

DRAMA

Paper 9482/11 Open-Book Written Examination
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Key messages

The questions in this Drama paper will always have a practical theatre focus and candidates are reminded that their interpretation of the selected set texts must be expressed using the language of the theatre.

While candidates are expected to have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the plot and characters of their selected texts, the examination is intended to assess candidates' ability to apply their knowledge about how theatre practitioners – directors, performers, designers- apply their various skills to convey meaning to an audience in relation to the prescribed extracts/texts and the precise question focus.

It is important that candidates adopt the perspective that is demanded by the question, for example, if the question requires a performer's perspective, they should write in the first person as a performer. The same principle applies to questions intended to be from a designer's or director's perspective.

Candidates are reminded to ensure that they have read and understood the precise requirements of the questions that they choose before embarking on their answers. They should attempt to avoid including material in their answers that is peripheral or irrelevant to the demands of the question set as, this will attract no credit.

It is important to understand that although it may be useful to offer a brief contextualisation of the action in the prescribed extract in **Section A** and/or in their selected sections, in **Section B**, candidates are not expected to offer 'potted' versions of the play in either section. Narrative description of the play's action or character sketches of individual characters do not attract credit in themselves.

It is also very important that candidates appreciate that their knowledge and understanding of each play's style, genre and performance context needs to be made explicit in their answers, as well as being implicit in the style of performance or production elements adopted in their interpretation. This aspect of candidates' knowledge and understanding is assessed separately, and where candidates neglected to consider style, genre and context in their answers, they were unable to access the full range of marks available to them.

General comments

Many very good answers were seen in this, the first series of a new syllabus.

Candidates appeared to find the questions accessible, and many wrote detailed and vivid responses to the precise demands of individual questions, that succeeded in bringing to life an extract or section of text, so that the Examiner could clearly envisage the unfolding action or moment.

Very good answers tended to demonstrate a secure grasp of theatrical terminology which was applied accurately, and which supported the 'virtual' realisation of a moment or section of text.

In less successful answers, candidates sometime betrayed a lack of appropriate theatrical vocabulary and were hampered in their ability to discuss production elements, in particular. A number of candidates attempted design questions, for example, without apparently possessing the necessary knowledge and/or experience of design to enable them to communicate their ideas effectively.

The most frequently seen errors of approach involved candidates whose answers were overly narrative or literary in approach and too dependent on relaying aspects of plot or identifying themes.



Some candidates made no explicit reference to the style, genre or context of their selected text and, if they happened to refer to previous productions of the text, they frequently made no pertinent comments about it.

Candidates should be reminded that, especially when they are writing about a text in translation (*Medea*, *Tartuffe*, *The Seagull*) they need to be very clear about which part of the play they are dealing with, as different editions/translations can be vastly different from one another. Candidates should never identify sections of text by quoting page numbers, line numbers or truncated phrases from the text linked with ellipses.

Most candidate timed their answers well and produced two developed pieces of writing. There were some very brief responses, however, where candidates wrote less than two sides of their answer booklets to cover their responses to both **Sections A** and **B**.

In **Section A**, candidates answered on *The Tempest* or *Death of a Salesman* or *The Lion and the Jewel*. In **Section B**, candidates answered on *Medea* or *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The Tempest

- (a) **How would you direct selected moments from the extract to create comedy for your audience?**

A number of inventive responses to this question were seen.

Candidates tended to focus on the comic rivalry between Trinculo and Caliban and on Stephano's absurd enjoyment of his status as 'regent-in-waiting'.

There were some amusing interpretations of Ariel's 'invisible' presence and his interaction with the confused trio of plotters, as he uttered his accusation, of 'Thou liest!' in their ears, causing more comical tension between 'the clowns'.

Some candidates exploited the comic opportunities of the moment when Trinculo and Stephano are 'spooked' and quaking in fear when Ariel, 'the picture of Nobody', plays the tune of their song on an invisible tabor and flute.

Many candidates focused on the drunken state of the characters, with mixed results. When detailed ideas for creating comedy from the individual or collective drunkenness of the characters were linked to specific moments from the text, they were usually successful. However, a list of generalised signs of drunkenness such as 'slurring words' (not stipulated) or random references to 'falling over' attracted limited credit.

Some candidates wrote about standard features of theatrical comedy-making such as 'comic timing', slapstick and 'double-takes' without linking the theory to precise moments from the extract. Such answers attracted less credit than those where each of the comic tropes identified was illustrated with a specific example from the extract.

In terms of displaying knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play, more successful answers made purposeful reference to conventions of Shakespearian comedy, to the comic roles attributed to the lower classes in his plays and/or to Shakespeare's engagement with issues of colonialism, kingship, ownership and usurpation in this play. Some also referred to Jacobean interest in spirits and the supernatural.

