

DRAMA

Paper 0411/01

Written Paper

General Comments

Administration

This session has seen a further increase in candidates taking the examination. The majority of work was received in good time with appropriate administrative tasks efficiently completed by Centres. Late submission of scripts was rare and on the whole administration of the session went smoothly. Once again it is pertinent to request that where at all possible, Centres submit scripts on paper with a right hand margin, tag tied at the corner. This facilitates easy manipulation of and access to the script during the marking process.

The Examination

Once again, the session evidenced a very wide range of ability. Many candidates demonstrated ability to link theory to practice but at the other end of the scale there was a marked shortfall between the responses sought by the paper and candidates' ability to meet them. Candidates who planned their time and strategy effectively fared best as did those who appreciated the need to structure the longer essay answers. Where this was lacking it may have been compounded (in **Section C** particularly) by inadequate practical exploration. A few candidates admitted that they 'didn't have time' to complete their stimuli and therefore were forced to answer hypothetically. Centres are reminded that the stimuli form part of the specification and therefore must be completed if candidates are to address the questions and mark scheme fully.

Many candidates continue to have difficulty when it comes to discussing technical theatre issues, especially in the case of lighting. As a consequence **Question 5** proved difficult for some. In addition, **Question 4** confused some candidates. This was particularly the case where candidates failed to read the question properly.

In **Section B**, **Question 9** proved to be a popular choice. Candidates who were well prepared knew what the question was seeking to secure and therefore responded effectively.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Questions 1 – 5: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question 1

Many candidates were able to suggest an appropriate costume for Walter Lee. In order to score both marks, candidates were expected to make specific reference to the text and consequently his job, emotions or social standing to support their answer. 'Jeans and a t-shirt' was therefore inadequate in terms of an 'appropriate costume' and consequently insufficient to score marks. Any suggestion supported in some way by the text would have secured at least one mark.

Question 2

Many candidates showed a good understanding of the text and were able to suggest many ways in which a sense of weariness could be shown in the set design. A few candidates made reference to music and sound effects, which do not constitute set design and therefore were not rewarded. Similarly, candidates who neglected to refer specifically to set design and candidates who featured only lighting suggestions were unable to secure full marks. Some produced elaborate drawings, which again were not always sufficient to

access the mark scheme because they did not include adequate written explanation of the how work.

Question 3

Candidates were able to demonstrate a good understanding of characterisation and identified a range of aspects of Mama's character. Many supported this with reference to the text and therefore accessed the full range of the mark scheme. A few misread the question and commented on how an actress could in effect deliver her lines making reference to sensitivity, authority and leadership. Whilst these are implicit in some of Mama's characteristics, the responses did not always match the demands of the question and therefore this could not be rewarded.

Question 4

This caused a problem for many candidates who were seemingly unprepared for such a question. The supposition appears to be that a simple list of characteristics would suffice. A few candidates were able to pick up the melodramatic hints within the character and responded appropriately. However, many got sidetracked into costume and props or extended discussion of Lindner's nervousness which did not address the question in the broader sense. Many missed the point of 'director's notes' as a means of highlighting creative approaches to drama and a few instead chose to extend the discussion to other characters in the scene.

Question 5

An alarming number of candidates continue to labour under the misapprehension that lighting consists of melodramatic, mood-related washes of primary colours. Reference to red without a supporting statement was common and this session sees the launch of a worrying infatuation with 'grey light'! Candidates are not expected to be lighting designers but are required to recognise that naturalistic plays demand, for the most part, a degree of naturalistic lighting and that 'grey', though certainly available as a lighting gel colour is not an 'off the peg' quality of light itself. Grey light is a concept and has to be created. Some did recognise the hanging mood of the scene and were able to make some suggestion as to how this could be reflected in the creative use (level, direction, fades, balance and indeed tints) of lighting but only at superficial level. There were however a few excellent responses demonstrating good preparation by the Centre.

Questions 6 – 8: *Devised Work*

Question 6

A variety of cultural aspects were identified although only a few were able to present a developed discussion identifying ways in which the piece explores these. Many responses were somewhat loose in their discussion and need to be more clearly developed.

Question 7

Many responses were superficial. Candidates were able to identify simple points but few showed any sign of being able to discuss the use of dramatic techniques to communicate a message.

