In terms of set design, there were some very interesting variations on a caravan theme, but references to the furniture, which was strewn about the copse, were sometimes too generalised. It was difficult to determine, in some cases, just how 'real' the set was intended to look. There were lots of references to trees, but in few instances were there clear explanations of painted flats, real trees in pots or stylised metal or wooden structures.

Candidates were much more confident when writing about hand held props such as telephones and eviction notices.

Very few candidates chose to focus on costume design or on technical elements although the question allowed for any aspect of theatre design often singly or in combination. The play lends itself to some exciting costume possibilities and some candidates did succeed in evoking both period and relative status within the group through imaginative costume design.

Weaker answers failed to develop changes in the second section chosen or did not think to shift to a different design area to exploit the opportunities offered by their choice.

Good answers embedded their understanding of context and the political message of the play in their answers.

Question: 14

There were several responses to this question which was by far the more popular on this text. The majority showed a secure understanding of Ginger's status and his relationships. There was useful discussion of his insecurity but desire to impress, and of his rather immature hero worship of Johnny. Good answers highlighted different aspects of his character in his interactions with a range of other characters.

Some responses spent too much time discussing the social and historical context of the play at the expense of discussing performance skills. There was some lengthy, informed but discursive, reflection on rural Wiltshire and Ginger's social status, but this was not always usefully linked to practical realisation.

Some weaker answers failed to discuss interaction with different characters, as stipulated in the question, but focused only on interactions with Johnny. This had a significant impact on the number of marks they were able to accrue. Others wrote about more than two separate sections of the play thereby wasting both time and space as these additional sections could not attract credit.

Ginger had clearly captured the imaginations, and in some cases the hearts, of the students who wrote about him. Most answers included a clear explanation of the socio-economic conditions which spawned a generation of ‘Gingers’. Where students did write about ‘different characters’ they tended to include Ginger’s interaction either with Lee or the Professor in Act One. The intended effects here ranged from irritation that a grown man could behave in such a clinging, immature manner to pathos.

Many students noted that there is something appealingly vulnerable about Ginger at this point in the play and suggested that his desperate need to belong helps to make him a character with whom the audience can sympathise.

A small number of very successful students wrote about Ginger’s interaction with the professor. One in particular spotted that in the line “I don’t see how we’re going to meet our quotas...”, Ginger is genuinely funny. The student suggested that this line affords us a rare glimpse into the Ginger who might have been had he not succumbed to the drugs and the drink and the encroaching indolence. She suggested that this is one moment in the play when we laugh with Ginger because he is deliberately trying to be funny. “Most of the time we laugh at Ginger’s feeble attempts at significance. At this point in the play, however, we begin to understand why Johnny has, for so long, tolerated Ginger’s presence at his table”.

There were some sophisticated discussions of Ginger’s betrayal and students were quick to find the religious parallels. The suggested intended audience response here was overwhelmingly revulsion. Most students stated that at this point they wanted to create the effect of a man who has reached ‘rock bottom’ in terms of moral fibre.

Surprisingly, many students wrote about the ending of Act 3 as if it is Johnny who is betraying Ginger’s loyalty and seemed either to forget, or not to have noticed, Ginger’s cowardly retreat from the scene, when he hears Johnny being beaten up by Troy’s men.

Section B – 20th and 21st Century Drama

The questions set in Section B follow the same pattern for each play, in that they include one question which is to be answered from the perspective of a director, one from a performer’s perspective and one from a designer’s perspective.

Students are advised to use the play extract that appears in the Insert to the Question Paper to refer to when writing their responses in order to avoid the disastrous mistake of writing about the wrong extract in the exam. This error was seen again this year and appeared to be most prevalent in answers to *Metamorphosis*, *Cloud Nine* and *Yerma*. Some students also wrote about earlier sections from the First Rehearsal than appears in the printed extract from *Our Country’s Good*.

It is very important to note that each question has a very specific focus, often with precise line references given to guide the students and that material that falls outside of the question focus, or outside the prescribed lines in individual questions, will not attract any credit.

Students who quoted line numbers in their answers rather than quoting phrases from the text penalised themselves by offering answers that lacked immediacy, as it was not always possible for the marker to follow the unfolding scene or section under discussion.

Hundreds of students wasted valuable time including, in their answers to Question 1, staging ideas for the whole extract and sometimes for the whole play, at the expense of dealing with the precise focus of the question.

