



A-LEVEL

DRAMA AND THEATRE

7262/W: Drama and Theatre
Report on the Examination

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General

The 'new' Drama and Theatre A Level specification is in its second year and examiners reported seeing many students' scripts that indicated secure understanding of the precise demands of Sections A, B and Section C of this paper.

As always the range in the quality in students' responses was considerable although there were fewer reports from examiners of students not understanding the significance of timing their work on each section appropriately to reflect the importance of writing three decent length answers in Section B of the paper. Nevertheless, some students did devote less than a page to each of the three parts of the Section B questions which considerably impacted upon their potential achievement.

Teachers are to be commended for ensuring that their students were fully *au fait* with the requirements of the questions in each section, although, some students appeared to be confused about the difference between the requirements in Sections A and B to refer to the social, cultural or historical context of the chosen text and the requirement in Section C to comment on the total dramatic effectiveness of the chosen production. Confusion like this sometimes had a negative impact on overall achievement.

Indeed, the single factor that led to students' under-achievement was their inclusion of material not directly relevant to the question. Each of the Sections was affected by this error; whether a student included detailed casting and costume ideas for Thea Elvsted that had no capacity for revealing her feelings for Eilert Loevborg or they discussed the miseries endured by the convicts during the 'Voyage Out' that were not relevant to the published extract and its questions or they wrote exclusively about sound and lighting in answer to the question on set design in Section C.

Students have generally responded well to the requirement to include social, cultural and/or historical context in their answers to Sections A and to all three answers in Section B.

In some answers, however, students wrote at greater length than is required and/or punctuated their whole answer with reference to, for example, the general mores of the society that is depicted in the chosen play. This approach is counter-productive as it prevents students from developing their responses to the precise demands of the question.

Often the SCH information that a student was attempting to assimilate into their answers had no direct bearing on the set task. Some students resorted to including biographical details about the playwright – especially prevalent in relation to Berkoff and Lorca - although Ibsen and Goldoni also featured prominently.

It is also worth noting that some students included inaccurate information under the guise of SCH, and in some instances confused the SCH that they had used for the play studied in Section A with what they had used for the play studied in Section B.

As mentioned in last year's report, examiners will not credit the same points twice; so, if students wrote extensive conclusions to their essays, which did no more than reiterate points already made in the body of their answer, no further credit would be achieved.

Students who offered a brief, useful context to the action that they are discussing in Sections A and B often fared the best in terms of introducing their answers to specific tasks. For example: 'Thea has come to seek the help of George Tesman discover the whereabouts of Eilert Loevborg'.

‘The debate amongst the officers about the potential value of the play has come to a head’.

The plot of the play up to the point of the chosen section or published extract is **not** required.

As reported upon last year, a number of students failed to use time as effectively as possible 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, some students used inappropriate or colloquial expression in their answers and there was restricted use of ‘text in action’ in both Sections A and B.

Some students appeared unfamiliar with specialist terminology. Some basic theatre terminology was misunderstood, for example, examiners reported the following: back stage and front stage for upstage and down stage, stage left and right the wrong way round, stage aprons called ‘the bit at the front that sticks out’, block with wheels (truck), turntable (revolve), cotton sheets (backdrops, gauzes), the ceiling (flies), parcans with shutters and barn doors, Fresnel with gobos, in-the-round configurations with cycloramas and projection screens, set and costume designs with few or no references to design fundamentals.

Although possibly not quite as pervasive as last year, students continued to reveal an insecure understanding of the term ‘gait’; which many used, incorrectly, as if interchangeable with ‘stance’ or ‘posture’. Many students wrote about ‘standing in a low gait’ (or a high one) for example.

Students also failed to attain marks where they identified ‘proxemics’ as a performance skill. As it is not a performance skill, to claim that ‘I would use my proxemics to reveal my selfless devotion to baby Michael’ is an unclear phrase.

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 error occurred most frequently in relation to *Metamorphosis* but also appeared in answers on *Our Country’s Good* and *Cloud Nine*.

Some students answered the Section B questions on the whole play, rather than on the published extract and this inevitably had the consequence of low scores.

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 but 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. Students select one question from a choice of four. There are always two different questions on ‘production elements’, including directorial decisions as well as design aspects, and two different questions on performance elements.

Students should choose a question that lends itself perfectly to the production that they intend to write about. Ideally, students will have experienced more than one production in their two-year course and will be in a position to select an appropriate production that offers many opportunities to explore in relation to the focus of the question and to offer meaningful illustrations.

Unfortunately, in this series, some students failed to respond to the precise demands of their chosen question in Section C. This may have been because of the limitations of their experiences of live theatre. This inevitably led to disappointing achievements.

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.

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 need 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.

Some students underachieved in this series as a result of insisting on lengthy discussion of a proposed transposition that was either not directly related to the focus of the question or was unconvincingly defended.

Texts where ‘ingenious’ 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*.

Antigone

Question 01

This was one of the most frequently answered questions on the paper, which was almost always answered from a director’s perspective.

There was an understanding of context in the majority of answers.

Some pre-prepared identical introductions added little to the answers.

Less effective answers indicated historical context, but without focus on the question. More effective answers embedded understanding of social, cultural and historical context into their answers, making this relevant to direction or design.

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

More effective answers were focused on the question demands, which required ideas for creating an ‘emotional impact’ for the audience in two separate sections of the play.

Choice of section was absolutely crucial here, as was an understanding of what constitutes an emotional impact – as opposed, for example, to an intellectual appreciation of the central concerns of the play.

Most of the answers were well focused on the question and showed a good understanding of its demands. There were some useful examples of creating emotional impact, focusing, for example on Ismene’s distress at Antigone’s rejection of her, Haemon’s growing anger with Creon, Antigone’s belated understanding of the consequences of her rebellion and Creon’s entrance carrying Haemon’s body. These answers offered detailed strategies for creating their preferred effects and showed clearly the emotions that they were aiming to create.

More successful answers were always rooted in exploring Sophocles’ text and they considered the emotional impact of the words spoken as well as of the images created by, for example, a once proud ruler stooped under the burden of the son whose death he has caused.

Less successful answers were not as secure with the terms of the question, and tended to focus on audience understanding rather than emotion. As last year, some students expressed the impact in imprecise terms such as ‘This would keep the audience awake’, which lacks a sense of ‘impact’.