Question 8

Generalised discussion of characters was presented but only a few referred to ways in which the characters contributed to the intention of the piece. The weakest responses tended to list the candidates accompanied by a few points about their objectives but there was a paucity of appreciation of how the characters and their relationships contributed to the development of the drama.

Section B

Questions 9 – 11: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question 9

The question is clearly asking for candidates to recognise the mood and style of the play; the relationship between the set and the changing nature of the drama, the choice of props and placing of scenery and the way in which the design facilitates the drama. Many candidates were able to suggest an appropriate design but failed to link this to the drama and support their answer with reasoning. Many answers lacked detail. Some candidates seemed to lack basic knowledge of performance spaces and there were some ingenious, but totally unworkable suggestions of the candidates' own devising, suggesting that they had not explored the material practically in class. Many do not take sightlines into account.

Question 10

This proved a popular choice.

Many candidates showed good character analysis and were able to discuss many facets of Walter's character. The majority of these good responses were well supported by references to the text.

Question 11

Those who chose this question were able to offer a full discussion of three moments in the text. Again this was supported by close reference to text. Candidates had explored a range of performance techniques to support their answer.

Questions 12 – 14: *Devised Work - Production*

Question 12

Where Centres had not explored the stimuli practically some candidates were severely disadvantaged. On the positive side however, the content of the brackets appearing in the question seemed to focus candidates' responses by providing an indication of what was actually meant by 'technical aspects'. This gave rise to some well-developed answers.

Question 13

Many candidates confused structure with commentary and simply regurgitated the script storyline without ever really exploring contrasts, sections and action. Some were able to give an adequate appraisal of highs and lows in their pieces but could not develop the discussion sufficiently to access the upper levels of the mark scheme.

Question 14

Many candidates showed a lack of understanding of the terms contrast, pace and tension. Answers contained a significant degree of narrative but in a number of cases there were candidates who gave detailed and perceptive responses which both discussed the techniques used and evaluated them.

DRAMA

Paper 0411/02
Coursework

Once again, the candidature for this syllabus has increased. As in previous years, Moderators reported that most of the video evidence presented captured the strong sense of enthusiasm and commitment that candidates brought to the work. It is one of the aims of the syllabus to foster an enjoyment of drama and it was clear that the practical work undertaken for coursework submissions is increasingly achieving this aim. Moderators reported once more that the best work was a real pleasure to watch: disciplined, focused and with a strong sense of creating meaning for an audience.

The standard of the practical work was comparable to that submitted in previous sessions and teachers in Centres continued to provide their candidates with challenging and stimulating tasks. Such high expectations produced some innovative and engaging work and provided candidates with a good framework for acquiring advanced skills in drama, as performer, director and designer. This latter point remains an important one since the syllabus is not designed merely as an acting course. Whilst the practical assessment focuses on performance skills, the intention is always that candidates see these in the context of high performance values and pay due attention to the role of lighting, set, costume and other production elements. That said, the task is to create performances for the stage and **not** to create a film set. It was gratifying, therefore, that there were fewer Centres where the work was not directed at an audience; in such instances, candidates were at an obvious disadvantage as their pieces were conceived as performances for television or screen. The point is therefore reiterated from previous sessions: extracts from repertoire should be taken from works produced as stage plays and not films, poems or novels.

Administration

All Centres submitted their work by the due deadline and this enabled the moderation process to run smoothly and efficiently. The teacher responsible for the syllabus in a Centre needs to mark the Coursework, and submit video evidence for moderation, even if the teacher concerned is awaiting accreditation. Assessment should be carried out throughout the course, and video evidence is supplied to support the marks awarded by the Centre, rather than to allow a later assessment of the candidates.

The selection of the sample of six candidates improved in this session with the sample being clearly presented by the majority of Centres. Centres are reminded that the six candidates selected for the sample should include the highest and lowest overall mark and that each of the pieces for these six candidates must be included on the moderation video or DVD.

Forms and commentaries

The majority of Centres complied with the need to complete a Working Mark Sheet for each piece and then to summarise these on the Final Record sheet for each candidate. Moderators recorded their gratitude that the majority of forms were extremely detailed and made meticulous reference as to where marks had been awarded.