In order to achieve marks in the upper bands, students have to make reference to the social, cultural and/or historical context of the play in **each** of their to the three questions on each text.

These references should not be an identical paragraph in each answer and should be pithy and relevant.

A significant number of students, inexplicably, prefaced their answers to Questions 1, 2 and 3 with up to a page of material simply labelled with the number associated with their chosen play. For example, the student would write 18 in the margin and write a paragraph or so of general staging ideas and/or contextual information, and *then* they would write 18.1, 18.2, 18.3 in the margin and begin to answer the focus of each of the specific questions against these 'numbers'.

It was not possible to credit the material written against, for example, '18' unless it was addressing one of the questions directly.

Students should be reminded that Section B carries the most marks of all of the Sections and should be accorded due attention and a portion of the three hours allowed, overall, commensurate with its relative value.

Lorca: *Yerma*

Question: 15.1

Better answers showed an understanding of the social, cultural and/or historical context setting and used this understanding to inform the tension created in the scene. The question refers to emotional tension, but many students interpreted this as 'sexual' tension or 'chemistry' and this often rendered their answers inappropriate.

Most students seemed to understand the situation that Yerma and Victor are in (although some confused Victor and Juan which led to some weak responses). Most answers showed an awareness of the impact of Juan's entrance, but few mentioned either the presence of the Second Girl when Victor arrives or the insidious presence of the Second Sister-in Law, before Juan enters.

Some students offered direction that had Yerma and Victor in a passionate embrace or touching one another in an intimate way, which was completely inappropriate for both context and situation.

Question: 15.2

There was a wide variety of interpretations of Juan's character, from a self-centred businessman to a husband involved in a game of one-upmanship with Victor, mainly about sheep. The better answers showed an understanding of his reliance on material things (including his 'possession' of Yerma) and his role in Victor leaving.

The preferred responses identified here varied between one which felt that the audience should feel sorry for Juan because he knew that Yerma loved Victor and a second which felt that the audience should be irritated with Juan because he cared more about his farm than he did about his wife.

The directions given were generally apt and revealed a reasonable understanding of this character. Surprisingly, many answers didn't use the text well for such a short appearance.

Question: 15.3

As with many of Section B question 3 answers, students did little more than follow the stage directions.

This question was not answered well and, in some cases, was not answered at all, presumably due to time pressures.

Lighting ideas offered were a little more appropriate than those for sound, but few students seemed to be completely aware of where the scene is set. Along with appropriate sounds such as sheep bells in the distance there were many suggestions of birds singing and of a river running through the space which ignores the fact that the scene takes place in Yerma's house.

Similarly, lighting ideas offered gave suggestions of the time of day which varied from daybreak to dusk or had a 'bright orange light' to show the sunlight. Very little reference was made to an 'appropriate mood and atmosphere' for this point in the play.

Weaker answers suggested one lighting state of red/orange to show the heat of Andalucía and one sound effect of sheep. There was little understanding of the subtle changes possible for both lighting and sound in the extract and their role in supporting and enhancing the action and emotional undercurrent.

Williams: *The Glass Menagerie***Question: 16.1**

The weakness in many of these answers was the lack of awareness of Laura's 'growing panic'. Many students wrote about her being in such a heightened state of panic from the beginning of the extract that there was nowhere they could go with their directions to show her panic intensifying. Some focused more on Amanda than Laura and, although Amanda's actions and responses help add to Laura's feelings of panic, the focus needed to be on Laura herself most of the time. Perceptive answers dealt with small gestures initially which grew increasingly nervous and more agitated vocal tones as the extract went on showing the panic 'growing' in Laura.

Question: 16.2

This was dealt with fairly successfully although some students had Jim being over-familiar with Laura on his arrival which showed a lack of awareness of the social and historical contexts. Some only dealt with the section with Tom on the fire escape while others only dealt with his entrance and interaction with Laura. Stronger answers were those which showed him as a fairly naïve young man, despite his confidence in himself, who was unaware of the effect his arrival at the apartment had on Laura.

Question: 16.3

This question was not really done well. There are many stage directions in the extract for sound and for projections and many students basically listed those. There was usually an imbalance in the responses which focused on either lighting or sound or projections rather than the required focus on lighting **and** sound **or** lighting **and** projection. Some lighting ideas were impractical – a spotlight on Laura so that her panic was highlighted but with no reference to any other lighting for the scene, or constantly changing coloured lights to highlight her panic which was inconsistent with the style of the play.