Some students had chosen to transpose the play to a more contemporary setting. Where this was appropriate to the play as a whole and supported the student’s response, this was appropriate, for example setting the play in the burned out ruins of civil war. Unfortunately, some students did not explain their transpositions sufficiently robustly and this was often the case with costume choices. For example, one student costumed Antigone in shorts and Ismene in a pencil skirt, but made no reference to period setting or why this was appropriate.

Only a very few students chose to address the question as a designer and of those who did, several showed a confident understanding of the staging form they wished to use and good knowledge of classical staging terminology.

It was not a requirement to stage the play using classical conventions and many students availed themselves of the opportunity to use known spaces in contemporary theatres in which to envisage the unfolding action.

Sketches were generally clear and helpfully labelled. More successful answers showed; understanding of the destructive forces in the play and how these could be supported with setting and lighting design, for example during Tiresias’ prophecies to Creon, supporting his words with dramatic and foreboding lighting effects and/or sounds effects, for example, of the beating of wings.

Students were also quite inventive in the way in which they suggested the 'off-stage' violence through the use of bloodied garments and coloured lights.

Occasionally, students invented pre-shows or sequences mimed behind gauzes as a substitute to referring to design for the actual events and text of the set play. While this may be something that a designer in professional theatre has license to do, with the approval of a director, it is a risky strategy for an A Level student whose job is to interpret the play as we have it.

Question 02

This was also a very popular question and was well understood by the majority of students. Although a few students misread the question and discussed the attitudes of the different family members (usually towards the question of burying Polyneices) rather than Antigone's attitudes towards different members of her family.

Some students wrote about Antigone's contrasting attitudes to each of the selected family members, for example loving Ismene but deploring her frailty. Contempt for Creon but also fear of what he might do to her. Love for Polyneices but also frustration at his part in the civil war. Unfortunately, these answers struggled to meet the question requirements.

Most students included Antigone's attitude to Ismene, in their answers and this was effective when explored in detail. More effective answers showed Antigone's love for her sister, but also her disappointment at her refusal to assist her in her plan to bury Polyneices, leading to anger towards her sister and ultimately to her rejection of her.

There were some also insightful responses on Antigone's refusal to let Ismene die with her, showing her conflicting emotions of love, anger and a need to protect her. These answers were often very detailed in terms of performance skills and were frequently supported with extensive textual references.

Well-prepared students noted the demand of the question for **two** sections to be discussed and they chose their sections with care to enable them to show the different attitudes within two sections only. Several students did not notice this demand and they wrote about more than two sections which resulted in the least successful section being discounted by the examiner.

There were some very effective explorations of sections between Antigone and Creon.

There were also some very clear answers which showed Antigone's attitudes to her dead relatives and, again, there were some subtle answers which showed her disappointment with her father and brothers, but her overall commitment and loyalty to her ancestors. These answers included Antigone's apostrophe to Polynices and her wish to be reunited with her family after death. Many students revealed very secure social, cultural and historical knowledge and how this might influence the performance.

More effective answers clearly developed ideas that would create meaning for a 21st century audience while remaining true to Sophocles intentions. Some students, as last year, spent too much time considering the potential responses of the original Greek audience, often comparing and contrasting audience responses, which was not a demand of the question and attracted little or no credit.

Some answers spent too long discussing Sophocles, the festival of Dionysus and the curse of the Labdacus family, without using the information to develop the answer. There was some evident misunderstanding of the drama festival in some answers.

Much Ado about Nothing

Question 03

There were a number of responses to this text, but comparatively few to this question. Those that did offer a response usually selected a director's perspective, with only a handful of students opting to approach it from the perspective of a designer.

The majority of the answers were well focused and wrote about appropriate sections of the play, such as Leonato's welcome of the Prince's party and the revelry of the masked ball.

Many answers focused on the witty exchanges between Benedick and Beatrice, although, in some instances, exploration of this relationship dominated the answers at the expense of creating 'atmosphere'. As last year, a few students did not seem secure in their understanding of this term.

There were some good and detailed answers which explored the excitement of Hero and her Ladies-in-waiting, and how the general rejoicing and high spirits affected Don Pedro and Claudio. There was also some good description of Leonato acting the role of genial host.

Design answers often considered the way in which Leonato has prepared for the returning 'heroes' – his house and garden decked in cheerful fairy lights or bunting, with canopies and balloons for the masked ball.

The majority of students envisaged a large cast to gain an appropriate atmosphere and sufficient couples to create the atmosphere of a bustling ballroom; some suggested staging configurations supported this, including staging in the round to allow for exuberant entrances and exits through the audience.

Sumptuous costumes for the ladies and elaborate masks for all the guests added a touch of festivity to the scene.

There were also some useful and justified transpositions, for example setting the play in the period following the First World War, with Don Pedro and the soldiers arriving back to a village celebration, complete with coloured bunting, fairground stalls and a bandstand with military band. The suggestions for colour in the bunting, the officers dress uniforms, and the holiday clothes of Leonato's household added to the vibrancy of the scene and the setting offered opportunities for the action.

Less effective answers offered less detail so that it was difficult to envisage the ideas, and some lacked appropriate sketches.

The answers showed a good understanding of the social, cultural and or historical context, particularly with reference to the ball, and used this context appropriately.

Question 04

This was by far the more popular question on the text and a range of responses was seen. The majority of students selected to write about Beatrice and Benedick and showed a good understanding of the development of the relationship. Where students stated their intended effects clearly, they had greater success.

There were some more effective answers to the question showing an understanding of the language and offering a range of performance ideas to create meaning for a 21st century audience. A few students had suggested transpositions which were generally appropriate in themselves, but did not add significantly to the performance ideas and had therefore only served to distract the student for a paragraph or two without attracting any credit.

The question is focused on Benedick's 'interaction' with either Beatrice or Claudio. The term, 'interaction', used frequently in this subject for many years, implies both speaking to and listening/responding to what another or other characters say or do. In this question, it is expected that while students will not focus on Claudio's or Beatrice's performance they will focus on Benedick's reactions to what they say or do as this forms part of the 'interaction'.

Answers were less strong when students focused solely on Benedick's delivery of lines.

There was some good suggestion for interaction, including Benedick's delivery of text, particularly when demonstrating the changes in the relationships, for example the softness of tone used to Beatrice following Hero's abortive wedding, contrasting with the pace and sharper 'wit' of their first encounters.

A few students who explored the relationship with Claudio offered some subtle ideas to show Benedick's confused feelings when he challenges Claudio, shifting their relationship from close friends to apparent enemies – all in the name of love.