- (b) **How would you perform the role of CALIBAN in selected moments from the extract, to convey your interpretation of his character to the audience?**

There were fewer successful answers to this question.

A number of candidates satisfied themselves with describing Caliban's physical appearance and calculating the degree to which his appearance might be described as 'monstrous'. Others also considered his voice as well as his posture and movement, but also in general terms, and with no reference to Caliban's involvement in the action of the extract at all.

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See comments above for ways in which some candidates displayed their knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play.

Question 3

Death of a Salesman

- (a) **How would you perform the role of BIFF in selected moments from the extract, to reveal his changing feelings for his father?**

This was overwhelmingly the most attempted question on the paper and many highly appropriate and inventive answers were seen.

The most successful candidates chose moments that covered the arc of the unfolding action, from Biff's exasperated entrance, having been knocking at the door for 'for five minutes' to his hasty and tearful exit, after witnessing the 'fall' of the father he once worshipped.

While it is not to be expected that candidates are able to include every important moment from the given extract, it should be fairly clear that candidates who only deal either with Biff's entrance or with his exit will not be able to demonstrate Biff's 'changing feelings'. Quite a number of candidates adopted a highly selective approach which was self-penalising.

The best answers were from candidates who selected moments based on the opportunities afforded by key moments to explore Biff's shifting feelings towards Willy in the course of the extract. Having made judicious selection, they then offered detailed ideas for Biff's vocal, physical and facial expressions that would convey those feelings to an audience.

Too many candidates offered a narrative retelling of the 'story' of the extract, written in the third person and completely devoid of a practical theatre dimension. Some candidates wrote about Biff's emotions but without the necessary accompanying practical detail, so they wrote, for example, 'I would look hurt' or 'I would look ashamed' and left it to the Examiner to imagine how those 'looks' might be conveyed.

There were some very detailed responses, however, which conveyed Biff's shifting emotions very powerfully and sometimes with great economy. The most frequently chosen moment was the appearance of the Woman and the near paralysis of Biff as he processes the implications of her presence in Willy's bathroom.

Some candidates omitted this sequence altogether and some appeared to think that the scene was a continuation of the previous 'restaurant' scene and the woman was, in fact, Miss Forsythe. Such answers were in the minority, although there was a significant number of answers that betrayed a lack of complete understanding of the plot and structure of the play or who failed to grasp that the scene was taking place in Willy's imagination or memory.

Overall, candidates displayed well-developed understanding of how performer's convey their feelings, on stage, using vocal and physical skills.

In terms of displaying knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play, more successful answers made purposeful reference to Miller's intentions to present a modern tragedy. Candidates were frequently able to articulate an understanding of the importance of 'The

American Dream' both to Willy and to Biff and they were aware of the play's setting in terms of its physical location, its historical period and in terms of its social and economic context. Most candidates revealed, through the nature of their performance suggestions, that they understood the naturalistic style of performance required.

- (b) **As a director, what effects would you wish to create for the audience during the unfolding action in this extract? Explain how your direction of selected moments would achieve your aims.**

Answers to this question were less plentiful than those on Biff, but there were still a great many competent answers seen.

The comments made above, about the pitfall of adopting a narrative approach are applicable in relation to this question also.

One notable trend in answers to **Question 3 (b)** was a tendency of candidates to concentrate on lighting and sound effects, rather than on the direction of moments from the prescribed extract. While ideas for lighting and sound may be considered a part of the director's overall responsibility, they should not be the primary focus of an answer about directing selected moments to create specific effects for the audience. It is also worth mentioning that these answers also often included the expressionistic use of technical elements which appeared to be at odds with the style of the play.

There were also many very sound answers seen, that focused appropriately on creating tension for the audience. These answers focused on the delivery of lines and movement of all three of the characters involved in the scene. The suggested ideas were often aimed at maintaining the audience's anticipation of the discovery of the Woman, throughout the early exchanges between Biff and Willy, knowing that, despite Willy's best efforts, it was only a matter of time before his secret was discovered.

Some candidates chose to focus on Willy's appalling treatment of the Woman in an attempt to shock the audience as they watch Willy's unfeeling act of self-preservation. Many candidates wrote about achieving sympathy or empathy for Biff, Willy or for both of them as their once strong familial bond was broken.

See comments above for ways in which some candidates displayed their knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play.

Question 4

The Lion and the Jewel.

- (a) **How would you perform the role of SIDI in selected moments from the extract, to reveal her attitudes towards both LAKUNLE and BAROKA?**

This text proved to be a minority choice, although some good answers were seen. Most candidates appeared to enjoy tackling the prescribed extract from the perspective of a performer playing the role of Sidi. Those candidates who focused precisely on revealing Sidi's attitudes towards Lakunle and Baroka demonstrated a good level of understanding of what Soyinka intended each of the potential suitors to represent.