Some better answers offered ideas for soft-focused lighting to fit with the 'memory play' and one student suggested intensifying the lighting for the later section when Tom was present as his memory would be stronger for that part than for the initial scene before his arrival.

Ideas for projections were frequently unimaginative.

Berkoff: *Metamorphosis*

This was a popular choice which generated a wide range of responses. Good answers showed a secure understanding of Berkoff and of the play, but disappointingly, several answers demonstrated only a superficial knowledge and understanding.

In terms of social, cultural and/or historical context, several candidates seemed confused about the relationship between Kafka's work and Berkoff's. There were frequent mistakes made with reference to dates and some generalisation regarding the influence of Berkoff's background and its impact.

A few candidates suggested that he was a victim of the Nazi regime.

Question: 17.1

Where candidates had secure knowledge of Berkoff's methodology this question attracted very successful answers. There were some detailed responses, showing knowledge of Berkoff's use of Total Theatre elements and demonstrating both the contrasts between Gregor and his family with security.

Good answers employed a range of strategies and applied these effectively. There was especially good reference to Berkoff's use of distortion and the grotesque, and contrapuntal speaking. Better answers made very clear and explicit reference to his methods; less secure answers were less precise and made more general references to acting style.

Weaker answers explored only one or two of Berkoff's methods, generally synchronised movement and rhythm, and spent some time discussing his use of make-up and mono-chromatic costume, with sometimes tenuous links to the question. These answers frequently spent much of the answer exploring lines 7-20, the sequence with the potato, to the detriment of the rest of the section. Little credit could be awarded to students who merely copied out Berkoff's stage directions for the miming of the potato.

There was some unsupported assertion with reference to the impact of Total Theatre. Particularly disappointing were answers where Berkoff's methods had been confused with those of Brecht, most frequently in use of direct address.

Some students wrote more about Brecht, Artaud and/or Le Coq than they did about Berkoff's 'intended style of acting'.

Question: 17.2

Good answers showed a very good understanding of the role of Mrs Samsa and her ambivalent feelings about Gregor.

Better answers explored the range of the extract, giving the answers scope for realising the contrasting aspects of her performance. Less successful answers focused on either the beginning or concluding sections of the extract.

Good answers applied Berkoff's acting style with discrimination, particularly with reference to her fear of Gregor despite her care for him, for example when she whispers, "Did you hear that?"

These answers often showed how the dominance of Mr Samsa causes her to disguise her emotions, creating more impact when she stands up for Gregor.

Good answers explored the differences between memory and reality and showed, through Mrs Samsa's heightened performance, how her memories may be unrealistic.

Weaker responses only considered a limited portion of the extract, which restricted the effectiveness of their answers. There was also a surprising appearance of an actual table for Mrs Samsa to lean on in answers to this question, despite miming of plates and cutlery in Q.1.

Question: 17.3

Unfortunately, there were only a few very secure answers to this part of the question.

A few good answers showed clear and detailed realisation of the use of technical elements most of which very clearly realised the tension between past and present. These answers took the stage directions into account and developed them, for example developing the Christmas atmosphere with the use of specifically identified 'Christmas music' and twinkling lights.

Weaker answers showed only a restricted understanding of how technical elements supported Total Theatre and there was evidence of lack of practical understanding. For example, there was reference to red and green lights, but not where they were projected, or what the specific effects would be. A few students showed secure knowledge of technical terminology, but there was quite frequent misuse of terms, particularly "gobo" and "cyclorama". There were some references to use of sound, but only a few good answers developed ideas in further detail than the stage directions. Some of these answers took scant consideration of the stage directions.

Tension was referenced, but in only a few cases was this clearly realised in relation to the 'tension between the past and the present' and only a few good students showed understanding of how technical elements could make a significant contribution to Total Theatre.

There were a few useful suggestions for the use of sound, particularly a metronome and an increasingly discordant sound-track of violin music, but again, opportunities were missed and there was only limited attention given to the stage directions.

Wertenbaker: *Our Country's Good*

As with previous series, there was over-emphasis on "the redemptive power of theatre" in some responses. There is some evidence of this in the extract, but it is still at an early stage of the convicts' and Ralph's development. Some candidates referred to the play as "Brechtian". Although there are clear elements of epic theatre, the style and content of the text are Wertenbaker's and qualitatively different.