A few answers did not recognise the type of character that Benedick is within Shakespeare's writing, and the nature of the witty exchanges between himself and Beatrice. Some students saw Benedick as both foolish and childish, and although he is certainly gullible, Beatrice's happiness at being beloved by Benedick at the end of the play is rendered meaningless if he has been depicted throughout as vapid or foolish.

The Servant of Two Masters**Question 05**

This was the more popular of the two questions, the overwhelming majority approached the task from the perspective of a performer playing Truffaldino.

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 establishing an understanding of the master/servant relationship as depicted in the play.

Some students misread the question and believed they had to write about ways in which Truffaldino exploited his masters.

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 lacked comic invention.

Many more effective answers took a straight-forward approach and presented ideas for directing or performing Truffaldino to create comedy when interacting with Florindo and/or Beatrice.

Some answers were successful when including interactions with Pantalone on the premise that Pantalone is a master and Truffaldino a servant.

Less effective answers got side-tracked with Truffaldino's interactions with Smeraldina when using Act One Scene Two as one of their sections. Some seemed to believe that Brighella was a 'master'.

Others wrote either at length, or repetitively, about Truffaldino's commedia antecedent, Arlecchino.

Many answers included Truffaldino's attempts to seal the letter with bread, but these were only successful if they referred to Truffaldino's fear of the likely consequences of being found out by his master as the motivation for his desperate attempts to reinstate the letter.

Less successful answers were disjointed, picking out random lines from a variety of sources in the hope of creating comedy.

A few others completely ignored the direction to exploit the master/servant relationship.

Often, text references were brief and/or infrequent, with most attention spent on the role of the Harlequin and his obsession with food and sex – which was not the question.

More than one centre's answers transposed the play into 1960s London, but without clear justification, explanation or relevance to the master/servant relationship.

Question 06

Not enough answers on this question were seen to make useful comments about student achievement.

Hedda Gabler

Question 07

The majority of students who had studied this text chose this question and most of those adopted a performer's perspective rather than a director's.

Thea's first meeting with Hedda in Act One and their talk about Thea's situation featured in most responses. There were some successful answers here that offered apt practical suggestions for conveying Thea's initial attempts to conceal her feelings for Eilert and the subsequent development, under Hedda's persistent questioning, that leads to her confession that she has left her husband because of her feelings for Eilert.

Less effective responses tended to focus almost as much on the character of Hedda in this scene as on Thea and dealt only superficially with Thea's confession of her feelings for Eilert discussing

instead her feelings of inferiority when in Hedda's presence. Some seemed to choose this Act as an opportunity to write comparisons of Hedda and Thea rather than attempting to focus on the actual question.

Act Two, where Thea is seen with Eilert for the first time was written about with some sophistication by more able students. They built on her tentative confession about her feelings in Act One and offered appropriate suggestions for showing Thea's growing confidence in her relationship with Eilert.

This confidence was short-lived, and students found inventive ways to depict her panic at the thought of Eilert's relapse into his old habits and her fears for his safety and well-being. The rapid changes in Thea's moods in this Act, caused by Hedda's manipulation of both her and Eilert, offered opportunities for practical suggestions that more able students clearly linked to her feelings for Eilert.

Performance ideas were generally sensitive and pertinent and fully supported from the text.

Less successful responses detailed how Thea's panic and changing moods should be portrayed without appearing to realise that these moods were motivated by her feelings for him and that this should be the focus of their response.

Thea's meeting with Eilert in Act Three also formed the basis for many responses with more perceptive answers seeing not just Thea's heartbreak at Eilert's rejection of her but also her sense of his betrayal.

Students discussed, with some sensitivity, how Eilert's confession that he has destroyed his manuscript has a devastating effect on Thea and on her feelings for him. Performance ideas intended to reveal Thea's feelings of loss, and therefore of anger towards Eilert, were often discussed with some sophistication, revealing how her feelings changed with the realisation that she had given up her established life for someone who had failed her.

Less effective responses saw how upset Thea is when Eilert suggests ending their relationship but did not appear to understand the depth and complexity of her feelings for him at this point. A more challenging section, and one that fewer students chose, was Thea's appearance in Act Four. The role of Thea here requires the performer to move fairly quickly from a state of complete despair when she is told of Loevborg's death to a mood of optimism as she comes to realise that she has not totally lost the man she was in love with as she can continue the work they started together. Using this section to reveal Thea's feelings for Eilert was not tackled by many students as many appeared to be more comfortable with scenes where Thea and Eilert appeared together. However, there were some accomplished responses that understood the complexity of Thea's feelings for Eilert and were able to approach this Act with apt practical suggestions for revealing these feelings to an audience.

Some students failed to notice that they had to concentrate their attention on **two** sections, and they wrote about three or even four separate sections. Examiners then had the painful task of discarding the one (or two) less successful sections in arriving at their marks.

Question 08

Very few students attempted this question and those that did were not overly successful generally.

Ideas for the setting were offered and these followed fairly traditional ideas for a 19th century piece of naturalistic theatre. There were some that suggested revolving stages to show the main room and the inner room of the Tesmans' house or a few that had the inner room on a higher level or as a balcony above the main room without full consideration of the practicality of those settings.

Furnishings were described, often in some detail, but these sometimes did not appear to take into account the fact that the Tesmans had only recently moved into the house and that the person responsible for choosing the decor was not Hedda.

Ideas were offered that implied that this was Hedda's long established family home, or even that of Tesman's Aunt Juliana which revealed a lack of knowledge and understanding of the text.

Those students who decided to consider the elements of lighting and/or sound often went against the style and genre of the play offering suggestions of a 'flood of red light' to show 'Brack as a villain' or a 'spotlight on Hedda' while she was observing Loevborg and Thea 'to show her jealousy'.

A particular weakness in these responses, in addition to the lack of reasonably sized sketches, was in the aspect of the question that asked how the ideas for these elements would help the audience to understand the themes and issues of the play; themes and issues were rarely mentioned.

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. Some students had clearly seen the words 'as a designer' and did not stop to work out the exact requirements of the question.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle

Question 09

This was a popular question which attracted a range of responses.

Almost all students choosing this question answered from the perspective of a performer playing Azdak.

Some students misread the question's demands and appeared to think that if they selected the design option they were designing only in relation to Azdak. Costumes for Azdak and settings for scenes in which he appeared were therefore the only designs offered. This made for a limited response.

Interestingly, in previous series, students have tended to discuss Brechtian distancing devices at the expense of focusing on the actual demands of the question. On this occasion, where it was necessary to address the *Verfremdungseffekte*, some students struggled to articulate Brecht's ideas.

There were misapprehensions about Brechtian theory in evidence in student's answers.