These forms are included in the syllabus for each year and are also available on the CIE website. Most Centres correctly grouped the completed forms by **candidate** rather than by piece and all Centres should adopt this practice since it enables the Moderator to see quickly and easily how the candidates in the sample have performed.

The completion and organisation of the forms continued to present some logistical challenges for many of Centres, although the majority were well organised, as in previous years. There are a number of points to be borne in mind when completing the forms, although Centres are advised that the current arrangements for the forms will change in June 2008 so the arrangements outlined here will remain in place for June 2007 onwards.

- For each candidate, Centres should complete a Coursework Working Mark Sheet for **each** piece of coursework and a Coursework Final Record of Assessment Form to **summarise** that candidate's performance as a whole.
- The four forms for each candidate should be grouped together for that candidate and either stapled or placed in a plastic wallet.

When completing the Coursework Final Record of Assessment Form, special care should be taken in calculating the final mark. Where the final mark does not produce a whole number, marks should be rounded up. For example, if a candidate has attempted two devised pieces and the two marks for Objective B, awarded on the basis of those devised pieces were 12 and 13, these should be added together to make 25. In such a case, divide 25 by 2 to make 12.5 and then round this up to 13. Failure to do this disadvantages a candidate, and Moderators reported that a surprising number of candidates had not been credited in this way.

Centres are reminded that from June 2008 a new system of forms is to be introduced. These are set out in the syllabus for the June 2008 session and this is already available to Centres. Centres may, if they wish, trial these forms as from the June 2007 session.

Video recordings

The presentation of material on the video was better this session although there is still considerable scope for improvement. The biggest improvement was where Centres had created a DVD for the final submission and this was divided helpfully into chapters for ease of finding each piece. This was warmly welcomed by Moderators and, if the Centre has the appropriate facilities, is encouraged for future examination sessions. Centres should note, however, that only full-size DVDs are acceptable and **not** mini-DVDs such as those produced by DVD camcorders. It remains true that, however good the quality of the video, it is the dramatic content that is being marked and not the recording itself. Indeed, as has been stated elsewhere in this report, filmic performances involving over elaborate sets are not appropriate for this syllabus.

The identification of candidates on video was often easier to follow than in previous sessions. Moderators reported favourably on an approach taken by a number of Centres where, prior to each performance, candidates introduce themselves by name and number while holding up a white piece of paper or card with their name clearly printed in capital letters. The camera pauses on this sheet of paper for several seconds allowing the Moderator to take in the name and the candidate's appearance. It was even more helpful in instances where the video case contained a list of the six candidates with their names and numbers in the order of appearance. Candidates should also announce the title of the play for text-based pieces, along with the name of the playwright and the character/role being played by the candidate.

Many video recordings are still of poor quality with inadequate candidate introductions. In extreme cases, Moderators spent a considerable amount of time piecing together the identity of the candidates from the evidence on the Coursework Working Mark Sheets. Furthermore, in some instances the candidates were almost inaudible. In some Centres the recording was impaired as the camera swooped uncontrollably around the stage whilst in other cases, a long distance static recording was not close enough to pick out individual candidates. Whilst the camera should be placed a sufficient distance away from the performers in order to take in the complete stage picture, this should not be so far away that the sound and/or the clarity of the picture is lost. Neither should the camera be so close that the candidate's face fills the entire screen since this gives absolutely no sense of the context of the drama and becomes merely a study in facial expression.

Devised pieces

This point was included in the June 2005 report and is reproduced here since a small minority of centres appeared still to be unaware of it.

Centres are reminded that the dramatic stimuli set for work on Paper 1 must not be used as the basis of the practical submission in Paper 2. CIE reserves the right to refuse to award marks to coursework which duplicates a task set for the written paper.

There was a better balance between the standard of performances of devised work and the standard of repertoire this session. In previous sessions, a significant number of candidates seemed unable to apply the dramatic techniques they had studied to the creation of their own dramatic pieces.

There was a good range of styles, which covered most of the syllabus options. The subject matter, however, was more restricted, with much soul searching and angst around family relationships, drug abuse and violence. A good number, however, attempted to deal with less frequently discussed themes, many involving issues specific to the candidates' own country or area. Some of the best devised work dealt in detail with social and cultural issues of the country in which it was produced. For example, one particularly impressive post-colonial piece consisted of a monologue by a farmer whose land had been taken from his family in former generations. Set outdoors, this had a resonance that was as moving on video as it must have been for the live audience watching it.