Several candidates offered very lengthy descriptions of Thatcher's politics and the impact on theatre in the 1980s, but with limited impact on the interpretation of the questions.

Question: 18.1

Most answers showed an appreciation of how and why Ross causes fear amongst the convicts, and some sensitive work was seen. Rather too many students, having covered a page of their answer books with learnt material about Mrs Thatcher and her attitudes towards both the arts and overcrowded prisons had left insufficient time to consider little more than his entrance.

Others talked about general cowering and head-bowing or relied on the slinking and sinking suggested in the text. A good number of answers mentioned the convicts moving 'backstage',

'edge-stage' (sic) or just had them spread out. Better answers moved onto individual reactions from Caesar, Wisehammer and Liz and the other convicts' reactions to Ross berating them.

Weaker answers discussed Ralph's fear of Ross, which is not the focus of the question. A few candidates offered simplistic direction which showed insecure understanding, such as having all the convicts "burst into tears"; unlikely in their circumstances.

Question: 18.2

Good answers focused on the question and demonstrated an understanding of Ralph's softening attitude, which nevertheless remains tentative at this stage of the play. It is unlikely that Ralph would touch the convicts or manoeuvre them into position in this first rehearsal.

Good responses offered exchanges with both Liz and Duckling and indicated some differences between his approach to the two women. A few candidates did not engage with Duckling at all so offered only partial answers.

Some answers focused on Ralph's attitude to Mary, which is not part of the question. At this stage they are not "in a relationship" so the suggestion by some candidates that this is responsible for his changing attitude was incorrect.

Question: 18.3

Most answers provided some design ideas, but for the play as a whole, rather than with a specific focus on the extract, as required by the precise wording of the question. Some students provided sketches, which weren't always helpful, showing a lack of understanding of stage space and actor-audience configuration.

Examiners reported seeing a, by now, familiar array of set dressings. These included, sails acting as tents; a suggestion that appears to assume that the ship that the officers and convicts arrived in was wrecked and then pillaged. There were also barrels and crates and gallows (which the text makes clear have not been built). Many students offered sketches to show the dubious arrangement of having raised areas for the exclusive use of officers and lower areas for convicts. Better answers thought about how and when raised platforms and barrels/crates might be used to accommodate the action in the extract.

A few answers showed only restricted understanding of the historical context of the play and/or offered very generalised designs for the play which had little or no relevance to the extract,

Churchill: *Cloud Nine*

Students who responded to this question generally showed a secure understanding of Churchill's style and were aware of her political purpose. Given this, some answers were disappointingly pantomimic and lacking subtlety. The text is comic, but at times Churchill's intentions were obscured by poorly considered slapstick and low-brow sexual humour.

There is great potential in the play and the extract to exploit social, cultural and/or historical context to good effect, which better answers did. These answers made reference to the aspects of colonial society that Churchill is satirising. Weaker answers made very generalised references to the historical period, often with little or no reference to its impact on the extract.

It was disappointing to note that several candidates did not focus on the specified extract, but started their answers at the beginning of the play, including suggestions which attracted no credit.

Question: 19.1

There was some casting offered for both Betty and Clive although this was not an aspect required by the question. As stated above, there was a tendency for ideas to lack subtlety, at the expense of the text. For example, several answers focused on Betty's "hairy legs", without fully considering the **performance** elements demanded by the question which would contribute to the parody of the gender stereotypes.

Some candidates recognised the stereotypical setting and content and understood the roles and responsibilities of the characters represented by Clive and Betty.

Weaker responses failed to recognise context, particularly that Clive has just returned from riding in the bush and how this would affect his appearance. There were a few good presentations of Betty's over-exaggerated femininity, but many answers focused exclusively on the actor's **failure** to appear female, making the interpretations quite crude and inappropriate to realising Churchill's feminist message. It is also worth considering how hairy legs were to be seen when attired in Victorian costume?

Most answers attempted a comic direction, with degrees of success. Good answers explored comic business and timing with some subtlety. There was some useful detail regarding Betty's response to Harry's name, linking this to the full text.

In a few good answers there were also some clearly comic moments in the discussion of Betty's mother, showing good delivery and facial expression which showed an understanding of attitude and sub-text.

The section in which Betty attempts to dismiss Clive's suggestion that Harry is her admirer, was the most successfully handled section of the text.

Weaker answers showed no subtlety and a few over emphasised the sexual themes within the play, inappropriately in this context and in relation to these characters at *this* part of the play.