Some students showed a clear and detailed understanding of Brecht's purpose and methods in relation to 'Verfremdungseffekte', but a disappointing number of students showed less understanding or a faulty knowledge of his major tenets.

Contrary to what some students appeared to believe, Brecht never advocated a minimalistic approach either to performance or production methods, as highlighted in last year's report.

Many students did not understand the nature and purpose of gestic acting and appeared to believe that it was an offshoot of pantomime or over-exaggerated acting.

Students writing as a performer playing Azdak also revealed limited understanding of the duality of the role and saw him either as a hero or a villain. In keeping with Brecht's ideas about 'split' characters, Azdak is neither wholly one nor the other.

Design ideas showed some success, particularly in costume, which was well exploited in the 'Chalk Circle', especially in terms of the rich colours and fabrics used for the high class characters such as Natella Abashvili, contrasting with the poorer quality fabric and more earthy colours of the lower classes, for example, Grusha.

More effective answers discussed the comparative fit of these costumes, indicating the extravagance of the upper classes and showing understanding of Brecht's socio-political message. The most effective linked costume to gestus, showing how costume could enhance the actor's performance. Some students designed masks for the high class characters, which were linked to their 'distance' from the lower classes and were useful examples of the creation of the V-effekt. A good example of this was given of Grusha's meeting with the noble ladies at the inn.

There were some useful set designs which incorporated aspects of Brecht's staging, including projection screens and placards. Some more effective answers commented on how contemporary technology could be used, for example to project images as well as text, in creating the V-effekt. There were some useful ideas for linking the political messages of the play to contemporary events, particularly images of war projected to enhance the messages in the destruction of the city.

Some set designs were, however, less successful and some lacked clarity. It was disappointing to note that some students still believe that Brecht's intention was for 'minimalist' staging, when it is abundantly evident that he took great care with staging form and set design. His work with Caspar Neher is well documented. Some students had taken ideas from productions seen, which is acceptable, but students need to remember that companies whose work is influenced by Brecht are also interpreting and selecting from his ideas, so the results may be qualitatively different from the original. Students who offered very minimal designs lost opportunities to explore design fundamentals such as colour, scale and texture.

It was also disappointing to note, however, that many students are still referring to the miming of props in Brechtian styled theatre and seem unaware of the care and attention that Brecht and his actors gave to their selection of highly authentic props.

Few students offered detailed, labelled sketches to accompany their ideas.

Question 10

This was a popular question which was generally quite successfully tackled. Most students understood the focus of the question and chose two or more sections where it was relatively straightforward to reveal Grusha's selfless devotion.

Most effectively treated were the sections where the Singer narrates Grusha's decision to take the child where students offered detailed directions for the actor playing Grusha to act out the 'theft' of the baby; the section with the old man who is stingy with the milk, Grusha's inability to leave Michael with the peasant couple, the crossing of the treacherous bridge, the marriage to Yussup, Simon's return, and the Chalk Circle test itself.

More successful answers offered detailed performance details supported with textual illustration.

Less effective answers tended to put insufficient emphasis on Grusha's growing relationship with Michael, offering ideas for directing Grusha's performance, but focusing on, for example, her anger and her feisty nature during the trial, but not developing this to show her devotion or her selflessness. Sometimes implied, this devotion was not always clearly realised.

Only a few answers were very brief, referring to one or two lines of text as opposed to the sections requested.

Accidental Death of an Anarchist

Question 11

A number of students attempted this question; almost exclusively adopting the perspective of the performer playing the Constable.

A handful of truly inventive, energetic and precisely detailed answers were seen which made the performance easy to visualise and to appreciate as being potentially very comical.

The more successful answers included some justified detail about visual appearance (size, body shape, costume) in relation to a cartoon style and then performed the role using exaggeration as their main motivator.

Even more successful answers included an understanding of Fo's style or at least referred to farce and exploited the cartoon style of the play by showing an increasing sense of chaos and exaggeration, as embodied in the hapless Constable, rather than describing everything as being 'over-the-top' – a hallmark of the work at the lower end.

Amongst the few design based answers seen, examiners noted a distinct lack of understanding of what constituted a cartoon style in design terms. Most students appreciated that cartoons are often highly coloured and made suggestions that incorporated this into set and/or costume design but there was a fairly universal lack of comic invention in these answers.

Some students confined themselves to designing a costume for the Constable (misreading the question) and were rather limited to colour and fit of uniform; oversized truncheon and over-sized shoes. The stick-on moustache helped to differentiate between the 'two' constables.

Less successful answers ignored the exploitation of a cartoon style completely and clearly labelled and detailed sketches were a rare phenomenon in the designers' responses.

Question 12

A few answers were seen, but generally not done well. It appeared as if some students had not fully appreciated that Fo has a very serious message. Even where Fo's serious intentions had been understood, students did not always focus on the idea of corruption, preferring to highlight 'police brutality' or 'police incompetence' which many students had clearly primed themselves to write about.

Most answers included detail on an exaggerated performance style and the thuggish behaviour of the selected characters, but few then related this back to the serious message of the play, preferring to maximise the comedy aspect of slapstick violence.

This play's social, cultural and historical context afforded some opportunity for useful discussion; but as mentioned in the general introduction, students need to be wary about writing at excessive length about SCH that is not directly relevant to the question in hand.

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. More successful answers utilised this research in their directorial approach.

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, as a whole, tended to be able to develop a coherent directorial over-view.

Jerusalem

Question 13

This was a popular question and there were some very more effective answers seen but there were also a great many answers that were focused excessively on the social and economic conditions prevailing when the play was written, many of which clearly had no relevance to the play's genesis, whatsoever.

There were some unnecessarily long preambles which explained in detail the circumstances and personalities behind the play's inception. These rarely added anything in the way of marks and had clearly eaten into the time available.

Most recognised that Troy is indeed hostile towards Johnny although reasons offered for this hostility were very varied and not always accurate, or plausible, for example: anger about Phaedra being held hostage, fear that Johnny is abusing Phaedra, Troy being 'the dragon' to Johnny's St. George, hatred for all kind of 'lefties', class war in general, jealousy that he's not part of the gang.

Most answers adopted a performance perspective, and most were able to recognise that Troy should be a physically intimidating presence on stage. Some had him towering over all other performers on stage, one did this by him having 'lifts' in his shoes.

Some considered costume as a way of enforcing his presence with parallels, in one case, being drawn between Troy in an all-black outfit and Moseley's 'Black-shirts'. Various tattoos and bulging muscles were described. One student suggested that Troy might be at odds with Johnny's lifestyle because he was part of the establishment; a lawyer or an accountant.