There were some well-developed responses demonstrating Sidi's attitudes towards the 'present' Lakunle and the 'absent' Baroka, through a range of specific suggestions for the performer's vocal, physical and facial expressions.

Candidates unanimously set out to display Sidi's apparent disdain for both men. As Lakunle is on stage during Sidi's discussion with Sadiku, candidates were able to discuss Sidi's rejection of the poor man through the contemptuous delivery of her withering judgement that Lakunle is no more significant than 'a eunuch'. In good answers, candidates also focused on Sidi's physical demonstrations of contempt for Lakunle's shows of affection and also her disgust at his persistent pursuit of her. Ideas were offered for pulling away her hand when Lakunle kisses it and even hitting him when he calls her 'My Ruth' and 'my Rachel'.

Some candidates found it more difficult to portray Sidi's attitudes towards Baroka, although there are plenty of opportunities for the performer to do this. Good answers focused on Sidi's dismissive exchanges with Sadiku and her very obvious infatuation with her own pictures in the magazine, revealing that the only person that Sidi loves is Sidi.

In terms of displaying knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play, more successful answers made purposeful reference to the play as Soyinka's allegory about Imperialism. They considered the play as an exploration of Nigeria's struggle to retain its identity in the face of Western colonialism and explored the idea that Baroka and Lakunle represent tradition and progress (or oppression) respectively. Some candidate demonstrated their understanding through reference to tribal customs, for example the tradition of polygamy and to the contrasting costumes of the characters in Ilujinle.

- (b) As a director, what effects would you want to create for an audience at selected moments from the extract? Explain how you would direct the actors to achieve these effects.**

Very few answers to this option were seen, as the majority of candidates who had studied this text chose to answer **Question 4(a)**.

Candidates aimed to create a range of effects for the audience. Principally, they wrote about revealing Sidi's vanity and there were some detailed descriptions of how Sidi might be directed to reveal how obsessed she is with her images in the magazine. There were suggestions for her examination of the magazine from all angles. One suggestion was that she should physically mimic her own 'poses' from the magazine, and to preen herself as she described her own beauty. One candidate wrote about her removing Lakunle's spectacles so that she could admire herself in the lenses.

Some attention was also given to making Lakunle something of a figure of fun and there were some suitable, and some less suitable, suggestions for directing his insistent overtures to Sidi. Sadiku, too, received some appropriate attention. There were several directions offered for her, especially for showing that she believed Sidi to be slightly unhinged to reject Baroka's offer of marriage.

It is worth noting that the question refers specifically to directing the actors as a means to achieving intended effects. Some candidates did not concentrate primarily on the actors, preferring, instead to offer ideas for staging elements such as lighting and sound to produce their intended effects.

See comments above for ways in which some candidates displayed their knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play.

Question 6

Medea

- (a) As a director, how would you stage two separate sections of the play that involve the CHORUS to increase the dramatic impact of the action for the audience?**

Surprisingly, out of the relatively large number of candidates who opted for this question, a significant number did not focus on the Chorus in their answers. Rather they chose sections where the Chorus was present but silent, and these candidates focused their attention on directing Medea interacting with Creon, Jason or Aegeus. The Chorus' role in increasing the dramatic impact of the action was not considered.

Even the candidates who did discuss staging ideas that involved the Chorus, rarely used the text spoken by the Chorus to support their answers.

Only stronger answers revealed knowledge and understanding of the role of the Chorus in Greek tragedy. In these answers there was usually an attempt to convey some information about the physical appearance of the Chorus, their number and gender. Some opted for uniformity of appearance and others suggested differentiating between different 'voices' by engaging with the text and the details of what the Chorus were saying.

The strongest answers were from candidates who knew the text very well and made judicious selection of sections, usually focusing on the Chorus' first appearance and interaction with Medea and their later appearance where they attempt to prevent Medea from murdering her sons and they confront Jason with the tragic news of the boys' deaths.

Many candidates opted for a traditional presentation of the Chorus, and they included ideas for their use of song and dance; others departed from tradition but justified the departure by explaining why a specific modern transposition might be desirable. Some candidates offered transpositions to locations and period that were unjustified and/or unconvincing.

As the question invited staging suggestions, rather than merely directorial ideas, those candidates who included ideas for dramatic costume and/or makeup or mask for the Chorus, or impactful lighting and sound effects to complement the Chorus' performance were duly credited.

In terms of displaying knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play, there were some answers seen that discussed the form and structure of Classical Greek tragedy and its formal constituents. Some referred to the mythological background to Medea's and Jason's relationship and this was occasionally referred to in support of staging ideas. Some candidates used the terminology of classical Greek theatre in terms of the positioning of the Chorus and some revealed knowledge of the history of the development of the Chorus in Greek drama.