Question: 19.2

There were some appropriate responses to this question, showing an awareness of Joshua's ethnicity, indicated through accent and movement.

Good answers showed awareness of the political messages in the performance and the contradiction between Joshua's superficial appearance and his true character. In particular in his relationships with both Betty and Clive good answers showed, through performance suggestions, how these relationships were demonstrated. For example, Joshua's affected admiration for Clive was shown through sustained eye-contact, while he did not deign to look directly at Betty. After Clive's wink at Joshua, when Joshua 'goes', some students invented a smug look which Clive could not see.

Better answers offered appropriate performance suggestions, emphasising the duplicity and hypocrisy of the relationships.

Weaker answers offered inappropriate ideas, for example directing Joshua to be explicitly contemptuous of Betty, or physically making contact with her to show his contempt, for example ruffling her hair when he says she "misunderstood". Similarly, there was a lack of subtlety in some suggestions of interaction with Clive. As part of the message of the play is the hypocrisy of the relationships, Joshua would not "grab Clive's bum" on his exit. In general, the answers seen were disappointingly simplistic and inappropriate.

Question: 19.3

As with other responses on this play, there were a few good answers but overall the answers were disappointing.

Most candidates offered sketches, generally better on costume than set, but not always clearly relevant to the play “at this point in the action”.

Costuming for Betty was more secure over all, showing some understanding of period and her overtly feminine character. Costuming for Clive was less secure, and none of the answers seen made any reference to his “long ride in the bush”. Most gave quite generalised detail of contemporary male costume but showed little consideration of context. For example, Clive would not be wearing a top hat at home on the veranda.

There were a number of inappropriate suggestions for Joshua, not recognising his role as a colonial house servant, but dressing him in rags because of his “lower status”. Opportunities were missed to show how design can support the meaning in performance. His role as a status symbol within this culture and his relationships were not recognised in his lack of livery.

Set designs were more secure and in some there was evidence of period detail and a sense of the colonial setting, including animal trophies, details of the veranda and in a few cases design fundamentals in terms of colour, texture and material. Most answers focused on the design as a whole, with a few good answers responding to “at this point” by indicating the design details of the veranda and the bush beyond.

Teale: *Brontë*

There were a number of excellent answers to this question. The majority of candidates were very clear as to the social, cultural and/or historical context of the play and had clearly researched the Brontës and responded positively to Polly Teale’s interpretation.

There was good understanding of the social mores of the time and this informed the responses. Generally, there was secure understanding of the style of the play which was evident in the performance and directorial suggestion.

Question: 20.1

There was very clear understanding of the different responses of the sisters to the reactions to their books, often underpinned by evidence with reference to aspects of social and historical context. There was some difference in the interpretations, particularly of Charlotte and the extent to which she is “pleased”, “bemused” or “quietly arrogant” at her success.

Good answers showed the differing characteristics of the sisters clearly with support from the text. Again, there was some variation in interpretation but generally Anne’s role as mediator and Emily’s disparaging rejection of criticism were very well realised. Vocal and physical qualities were referenced in detail, with particularly good examples of Charlotte’s more restrained and conventional attitude.

There were some excellent references to the use of the letters as props, indicating the sisters’ reactions quite subtly through “casting down”, “clutching” and “screwing into a ball”.

A few answers did not register the specific line references for this question, and offered suggestions for the end of the extract, which attracted no credit. Nor did all students notice that the first section takes place ‘in the bedroom’.

Question 20.2

Successful answers to this question considered Branwell's performance in both his appearances in this extract, offering the opportunity to create very different aspects of his character and highlight different audience responses.

Many answers showed an understanding of Branwell's situation and the expectations that would have been placed on him within the social context. There were some excellent answers which detailed his drunken behaviour at the start of the extract, showing clearly his lack of control and instability. In particular, his interaction with Anne, the sub text of that exchange, and the fright and disgust generated was well detailed and often very sensitively handled.

Similarly, his unstable moods in the second part of the extract were often well detailed and generally well contextualised. His mood swings from embarrassed supplication to arrogant demands were well realised, with appropriate audience responses varying from disgust to pity.

Some students failed to notice that his two appearances occur 'nine months' apart and had him behaving as if he was either a little drunker, or a little more sober, in his second appearance.

Branwell's relationship with his sisters at this point received good attention. Slightly less clear was his relationship and response to Patrick. Nevertheless, a good number of full and detailed responses were seen.