Moderators reported that several devised pieces lacked shaping, structuring and evidence of developed dramatic techniques. Far too many pieces relied on a form of naturalism, and what appeared little better than improvisation in extreme cases. It is essential that candidates are introduced to standard dramatic devices to improve the quality of their devised pieces. These could include:

- tableaux
- overlapping dialogue
- parallel scenes
- flashback/forward
- use of levels
- mime
- physicalisation of objects (where performers work as a group in a physical manner to represent e.g. a wardrobe or a chest of drawers)
- choral work
- multi-role (as a means of developing characterisation through vocal delivery and physicality)

It was encouraging that fewer pieces were performed only to camera without an audience being present. It was not simply the lack of audience in such cases that was the problem: it was the style of acting that it inculcated. This inevitably became filmic or (at best televisual) with less emphasis on physical and vocal contrasts and over-dependence on long, silent moments, meaningful pauses and minute changes in facial expression.

As in previous years, some pieces were over-long and Centres are requested to ensure that candidates are required to keep their pieces within the maximum lengths specified in the syllabus.

Repertoire pieces

This point was included in the June 2005 report and is reproduced here since a small minority of centres appeared still to be unaware of it.

Centres are reminded that the play extract set for work on Paper 1 must not be used as the basis of the practical submission in Paper 2. CIE reserves the right to refuse to award marks to coursework which duplicates a task set for the written paper.

The quality of text-based pieces taken from dramatic repertoire was of a similar standard to previous sessions and displayed similar strengths and weaknesses to them. Virtually all pieces were enthusiastically played and demonstrated a good commitment to the dramatic material. However, raw enthusiasm is not a quality that, unrefined, will sustain audience engagement for very long. With this in mind, the following points are offered as a distillation of Moderators' comments, concerning aspects likely to improve the quality of performance of dramatic repertoire.

- The performances must be taken from published plays, not films, poems or novels.
- Performances must demonstrate good articulation of the English text. The examination is in English and therefore, whilst accent does **not** matter, clarity of expression and articulation does. A worryingly high number of performers would have had difficulty making themselves understood to an English-speaking audience. It is virtually impossible to create character or action if what is being said is limited in its comprehensibility.
- The chosen extracts must be appropriate to the candidates' abilities and experience. This should be taken into account in considering the level of challenge of an extract for a candidate attempting to assimilate the language, style and cultural norms of a play. Put simply, there is nothing to be gained by a candidate performing an extract from Shakespeare if the performance simply reveals they do not understand what they are saying.
- The assimilation of character was generally well handled but some candidates appeared to have a very limited idea of who they were playing, from where in the play the extract was taken and the dramatic context of the extract itself. Centres are recommended to avoid simply taking monologues from commercially-produced books unless they are able to furnish their candidates with sufficient additional detail for them to be able to construct a meaningful and well rounded performance.
- There are some common structural weaknesses which should be avoided. These include awkward scene-changes, lengthy blackouts and clumsy delays for the changing of set and/or costume.
- Performance values are important but should be considered within the context of stage plays rather than films.

The June 2005 report included a list of works from which candidates selected extracts for performance. These are still relevant and Centres are advised to refer to that list as a broad indication of the type of works considered appropriate for candidates at this level. In addition, the list below gives further examples, drawn from work submitted for June 2006, to supplement the original list.

Examples of works from which extracts were taken

John-Claude Carriere	The Little Black Box
Sarah Daniels	Beside Herself
Christopher Durang	The Actor's Nightmare
Horton Foote	Courtship
Athol Fugard	My Children, My Africa
Susan Kim	Scientist Meets Fish
Peter Schaffer	Amadeus
William Shakespeare	Romeo and Juliet
George Bernard Shaw	St Joan
Dylan Thomas	Under Milk Wood
Benjamin Zephaniah	Listen to Your Parents

As mentioned in the June 2005 report, Centres may find it helpful to visit the Teacher Support area of the CIE website to obtain appropriate schemes of work for this syllabus. These schemes, if followed, will ensure that all aspects of the syllabus requirements are covered and that there is some choice of work for submission for the final examination.

Additionally, the newly produced Coursework Training Handbook and DVD are now available.