(b) As a costume designer, explain and justify your design vision for a production of the play. You should refer in detail to designs for MEDEA and for at least one other character to support your ideas.

This was a question that attracted many responses, although relatively few of these were both detailed and supported from the text.

Amongst those who did refer to the text or action of *Medea* were answers from candidates who appeared to have prepared themselves for answering about costume design before the examination. These candidates offered a design vision for the play in terms of the period that they wished to set the play in, the style of the production, the context of the action in the play and the impact that they wished to create for the audience through the whole 'look' of the production. Such answers were in the minority.

Carefully prepared candidates were specific about the details of each costume that they discussed. They had inventive or workable ideas for the use of colour and choice of fabrics. They described or sketched the costumes so that the cut and style of the garments was apparent. Good answers also contained details about the apparent condition of the costumes. In very good answers, candidates included labelled sketches to support their answers and they adopted a 'head-to-toe' approach to design, so that the reader was able to envisage the costume in some detail.

These candidates considered the style and silhouette of the costume; they considered necklines and hemlines and type of sleeves; they thought about and included ideas for belts/sashes, footwear, headgear, capes or shawls, jewellery, bracelets, armlets, rings, brooches and other accessories. Some had Jason in armour, others envisaged several costume changes for Medea as her mood changes throughout the play, and they depicted a resplendent outfit for her exit in her chariot.

At the other end of the scale, there were answers that referred entirely to the colour of the outfits to be worn by Medea and one or more others. They failed to justify their ideas. They made no reference to the play at all.

Some candidates wrote about the physical appearance of the chosen characters, even down to the colour of their eyes, rather than designing costumes for them.

Other candidates claimed to be going for an 'authentic Greek' design and then dressed the actors in Roman togas.

Some candidates chose the Chorus for their other designs and simply stated that Chorus members would all be 'in the same costume' but without explaining what that costume would be.

Others chose to transpose the play to more contemporary settings and with more contemporary costumes, but these choices were rarely justified in a convincing way.

The question appeared to attract responses from candidates with limited acquaintance with *Medea* and, in some instances, it appeared that *Medea* was not a play that they had studied.

See comments above for ways in which some candidates displayed their knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play. Several candidates did reveal careful research into authentic costumes as worn in classical Greece, or, if they proposed a suitable transposition of period/location for the action of the play, they had undertaken relevant research into costume design.

Question 9

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

- (a) **As a designer, how would you create two or three of the separate locations that feature in the play using set, lighting and sound elements?**

This was the most popular question in **Section B** and the complete range of achievement was seen.

Candidates had free choice of which locations to create and the selection that candidates made was something of a discriminator. Some candidates chose contrasting and/or fairly complex locations which enables them to demonstrate a breadth of design ideas as well as showing some variety in their ideas, while others chose to provide very similar design ideas for each location, or they chose locations that appeared fleetingly or were present only in Christopher's mind.

Very few candidates actually stated that due to the brevity of the scenes in each 'location', the locations often have to be created/disassembled very quickly and that the ensemble play a part in achieving the fluidity of locations throughout the play. As mentioned above, in relation to the design question on *The Seagull*, stronger answers tended to be prefaced with a definition of the style adopted for the production.

Where candidates had approached the text in a practical way in their own studios they tended to be more aware of the challenges presented by the shifting locations. If they had actually seen a production of the play or had had access to a recording of some extracts from a live production, they had a clearer grasp of how the original team created the ever-changing locations of the play. These candidates tended to adopt an approach that utilised lighting and sound and LED lights and projections to help create individual locations that were eminently 'dissolvable'.

Other candidates tended to view each location as an opportunity for a naturalistic set and, defying the need for swift transitions, they designed detailed naturalistic settings. This was particularly the case where candidates opted to design the sets for Christopher's home with Ed and Roger's and Judy's flat. Some of these answers read more like instructions from an interior designer than from a set designer with multiple locations to create in a very short space of time.

Some workable and inventive designs were seen where candidates appreciated the requirements of the style of the play and the role of technical elements in facilitating change of location.

Less successful were attempts at naturalism with no suggestions made for transitioning between locations.

Some highly impractical suggestions were seen where scene changes would have necessitated long gaps in the continuous action.

Some candidates were keen to design in such a way as to suggest Christopher's perspective on the world and this was a valid approach provided that they also offered design ideas for two or three different specific locations.

As previously mentioned, in relation to other design options on the paper, candidates are advised to undertake research and have a good level of understanding of the underpinning principles of stage design before tackling such a question in the examination room.