Question: 20.3

Some of the responses to this section of the question were excellent, but over all, this was the least successful element of the question.

In particular, the changes in Branwell's costume were not always noted. Some answers did not pick up the stage direction that he appears "half dressed" in the second part of the extract. There were some general descriptions of typical costume of the time, but, for example, it would be inappropriate for Branwell to be wearing riding breeches or a top hat indoors.

Good answers showed an understanding of the play as a whole, and made reference to Branwell's ambitions, resulting in his fashionable dress and his discussion of tail coats. The distress of his garments was often well described, with suitable ideas for colour and fabric. A few candidates felt that the rise in cotton production would result in cotton trousers, unlikely in the 'Wuthering' of the Brontë's parsonage.

Branwell's links to Bertha's character were often well established through design, often through reflected colours or fabrics. Bertha's wild and passionate character was well established through her (often) ripped and revealing costume, with her former status being indicated through use of fabric.

Very good answers made connections between the demands of her movement in the extract and the need for freedom in her costume. There were some good ideas for the use of symbolism, particularly using her exposed corset as an indication of restraint, but a few ideas needed further development and justification to realise their intentions and possibly a bit more consideration of effect. For example, the audience would probably not recognise that her dress was dyed in cranberry juice "to show her elemental connection to nature".

Sketches were mainly clear, showing indication of social and historical context and the majority were very usefully labelled. Some were very crudely drawn and suggested no practice at sketching costumes had been attempted over the two year course.

Section C

Section C always requires precise focus on the demands of the question. Questions in this section focus upon what directors, performers and designers wish to communicate through their work and how the audience experience and respond to their work

At this level it is to be expected that students know the difference between moods, attitudes, character and emotion – these are aspects that performers convey on stage in performance – and they are aspects that questions on live productions have always focused on – they are not interchangeable, and students must be able to recognise and differentiate between them or risk failing to answer the question appropriately.

It was disappointing in this section to read answers where candidates had learned tracts of programme notes by rote, which they were unable to usefully apply to the questions as asked.

Many mid to low range answers spent considerable time in summary, rather than explaining why they had chosen the particular production and its relevance to the question. Better answers made clear reference to the question demands, generally in the opening paragraph of the answers, clearly indicating the reasons for their choices.

Some students elected to write about productions whose qualities and style were better suited to other questions. Good answers gave very clear statements about the production team's intentions and illustrated both intentions and style through their answers.

In some answers there was a misunderstanding of "personal response" with some unlikely reactions such as "I wanted to rush on-stage and give him a big hug" or "The audience and I hated him and could have killed him in that moment", as opposed to giving a more analytical response to the skills or qualities expected in answer to the question.

Question: 21

A few answers were seen on this question. Good answers selected appropriate productions where the lighting and set had worked together.

Some answers discussed lighting and some set but very rarely was there a sense of lighting and set 'together'.

One answer on 'The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk' gave an excellent sense of the lighting and of the atmosphere created but stated that the stage was 'bare' and thus offered no sense of any set. Other students writing about the same production managed to offer some clear examples of set and combine this with the lighting ideas. Some students thought that they should include sound and gave details of that, often at the expense of one of the selected elements upon which the question was focused.

Good answers were always supported by clear sketches so that it was easy for the examiner to envisage the traffic of the production and the effects created by set and lighting. Some good work was seen on *The Woman in Black*, with detailed description of how aspects of the set were illuminated to create specific effects of tension and fear.

Similarly, some strong answers on *The Tin Drum* clearly demonstrated how the levels and stairs in the set were lit to create a distrust of hierarchy, with sinister characters backlit and sharp spotlights being used on the powerful dictator figure. Good answers also considered how lighting could create shadow and silhouette to create mood and atmosphere, for example the use of up-lighting to create sinister effect in *The Threepenny Opera*.

Weaker answers described lighting and set but failed to put the particular production moments into context, limiting the realisation of atmosphere and restricting focus on the production team's intentions.

A few students chose to write about productions with very complex lighting and setting. These answers were sometimes unsuccessful as students found the elements difficult to explain in the time given. An example of this is *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, where some students struggled to explain the grid lighting states and how aspects of lighting were integral to the set. Conversely, a few students chose productions, usually naturalistic performances, where the lighting effects were understated and offered few opportunities to address the question in detail.