Troy's contempt towards Johnny was generally acknowledged with a variety of sneers, put-downs and 'snide' looks towards the detritus of the site. Few considered his actual entrance (and indeed where from and to where on stage) and therefore missed the opportunity to alter the atmosphere and create tension before he even spoke.

In responses with a directorial focus, more successful answers discussed the way that Johnny 'winds up' Troy and then considered how Troy's verbal responses became angrier and more assertive. However, only in the most sophisticated of responses did the suggestions move beyond shouting and squaring up to Johnny without any detail as to how. Some answers became mired in discussions of status at this point with some answers losing focus and discussing Max Stafford Clark's rehearsal techniques.

Unfortunately, very few answers gave any real detail to Troy's devastating speech about the gang 'pissing' on Johnny – and filming it/sharing it, to add insult to injury. This was a significant omission in any attempt to realise Troy's feelings towards Johnny. Even fewer answers paid any attention to the reactions of Johnny and the others on stage to this verbal 'act' of hostility.

Troy's second appearance towards the end of Act 3 attracted very little attention in some answers; whilst in others there were clear departures from the text. For example, some students had the 'beating up' of Johnny occurring on stage and with Troy as 'lead thug'.

More suitable answers indicated Troy's possible enjoyment in the moment, with descriptions of him standing outside the caravan smiling calmly to himself whilst the sounds of the beating were heard. Few students actually considered his exit, although one very good response had him leaving moments after the other two men exited and standing, just on stage, watching Johnny as he staggered out of the caravan with a final moment as the two made brief eye contact before Ginger entered.

Question 14

As is common to most design-based questions, examiners noted a lack of sketches and often those answers that did include sketches, offered little detail or explanation above and beyond what had already been said in the body of the answer.

Some students didn't appear to understand that the characters are from different classes, lumping them all in together by having them wearing 'similar' and often generic costumes.

Some failed to recognise the difference in ages of the characters and others failed to link their choice of costumes to the period in which the play is set, thereby demonstrating a lack of appreciation of the play's SCH.

Some answers were very imbalanced with lengthy discussions of, usually, Pea's costume with scant attention paid to the others. Some seemed to believe that the professor should be wearing a gown and mortar board, whilst others had him in what appeared to be 'plus fours', reminiscent of the 1940s.

Suggestions for Dawn ranged from her appearing to be no different from Pea in her choice of clothes to her appearing dressed in what could only be described as the frumpy skirts and cardigans of the 'middle-aged'.

Only the most effective considered the fabrics and fits of the costumes with many not considering the need to distress the clothes to appear suitable to having been at an all-night rave. Some students recognised the significance of how costume can be a clear indicator of wealth (or lack of it) and some used accessories, shoes, tacky jewellery and/or piercings in a way that helped to support this idea.

Section B

The questions set in Section B follow the same pattern for each play, in that they include questions, one of 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 sections other than the one that 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 possible for the marker to follow the unfolding scene or section under discussion.

Some students did not use time as well as they could in including, in their answers to Question 1 on their play, 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 or historical context of the play in **each** of their three answers. Please note that this should **not** be identical work in each answer and will only be credited the first time it appears if it is the same.

A number of students 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 15 in the margin and write a paragraph or so of general staging ideas and/or contextual information, and *then* they would write 15.1, 15.2, 15.3 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, '15' 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.

Yerma

Question 15

15.1

Generally speaking, students coped well with this question although many did not establish from the outset what their preferred effects were.

There was uneven coverage of the nominated section also; most dealt with lines 1-10 and then lines 32-42 without considering the middle section.

There was a good understanding of Yerma's character evident in most responses with students discussing ways of directing the performance in order to convey Yerma's desperation to have a child.

Responses were often less successful when directing Dolores. Interpretations of her character ranged from a kindly neighbour, sympathetic to Yerma's situation, a deeply religious woman genuinely believing that she could help Yerma conceive, a witch-like creature who was a complete charlatan or a local gossip who felt that Yerma was behaving badly towards her husband. Attempting to realise some of these interpretations led to some practical ideas that could not be justified from the text and a confusion over what the preferred effects might be.

15.2

This question was probably the most effective of the three set on this text. Students offered responses to Juan that ranged from the audience hating him because of his treatment of Yerma to those that had audiences feeling great sympathy for him, because of his wife's erratic and often unreasonable behaviour.

Both responses were offered and supported with sensible justification by more able students and either interpretation could be accepted.

Less effective answers suggested a response to Juan, either favourable or not, but were unable to support this with apt practical suggestions for how the response could be achieved.

As with the previous question, Juan's entrance was usually discussed as was the final section, when Yerma embraces him and he rejects her, but few referred to his speech expressing his concerns about how their community 'falls silent' when he appears.

Many students suggested that he arrives shouting and violent, which goes completely against his desire to protect his reputation and name.

Those that did use his speech about the opinions of the villagers were able to produce a more subtle realisation of the role beyond just the anger he manifests in much of the scene and consequently were able to offer a more developed audience response to the role.

15.3

Responses to this question were probably the weakest of the three set on this text.

An element that was frequently missing was a sketch of the setting and this should be considered to be a basic requirement for all design questions.

Some sketches that were offered were basic outlines of the stage space which added little to the written response. There were also some very good sketches that gave a clear sense of the design and which focused on this particular extract without attempting to design for the play as a whole.

Less effective answers offered no reference to ‘Dolores’ profession as the ‘wise woman’ of the village’ restricting themselves to a description of an interior of a village house without any suggestion of her potions, herbs or remedies. Many saw Dolores as a deeply religious Christian woman and this was supported by suggestions of crucifixes and religious pictures covering the walls. Others, who did see the reference to her as a ‘wise woman’ interpreted this as meaning that she had bookshelves lining the walls of her house with her various recipes and potions in them. Very few made any direct reference to the text of the extract but there was the occasional reference to the ‘laurel prayer’ and herbs that would be used in her work.

The Glass Menagerie

Question 16

16.1

Answers to this question were generally successful and showed a secure understanding of the relationship and its tensions. There was some good understanding of Laura’s vulnerability and her inability to stand up to Amanda.

Several students suggested that Amanda is acting out of love for Laura, and, where this was justified from the text and in directorial terms and showed that her ways of showing love are not always successful, this led to some detailed and subtle answers.

Some students referred exclusively to Amanda’s share in the ‘relationship’, ie they did not consider the relationship properly at all.