In terms of displaying knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play, there were very few references to the style or genre of the play; no mention of the role of Frantic Assembly in the construction/creation of the original production and very limited reference to the historical or social context of the play.

(b) How would you perform the role of ED in two or more separate sections of the play, in order to convey your interpretation of his character?

There were many responses to this question and the whole range of achievement was represented.

Better answers always started with direct focus on the terms of the question and candidates made clear statements about their interpretation of Ed.

Most candidates appreciated that, despite Ed's short temper and tendency to violence both verbal and physical, his character is fundamentally a 'good' one. Many candidates recognised the strain that Ed was under, as sole carer for Christopher, and they saw Judy's departure as a betrayal that he was bound to find hard to accept. Others found Ed's behaviour in killing Wellington and lying to Christopher about his mother's 'death' to be so reprehensible as to be unforgiveable.

Stronger answers were always well-structured, either adopting a chronological approach to Ed's role within the play or taking a comparative approach, choosing one or more scenes when Ed appears in a good light and other scenes where he lost his temper or was aggressive. Whichever approach was taken, the most frequently discussed moments included Ed's first appearance, his interview with Mrs Gascoigne where he demanded that Christopher be allowed to sit A Level Maths, the moment when Ed and Christopher come to blows and the scene of reconciliation with Christopher, towards the end of the play, when he brings the puppy as a peace-offering.

In weaker responses, candidates did not identify the sections that they were exploring. In some instances, no text was used to support ideas and the approach to the text was so vague as to make it very difficult for a reader to locate the scene in the play that was being 'performed'.

Candidates sometimes offered narrative description of moments without considering the vocal, physical and/or facial expressions that an actor might use to convey an interpretation of Ed's character to an audience.

See comments above for comments about candidates' knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play.

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Answers to this question were less plentiful than those on Biff, but there were still a great many competent answers seen.

The comments made above, about the pitfall of adopting a narrative approach are applicable in relation to this question also.

One notable trend in answers to **Question 3 (b)** was a tendency of candidates to concentrate on lighting and sound effects, rather than on the direction of moments from the prescribed extract. While ideas for lighting and sound may be considered a part of the director's overall responsibility, they should not be the primary focus of an answer about directing selected moments to create specific effects for the audience. It is also worth mentioning that these answers also often included the expressionistic use of technical elements which appeared to be at odds with the style of the play.

There were also many very sound answers seen, that focused appropriately on creating tension for the audience. These answers focused on the delivery of lines and movement of all three of the characters involved in the scene. The suggested ideas were often aimed at maintaining the audience's anticipation of the discovery of the Woman, throughout the early exchanges between Biff and Willy, knowing that, despite Willy's best efforts, it was only a matter of time before his secret was discovered.

Some candidates chose to focus on Willy's appalling treatment of the Woman in an attempt to shock the audience as they watch Willy's unfeeling act of self-preservation. Many candidates wrote about achieving sympathy or empathy for Biff, Willy or for both of them as their once strong familial bond was broken.

See comments above for ways in which some candidates displayed their knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play.

Question 4

The Lion and the Jewel.

- (a) How would you perform the role of SIDI in selected moments from the extract, to reveal her attitudes towards both LAKUNLE and BAROKA?**

This text proved to be a minority choice, although some good answers were seen. Most candidates appeared to enjoy tackling the prescribed extract from the perspective of a performer playing the role of Sidi. Those candidates who focused precisely on revealing Sidi's attitudes towards Lakunle and Baroka demonstrated a good level of understanding of what Soyinka intended each of the potential suitors to represent.

There were some well-developed responses demonstrating Sidi's attitudes towards the 'present' Lakunle and the 'absent' Baroka, through a range of specific suggestions for the performer's vocal, physical and facial expressions.

Candidates unanimously set out to display Sidi's apparent disdain for both men. As Lakunle is on stage during Sidi's discussion with Sadiku, candidates were able to discuss Sidi's rejection of the poor man through the contemptuous delivery of her withering judgement that Lakunle is no more significant than 'a eunuch'. In good answers, candidates also focused on Sidi's physical demonstrations of contempt for Lakunle's shows of affection and also her disgust at his persistent pursuit of her. Ideas were offered for pulling away her hand when Lakunle kisses it and even hitting him when he calls her 'My Ruth' and 'my Rachel'.

Some candidates found it more difficult to portray Sidi's attitudes towards Baroka, although there are plenty of opportunities for the performer to do this. Good answers focused on Sidi's dismissive exchanges with Sadiku and her very obvious infatuation with her own pictures in the magazine, revealing that the only person that Sidi loves is Sidi.