Question: 22

There were a few responses to this question.

There were some good answers to this question, the best supported by clear sketches which helped the examiner envisage the actors' performance space.

Good answers gave clear indication of the staging configuration and how this supported the production team's aims and the actors' performances. There was some good work reflecting on the Young Vic's production of *Yerma*, and how the use of traverse staging gave a voyeuristic atmosphere which contributed to the dramatic effectiveness of the piece.

Another successful example was from the *Testimony of Lil Bilocca* where a promenade, site-specific performance used a variety of locations to enhance the actors' use of space. For example, in one scene a boardroom was used for a public meeting, which initially showed the formality of the situation but was used to show the exasperation of the characters as they became more frustrated with the lack of political action but were confined by the formal space, showing this through banging on chairs and leaping on the conference table.

In a very different example, *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk* was effectively used to show how the actors used space to demonstrate emotion in a non-naturalistic way, as Chagall and his wife demonstrate their attraction through use of space, swinging together using ropes to show their relationship.

'Staging configuration' appeared to defeat some of the students who chose this question and as the question also included a phrase about the 'actors' use of space' they sometimes wrote an answer that dealt with performers' skills rather than on staging and use of space

A few responses failed to recognise the design aspects of the question and offered quite generalised accounts of direction with no clear reference to performance space.

Question: 23

This was not a frequently answered question but was often very successfully addressed. Good answers gave very detailed description of how the ensemble applied their skills and there was some excellent detail of choreographed movements.

Good answers were able to state the effects of the ensemble performance with focused analysis, for example discussing how the ensemble in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* added to Christopher's sense of panic and confusion, contrasting his erratic movement with the smooth and directed moves of the ensemble.

Other candidates commented on how the ensemble contributed to atmosphere and emotion, for example the use of the ensemble to create Emma's breakdown in *People, Places and Things*, and the foreboding created by the ensemble as Jane struggles to leave Thornfield Hall in *Jane Eyre*. These answers showed a very secure understanding of purpose and style, linked to total dramatic effectiveness.

Weaker answers failed to give sufficiently detailed description of how the ensemble performed, and these answers often neglected to state the purpose of the ensemble work, limiting the success of the answers in AO3. Some candidates devoted considerable attention to less significant moments of the performance which did not demonstrate the use of ensemble to its best effect, or this was not realised in analysis.

'Ensemble' was seen by many as just meaning more than one actor on stage so they offered a description of their onstage action. There was very little sense of any 'ensemble' work in these responses. Some saw 'ensemble' as meaning 'chorus' and gave examples of lines said in unison as being 'ensemble work'. While choral speaking may well be an element of ensemble work, there needed to be further development in these answers.

A few candidates did not fully understand the demands of the question and simply wrote about actors working together, rather than as an ensemble. Some candidates wrote about *Lovesong*, and although there were a few good answers which understood the choreography demanded by ensemble, some answers concentrated on individual physical skill, to the detriment of their response.

Question: 24

This was by far the most popular question on the paper but was not always the most successful, as several candidates misunderstood "to convey (the performers') characters" and focussed on emotion or the characters' situation in terms of the narrative.

Good responses selected performances which developed clear, if sometimes complex, characters and there was good work seen on *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *People, Places and Things*, to name but two productions. Some candidates chose productions that related less well to the question, for example Gecko's *The Wedding* where there was regularly good description of the performers' skills, but several answers described the function and symbolism of the roles rather than exploring the characters.

Many students wrote about the conveying of emotion (a question that appeared on the specimen paper) rather than the conveying of 'character'.

The anguish of the father in *Things I Know To Be True* was a frequent subject for this question but most students stopped at his emotion and how the actor conveyed it without developing this into how this showed the type of character he was.

Several answers were linked to *The Woman in Black* and some of these were reasonably successful in explaining how the performers had established and conveyed their characters. However, these also had a tendency to drift into focus on emotion, largely centred around the rescue of the mimed dog, Spider.

An occasional response, after a lengthy account of portraying emotion, would manage to link this to the question by saying 'this showed her to be a naïve and innocent character' or a similar statement which meant that the skills they had discussed became more relevant to the question, as asked.

Nevertheless, there were some very successful answers to this question and some sophisticated answers which explored how physical theatre was used to convey character, with good examples of ensemble and physical work being given from *Jane Eyre* and *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk*. These answers showed a very secure understanding of style and of the demands on the actors' skills.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

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