A few students did not consider the stage directions carefully and misinterpreted some of Williams’ intentions. The fact that Amanda is adjusting the hem of Laura’s new dress was missed by many, as both actors cavorted around the stage during their exchanges.

The social, cultural and historical context of the play was generally usefully explored, but there were some misunderstandings evident in some answers and the ‘blocks’ of text offered on the ‘depression’ and the ‘American Dream’ often outweighed directorial suggestions.

Amanda’s background as a ‘Southern Belle’ needs to inform her movement and gesture, which was not always the case.

16.2

This question was less securely addressed.

Some but by no means all students clearly identified their preferred effects, for example, Tom’s guilt over bringing Jim home to meet Laura, and the most effective showed how his mood and delivery shifts during the course of the extract, creating different effects.

Some answers commented effectively on how his up-beat description of Jim created a positive and optimistic effect, slowly changing as he recalls Jim's lack of progress to 'the White House' and the impact of the Great Depression. These answers showed a good understanding of Tom as a narrator and referred effectively to use of pause and changes in pace. Less successful answers selected one effect which continued through the whole of the lines, sometimes without justification. For example, Tom was seen as wholly in awe of Jim throughout which is difficult to support from the text both in this scene and in the scene where Tom and Jim are together.

16.3

There were some justified costume ideas and there were some clear and detailed sketches. Other students offered very crude sketches (or none at all) and there was overreliance on identifying the colour of the costumes rather than the design.

It is expected that students will be familiar with costume design fundamentals of colour, yes, but also of style, fit, condition, silhouette, fabrics used, accessories worn, footwear and/or headgear.

In a number of answers the students had not considered the stage directions in relation to Laura's ethereal prettiness in this 'memory play', nor had they recognised that Amanda changes costume in this section.

Sometimes, where Amanda's change of costume was given some attention, she was initially dressed in a 'nightie' or dressing gown' or torn old clothes, suggesting a complete lack of understanding of the character.

The financial constrictions of the period were taken into account but given Amanda's background, she would not allow a gentleman caller to see her in a 'tatty' or 'tawdry' dress, albeit faded, and Laura's dress is clearly stated to be 'new'. Some students showed a good understanding of the cut and fit of clothes in the period, but their answers were not in the majority.

Metamorphosis

Question 17

This was a popular choice which generated a wide range of responses. More effective 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 historical context, several students 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 students suggested that Berkoff was a victim of the Nazi regime.

17.1

The most effective included directorial ideas for lines 41 to 87 and showed an understanding of Berkoff's style, with precise detail on how choral work, heightened performance style, synchronised movement, tempo and timing, for example, could be used at specific points in the section.

These answers also included some detail on using the set. Reasonable answers relied heavily on exaggeration, with a few specific references to the text.

Less successful answers covered very little of the section (a weakness in all Section B, question 1 answers) or provided a narrative summary of the action without explicit reference to Berkoff's style.

More effective answers included ideas for the family as well as for the Chief Clerk.

17.2

The most effective showed an understanding of the role, the style and provided performance ideas for the majority of Gregor's performance whether speaking or not. Well prepared students also suggested how Gregor's words becoming less distinguishable to the family might be achieved through increasing vocal distortion or the use of voice modulation software.

In more effective answers, students successfully combined vocal ideas with physical action and used their understanding of Berkoff to guide their suggestions.

Less effective answers were more general (Gregor should act like a beetle or sometimes 'beatle'), contained few performance suggestions or references to the text or didn't suggest the preferred audience response(s).

17.3

A lack of appreciation of design fundamentals inhibited many answers, so set designs most frequently consisted of 'a cage' or a scaffolding construction without reference to size, shape, scale, colour, materials or use of space. Costumes were invariably envisaged as being either all black or black and white 'monochrome', but with no detail on style, cut, period or texture and make-up was inevitably white faces 'because it's Berkoff'.

Very few answers even considered how their ideas might convey a nightmarish quality of Gregor's transformation or asserted that a scaffolding set, black costumes and white make-up was automatically nightmarish. Most students attempted a sketch at least.

There were some impractical ideas for transformation of Gregor which relied on the theatre of the impossible, at times.

There was some unsupported assertion with reference to the potential impact of Total Theatre. Particularly disappointing were answers where Berkoff's methods had been conflated with those of Brecht and some students wrote more about Brecht, Artaud and/or Le Coq than they did about Berkoff.

Our Country's Good

Question 18

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 students referred to the play as 'Brechtian'. Although there are clear elements of epic theatre, the style and content of the text are Wertebaker's and qualitatively different.

Several students 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.

18.1

There were some excellent answers to this question which showed a good understanding of the debate the officers are having, but in particular on how that debate highlighted Wertenbaker's ideas about the value of theatre in society.

The most effective showed detailed knowledge of the officers' individual views and how they contributed to the debate, rather than characterising all those against the play as drunken and aggressive.

Some answers did manage to suggest more subtly how Wertenbaker might persuade her audience through Phillips' rationality and calm, and Collins' considered judgement. They considered the strength of the individual's argument not merely dividing into 'pro and con' and equating it with 'right or wrong'.

Some students chose to focus almost exclusively on the direction of Ralph which was restricting. There were some suggestions for casting and the odd reference to multi-role play, but these were not always securely focused on the demands of the question.

Several students were distracted by the demand to 'highlight some of Wertenbaker's ideas' and wrote discursive answers, exploring the background to her ideas and her beliefs, without realising the practical elements of the question. A few students, as last year, wrote lengthy (and often clearly misunderstood) paragraphs about Thatcherism and the politics of the 1980s, which added little to the answers and were not always accurate. Margaret Thatcher did not reinstate transportation for convicts, for example.

18.2

This was generally answered very successfully with good levels of detail and development.

Some students failed to notice that the focus was on Ross's opposition to the play (rather than his hatred of the convicts).

More effective answers covered both Ross's opposition to the play and his hostility to Ralph. Less successful answers tended to emphasise one or the other.

There was good work on the delivery of lines and of ways in which to build Ross's seething anger until his dramatic departure.

Less effective answers drew on only a few lines of text and failed to recognise Ross's status and importance within the colony, often suggesting that he was 'childish' and petulant.

18.3

There were some more effective answers to this question although this was frequently the least successful of the questions on this text.

In particular, students needed to consider the appropriateness of their ideas in terms of the 'action' 'at this point in the play' and the question specifically asks students to justify their ideas of the section.