In terms of displaying knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play, more successful answers made purposeful reference to the play as Soyinka's allegory about Imperialism. They considered the play as an exploration of Nigeria's struggle to retain its identity in the face of Western colonialism and explored the idea that Baroka and Lakunle represent tradition and progress (or oppression) respectively. Some candidate demonstrated their understanding through reference to tribal customs, for example the tradition of polygamy and to the contrasting costumes of the characters in Ilujinle.

- (b) As a director, what effects would you want to create for an audience at selected moments from the extract? Explain how you would direct the actors to achieve these effects.**

Very few answers to this option were seen, as the majority of candidates who had studied this text chose to answer **Question 4(a)**.

Candidates aimed to create a range of effects for the audience. Principally, they wrote about revealing Sidi's vanity and there were some detailed descriptions of how Sidi might be directed to reveal how obsessed she is with her images in the magazine. There were suggestions for her examination of the magazine from all angles. One suggestion was that she should physically mimic her own 'poses' from the magazine, and to preen herself as she described her own beauty. One candidate wrote about her removing Lakunle's spectacles so that she could admire herself in the lenses.

Some attention was also given to making Lakunle something of a figure of fun and there were some suitable, and some less suitable, suggestions for directing his insistent overtures to Sidi. Sadiku, too, received some appropriate attention. There were several directions offered for her, especially for showing that she believed Sidi to be slightly unhinged to reject Baroka's offer of marriage.

It is worth noting that the question refers specifically to directing the actors as a means to achieving intended effects. Some candidates did not concentrate primarily on the actors, preferring, instead to offer ideas for staging elements such as lighting and sound to produce their intended effects.

See comments above for ways in which some candidates displayed their knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play.

Question 6

Medea

- (a) As a director, how would you stage two separate sections of the play that involve the CHORUS to increase the dramatic impact of the action for the audience?**

Surprisingly, out of the relatively large number of candidates who opted for this question, a significant number did not focus on the Chorus in their answers. Rather they chose sections where the Chorus was present but silent, and these candidates focused their attention on directing Medea interacting with Creon, Jason or Aegeus. The Chorus' role in increasing the dramatic impact of the action was not considered.

Even the candidates who did discuss staging ideas that involved the Chorus, rarely used the text spoken by the Chorus to support their answers.

Only stronger answers revealed knowledge and understanding of the role of the Chorus in Greek tragedy. In these answers there was usually an attempt to convey some information about the physical appearance of the Chorus, their number and gender. Some opted for uniformity of appearance and others suggested differentiating between different 'voices' by engaging with the text and the details of what the Chorus were saying.

The strongest answers were from candidates who knew the text very well and made judicious selection of sections, usually focusing on the Chorus' first appearance and interaction with Medea and their later appearance where they attempt to prevent Medea from murdering her sons and they confront Jason with the tragic news of the boys' deaths.

Many candidates opted for a traditional presentation of the Chorus, and they included ideas for their use of song and dance; others departed from tradition but justified the departure by explaining why a specific modern transposition might be desirable. Some candidates offered transpositions to locations and period that were unjustified and/or unconvincing.

As the question invited staging suggestions, rather than merely directorial ideas, those candidates who included ideas for dramatic costume and/or makeup or mask for the Chorus, or impactful lighting and sound effects to complement the Chorus' performance were duly credited.

In terms of displaying knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play, there were some answers seen that discussed the form and structure of Classical Greek tragedy and its formal constituents. Some referred to the mythological background to Medea's and Jason's relationship and this was occasionally referred to in support of staging ideas. Some candidates used the terminology of classical Greek theatre in terms of the positioning of the Chorus and some revealed knowledge of the history of the development of the Chorus in Greek drama.

(b) As a costume designer, explain and justify your design vision for a production of the play. You should refer in detail to designs for MEDEA and for at least one other character to support your ideas.

This was a question that attracted many responses, although relatively few of these were both detailed and supported from the text.

Amongst those who did refer to the text or action of *Medea* were answers from candidates who appeared to have prepared themselves for answering about costume design before the examination. These candidates offered a design vision for the play in terms of the period that they wished to set the play in, the style of the production, the context of the action in the play and the impact that they wished to create for the audience through the whole 'look' of the production. Such answers were in the minority.

Carefully prepared candidates were specific about the details of each costume that they discussed. They had inventive or workable ideas for the use of colour and choice of fabrics. They described or sketched the costumes so that the cut and style of the garments was apparent. Good answers also contained details about the apparent condition of the costumes. In very good answers, candidates included labelled sketches to support their answers and they adopted a 'head-to-toe' approach to design, so that the reader was able to envisage the costume in some detail.

These candidates considered the style and silhouette of the costume; they considered necklines and hemlines and type of sleeves; they thought about and included ideas for belts/sashes, footwear, headgear, capes or shawls, jewellery, bracelets, armlets, rings, brooches and other accessories. Some had Jason in armour, others envisaged several costume changes for Medea as her mood changes throughout the play, and they depicted a resplendent outfit for her exit in her chariot.