While the episodic nature of *Our Country's Good* lends itself to a fixed set, students needed to show an awareness of how this specific location and time of day could be created. There were

some useful ideas for the use of drapes to create a tent, and suggestions for a campfire (even in the sweltering heat) if set out of doors.

Most students drew a big table and indicated seating arrangements.

There were also ideas for seating using barrels and rough furnishings, some indicating appropriate hierarchy. There was generally limited design detail in the suggestions for props.

Some students did not know the word ‘tankard’, and many appeared to believe that the Officers would have access to beer bottles – even beer cans, in some students’ answers. Nooses, whips and guns were also included as props, but then, for obvious reasons, there was very little reference to how these props were used during the action of the extract.

Design questions are compulsory in this paper and students need to be prepared to acquire the necessary skills to be able to answer them; design fundamentals such as colour, scale, texture and material were frequently sadly lacking.

Some students were still, as last year, setting the scene on the ship, which is only relevant in Act One Scene One. Further, several students did not understand the desperate conditions in the colony which applied to the officers, too. Suggestions for a ‘lavish banquet’ under a ‘chandelier’ were not appropriate.

Students who had really undertaken appropriate research into the First Fleet would also know that the colony was not built out of the wreck of one or more of the convoy ships.

Cloud Nine

Question 19

19.1

This text was explored by a minority of students.

Students who had studied this play sometimes showed a fairly secure understanding of Churchill’s style and were aware of her political purpose.

Some answers lacked the requisite subtlety of the social satire.

There is great potential in the play and the extract to exploit social, cultural and historical context to good effect, but less effective answers made very generalised references to the historical period, often with little or no reference to its relevance to this question.

Several students, as last year, roamed freely through the play, rather than focusing on the printed extract. Further, the ‘mockery of female stereotyping’ was often not understood.

There were some ideas for casting, and these did show some appreciation of the roles of the different characters. However, many students explored the cross-gender casting of the play and how this would create comedy, rather than the stereotypes presented.

Many students restricted themselves to considering the comic absurdity of Betty being played by a man. There was negligible appreciation of Maud and Ellen’s roles as Mother-in-Law and Governess or the implications of those stereotypes.

A few students explored the dialogue successfully, showing how their responses to each other created comedy, but these answers were in the minority. There was little evidence of real understanding of a range of comic methods – other than simply being exaggerated, but there were some answers that suggested that a practical approach to the play had been adopted in preparation for the examination.

19.2

The question demanded attention to achieving preferred effects, a task that simply could not be accomplished if no such effects were identified as was the case with the majority of answers.

More effective answers revealed a secure understanding of Churchill's parody of Harry Bagley's masculinity and its importance to the extract.

Some less effective answers showed no such appreciation of nuance and focused almost exclusively on Harry's relationship with Edward, offering some quite superficial realisations of his indiscriminate sexual nature.

Only a few students drew from the whole extract. There was some detail of Harry's interactions with Clive and Betty, but these were often underdeveloped and the subtle interplay between Harry and Betty was routinely ignored.

19.3

There were a few more effective answers to the question which showed a secure understanding of period and how this could be developed in the setting.

The majority of answers provided some design fundamentals and, in particular, there was some success in the selection of set dressing, including, for example, animal skin rugs and/or African masks to suggest the African setting.

The majority of students recognised some aspects of the extract that had to be taken into account in the setting and had used colour to suggest the harsh climate and the surrounding bush.

A few did not understand these demands and did not show a secure grounding in the play as a whole, including one design where the sets for Act One and Two were both on stage, side by side, limiting the possibilities for the action and showing restricted understanding of the question. Some students offered designs for what looked like quite a nice suburban semi-detached house.

Brontë

Question 20

20.1

In all but a few of the most effective, there was very little sense conveyed of Shared Experience's storytelling techniques and very often the only SCH included was lengthy and unfocused biographies/history of the Brontës.

Some students failed to give adequate explanations as to how the actors would convey the impression of being children in this part of the extract or largely failed to define or explore the relationship between the characters.

Whilst in some cases, answers became so obsessed with a discussion of the role/status of women, that they lost sight of the question's requirements.

More successful answers included this knowledge more subtly and provided some nuanced indications as to how Charlotte changes as the scene progresses and she stops agreeing with Branwell's ideas.

Only a few really considered how the actors' use of vocal and physical skills could create an expressionistic feel of childhood. Some failed to consider that, given the likely period/style of the costumes that some of the physical suggestion being made might be difficult to achieve.

Overall there was often a lack of coverage of the specified section of the extract.

20.2

Many answers failed to address Patrick's opening lines, nor was a context provided for the situation in which he was speaking (an ideal moment to include some pertinent SCH).

A more significant and yet common omission was a statement about what audience response to Patrick was preferred.

Patrick's final section was generally quite well handled and because of the minimal number of lines that he speaks, most covered them all.

Students who failed to consider their preferred audience response to Patrick, often believed that they were answering the question when they explained what they wanted the audience to 'see', for example, his grief, his stoic qualities, his religious beliefs –this is not at all the same thing as identifying what this should make the audience feel.

Some answers clearly supported their ideas with explanations that revealed something of Patrick's relationship with his children, whilst in others it appeared as though he was alone on stage.

20.3

Most answers showed some awareness that the extract shifts in time but there was frequently little explanation of the elements of memory/imagination.

Students sometimes had little grasp of the way that lighting could be used and relied merely on techniques such as blackout or a split stage.

Some students focused their answer entirely on the actual lanterns that would be used but without discussing the effect that these might create.

Additionally, the term 'spotlight' was used to discuss any and all lighting states. There was some description of colour, but this was again often just a red state to accompany Bertha's entrance to signify anything from sensuality, to anger, to blood.

In relation to sound, this was even less well considered, only the most sophisticated responses worked methodically through the extract, identifying where sound could be used to support both the expressionistic and naturalistic style of the play.

There were so many opportunities within this extract to explore the impact that sound and lighting designs can have on an audience and link this to the genre of the play, but, sadly, in many cases these opportunities were not exploited in a coherent fashion.

Section C

As last year, students who selected an appropriate production which was suited to the question demands were more successful than those who chose to write about a production they had engaged with and tried to 'fit' to the question.

Some responses began, for example, with the declaration, 'my production did not feature family or romantic relationships, so I am going to write about friendship as presented in a production of *Art*. Variations on this included, for example, 'Dysart is like a father to Alan Strang and this is the relationship that I will be focusing on'....

Students have a choice of four questions, they should have a similar choice of productions to refer to, in order to ensure that at least one production will be a good 'fit' for at least one question.