At the other end of the scale, there were answers that referred entirely to the colour of the outfits to be worn by Medea and one or more others. They failed to justify their ideas. They made no reference to the play at all.

Some candidates wrote about the physical appearance of the chosen characters, even down to the colour of their eyes, rather than designing costumes for them.

Other candidates claimed to be going for an 'authentic Greek' design and then dressed the actors in Roman togas.

Some candidates chose the Chorus for their other designs and simply stated that Chorus members would all be 'in the same costume' but without explaining what that costume would be.

Others chose to transpose the play to more contemporary settings and with more contemporary costumes, but these choices were rarely justified in a convincing way.

The question appeared to attract responses from candidates with limited acquaintance with *Medea* and, in some instances, it appeared that *Medea* was not a play that they had studied.

See comments above for ways in which some candidates displayed their knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play. Several candidates did reveal careful research into authentic costumes as worn in classical Greece, or, if they proposed a suitable transposition of period/location for the action of the play, they had undertaken relevant research into costume design.

Question 9

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

- (a) **As a designer, how would you create two or three of the separate locations that feature in the play using set, lighting and sound elements?**

This was the most popular question in **Section B** and the complete range of achievement was seen.

Candidates had free choice of which locations to create and the selection that candidates made was something of a discriminator. Some candidates chose contrasting and/or fairly complex locations which enables them to demonstrate a breadth of design ideas as well as showing some variety in their ideas, while others chose to provide very similar design ideas for each location, or they chose locations that appeared fleetingly or were present only in Christopher's mind.

Very few candidates actually stated that due to the brevity of the scenes in each 'location', the locations often have to be created/disassembled very quickly and that the ensemble play a part in achieving the fluidity of locations throughout the play. As mentioned above, in relation to the design question on *The Seagull*, stronger answers tended to be prefaced with a definition of the style adopted for the production.

Where candidates had approached the text in a practical way in their own studios they tended to be more aware of the challenges presented by the shifting locations. If they had actually seen a production of the play or had had access to a recording of some extracts from a live production, they had a clearer grasp of how the original team created the ever-changing locations of the play. These candidates tended to adopt an approach that utilised lighting and sound and LED lights and projections to help create individual locations that were eminently 'dissolvable'.

Other candidates tended to view each location as an opportunity for a naturalistic set and, defying the need for swift transitions, they designed detailed naturalistic settings. This was particularly the case where candidates opted to design the sets for Christopher's home with Ed and Roger's and Judy's flat. Some of these answers read more like instructions from an interior designer than from a set designer with multiple locations to create in a very short space of time.

Some workable and inventive designs were seen where candidates appreciated the requirements of the style of the play and the role of technical elements in facilitating change of location.

Less successful were attempts at naturalism with no suggestions made for transitioning between locations.

Some highly impractical suggestions were seen where scene changes would have necessitated long gaps in the continuous action.

Some candidates were keen to design in such a way as to suggest Christopher's perspective on the world and this was a valid approach provided that they also offered design ideas for two or three different specific locations.

As previously mentioned, in relation to other design options on the paper, candidates are advised to undertake research and have a good level of understanding of the underpinning principles of stage design before tackling such a question in the examination room.

In terms of displaying knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play, there were very few references to the style or genre of the play; no mention of the role of Frantic Assembly in the construction/creation of the original production and very limited reference to the historical or social context of the play.

(b) How would you perform the role of ED in two or more separate sections of the play, in order to convey your interpretation of his character?

There were many responses to this question and the whole range of achievement was represented.

Better answers always started with direct focus on the terms of the question and candidates made clear statements about their interpretation of Ed.

Most candidates appreciated that, despite Ed's short temper and tendency to violence both verbal and physical, his character is fundamentally a 'good' one. Many candidates recognised the strain that Ed was under, as sole carer for Christopher, and they saw Judy's departure as a betrayal that he was bound to find hard to accept. Others found Ed's behaviour in killing Wellington and lying to Christopher about his mother's 'death' to be so reprehensible as to be unforgiveable.

Stronger answers were always well-structured, either adopting a chronological approach to Ed's role within the play or taking a comparative approach, choosing one or more scenes when Ed appears in a good light and other scenes where he lost his temper or was aggressive. Whichever approach was taken, the most frequently discussed moments included Ed's first appearance, his interview with Mrs Gascoigne where he demanded that Christopher be allowed to sit A Level Maths, the moment when Ed and Christopher come to blows and the scene of reconciliation with Christopher, towards the end of the play, when he brings the puppy as a peace-offering.