Students also need to ensure that they are confident with what the questions are asking, and are secure with the terminology. Terms which were not always understood, in this series, included; 'impact', 'effectiveness' and 'physical theatre skills'. A lack of familiarity with basic theatre terms can have negative effects on students' achievement, if they do not understand what they are being asked to write about.

Students also need to select productions which they can write about clearly and effectively in the time allowed. As with last year, some students attempted to write about productions whose complex lighting and setting was difficult to describe succinctly. Some of these answers also attempted to cover too much of the total production, rather than selecting fewer examples but writing clearly and in detail.

Very few answers to design questions were supported with clear and detailed sketches and there was a trend in some centres for students to offer very small sketches which limited the detail provided and were difficult for the students to label and for the examiners to interpret.

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

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. More successful answers made clear reference to the question demands, generally in the opening paragraph of the answers, clearly indicating the reasons for their choices.

More effective answers gave very clear statements about the production team's intentions and illustrated both intentions and style through their answers.

Question 21

Although not the most popular choice on the paper, there were a number of very more effective answers to this question.

Most students had a secure understanding of the aims of the production and of its style and form. Occasionally this was implied and could have been more clearly stated. Nearly all students stated where and when, and in what format they had seen the production, which was helpful.

The majority of students recognised the demand to evaluate lighting and sound ‘working together’ and there were more effective answers based on *Warhorse*, *The Woman in Black* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*. Some students did, however, find it hard to describe the effects in the latter production clearly and this was often due to a lack of specific, technical vocabulary which was evident in more effective answers.

A few answers considered both lighting and sound as separate elements, even when the examples were drawn from the same section of the production. This was restricting in terms of the evaluation of the effects and of the total dramatic effectiveness of the production chosen.

There were some lovely answers which clearly understood how different types of sound created different atmospheres and contributed to the effectiveness of a production. There were some particularly well chosen moments from *Warhorse* linking the sound of folk song to Paule Constable’s warm lighting states for scenes in the pre-war British countryside, to the screaming of bombardment and the precise, cold spotlights of the Western Front. These answers were both fluent and compelling.

Question 22

This was the least popular of all the questions in this section, but some students answered very well, depending upon the production that they had decided to write about.

Frantic Assembly’s *The Unreturning* was a popular and often successful choice for this question about a production with a non-naturalistic set.

Students also wrote about *The Woman in Black*, *Brief Encounter* and *Lovesong*.

Crucial to the success of students who attempted this question was appreciating the demand to explain how the use of the non-naturalist set was used ‘to enhance the impact of the performance at particular moments’. Where students omitted this aspect of the question – and many did – their achievements were much diminished. A description of the set alone attracted relatively few marks.

In a few answers seen to this question it appeared that students generally didn’t understand the idea of a non-naturalistic set. For example, for answers on the production *Wise Children*, the important ‘caravan’ was used to create a variety of realistic settings amongst less realistic ones.

Some answers on this production also included detail on the pre-show, with actors completing make-up and doing their warm-ups as an example, the students believed, of non-naturalistic use of the stage. This was not relevant to the thrust of the question.

Question 23

This question was selected by a large number of students many of whom did not understand the focus of the question itself. Students saw that the question asked how an audience was ‘engaged or amused’ and did not appear to consider how this was achieved in their selected production.

As always, the choice of production for the question selected is crucial. Students writing about productions such as the National Theatre's *Jane Eyre*, often wrote with sophistication about how the performers' skills created effects that amused or engaged the audience such as Jane's journey, the creation of Rochester's dog or a performer using a vertical ladder to show Rochester's fall from his horse.

Another successful production chosen by several students was that of *The Trench* by Les Enfants Terribles, where the ensemble performers created different shapes with their bodies to resemble barbed wire with entangled dead soldiers and another performer, using a harness, walked along a wall while being horizontal to the stage floor.

Some productions, while more naturalistic in style, had elements of physical theatre which students used successfully for this question; *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* was one such production with the scene showing Christopher 'flying' as he dreams of being an astronaut being an appropriate choice.

At times, students chose productions by companies such as Frantic Assembly presumably thinking that as their work is often that of physical theatre their productions would offer appropriate material. However, students writing about Pip's letter about leaving her husband from *Things I Know To Be True* were not able to offer details of physical theatre skills in that section of the production.

Many students focused their responses on straightforward physical skills, such as movement and gesture, and, while aspects of these could be credited, this tended to restrict their level of success in this question. Also, many students wrote about performance skills generally and there were answers that focused more on the performers' vocal skills than any other and these were not appropriate here.

Question 24

This question was interpreted fairly widely by the students who chose it and many students did choose it.

Some students concentrated just on a 'romantic' relationship, some on 'family' relationships and some offered examples of both.

However, what was essential for this question was the fact that students were asked to explain the ways that **two or more performers** used their performance skills to establish these relationships.

The requirement to write about two or more performers carries with it the corollary to discuss the interaction between the performers that would be needed to create a 'relationship' on stage. Some students chose to write about two individual performers from different sections of a production; doing this meant that no 'relationship' between people could be conveyed as there was no interaction of any kind.

Rosie's monologue from the opening of *Things I Know To Be True* is a case in point here. Although Rosie is describing the relationship she had while she was away travelling, the performer was not using her performance skills to **create** a convincing relationship on stage, she was offering a description of it.

There were other examples from *Things I Know To Be True* such as an account of the performers who played the parents, Bob and Fran, dancing together creating a romantic relationship or the

performers who played Fran and her son, Mark, creating a tortured family relationship as he confesses that he is transgender.

This production resonates with students and, when appropriate aspects are chosen, it has provided some good material for their responses.

A range of productions were accessed in response to this question, including *Macbeth* and *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk*. There were some impressive answers on the latter production showing how relationships had been realised using physical theatre.

Several responses took a fairly tenuous view of what constituted a family relationship. Some, discussing Billy Elliot and his dance teacher, fully accepted that this was not a 'family' relationship in the literal sense but decided to risk writing about it as if it was.

However, if a student writing an answer to a Section A question chooses to ignore the clear focus of the question, perhaps preferring to write for example about Hedda's feelings for Eilert rather than Thea's, the potential achievement would be compromised, as it was where students announced that they were not going to answer the demands of their chosen question in Section C.

It is also very important to impress upon students that when they are asked to explain how performers 'used their performance skills' that students actually identify those skills (facial expression, vocal and physical skills) rather than merely describing what the actors did on stage. If a student tells us that 'Rosie fetches a blanket for Pip', for example, no skills have been explained – let alone analysed or evaluated.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.