In weaker responses, candidates did not identify the sections that they were exploring. In some instances, no text was used to support ideas and the approach to the text was so vague as to make it very difficult for a reader to locate the scene in the play that was being 'performed'.

Candidates sometimes offered narrative description of moments without considering the vocal, physical and/or facial expressions that an actor might use to convey an interpretation of Ed's character to an audience.

See comments above for comments about candidates' knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play.

DRAMA

Paper 9482/13 Open-Book Written Examination
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Key messages

The questions in this Drama paper will always have a practical theatre focus and candidates are reminded that their interpretation of the selected set texts must be expressed using the language of the theatre.

While candidates are expected to have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the plot and characters of their selected texts, the examination is intended to assess candidates' ability to apply their knowledge about how theatre practitioners – directors, performers, designers- apply their various skills to convey meaning to an audience in relation to the prescribed extracts/texts and the precise question focus.

It is important that candidates adopt the perspective that is demanded by the question, for example, if the question requires a performer's perspective, they should write in the first person as a performer. The same principle applies to questions intended to be from a designer's or director's perspective.

Candidates are reminded to ensure that they have read and understood the precise requirements of the questions that they choose before embarking on their answers. They should attempt to avoid including material in their answers that is peripheral or irrelevant to the demands of the question set, as this will attract no credit.

It is important to understand that although it may be useful to offer a brief contextualisation of the action in the prescribed extract in **Section A** and/or in their selected sections, in **Section B**, candidates are not expected to offer 'potted' versions of the play in either section. Narrative description of the play's action or character sketches of individual characters do not attract credit in themselves.

It is also very important that candidates appreciate that their knowledge and understanding of each play's style, genre and performance context needs to be made explicit in their answers, as well as being implicit in the style of performance or production elements adopted in their interpretation. This aspect of candidates' knowledge and understanding is assessed separately, and where candidates neglected to consider style, genre and context in their answers, they were unable to access the full range of marks available to them.

General comments

Many very good answers were seen in this, the first series of a new syllabus.

Candidates appeared to find the questions accessible, and many wrote detailed and vivid responses to the precise demands of individual questions, that succeeded in bringing to life an extract or section of text, so that the Examiner could clearly envisage the unfolding action or moment.

Very good answers tended to demonstrate a secure grasp of theatrical terminology which was applied accurately, and which supported the 'virtual' realisation of a moment or section of text.

In less successful answers, candidates sometime betrayed a lack of appropriate theatrical vocabulary and were hampered in their ability to discuss production elements, in particular. A number of candidates attempted design questions, for example, without apparently possessing the necessary knowledge and/or experience of design to enable them to communicate their ideas effectively.

The most frequently seen errors of approach involved candidates whose answers were overly narrative or literary in approach and too dependent on relaying aspects of plot or identifying themes.

Some candidates made no explicit reference to the style, genre or context of their selected text and, if they happened to refer to previous productions of the text, they frequently made no pertinent comments about it.

Candidates should be reminded that, especially when they are writing about a text in translation (*Medea*, *Tartuffe*, *The Seagull*) they need to be very clear about which part of the play they are dealing with, as different editions/translations can be vastly different from one another. *Tartuffe*, for example, appears in many different editions and some are written in prose and some in Moliere's original verse style of alexandrines.

Candidates should never identify sections of text by quoting page numbers, line numbers or truncated phrases from the text linked with ellipses.

Most candidate timed their answers well and produced two developed pieces of writing. There were some fairly brief responses.

In **Section A**, candidates answered on *The Tempest* or *Death of a Salesman*.

In **Section B**, candidates answered on *Tartuffe* or *The Seagull* or *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The Tempest

Only a handful of candidates had studied this text.

- (a) **As a costume designer, explain and justify your design vision for the Spirits that appear in the extract. You should refer in detail to the costume of IRIS and at least one other Nymph or Spirit to support your design ideas?**

This was a question that attracted a few responses, although there was a lack of precise detail in the costume ideas suggested and justification was only occasionally supported with reference to the extract.

Amongst those who did refer to the extract were answers from candidates who appeared to have prepared themselves for answering about costume design before the examination. These candidates offered a personal vision for the play in terms of the period that they wished to set the play in, the style of the production, the context of the action in the play and the impact that they wished to create for the audience through the whole 'look' of the production.

Carefully prepared candidates were specific about the details of each costume that they discussed. They had inventive or workable ideas for the use of colour and choice of fabrics. They described or sketched the costumes so that the cut and style of the garments was apparent. In very good answers, candidates included labelled sketches to support their answers and they adopted a 'head-to-toe' approach to design, so that the reader was able to envisage the costume in some detail.

These candidates considered the style and silhouette of the costume; they considered necklines and hemlines and type of sleeves; they thought about and included ideas for footwear, headgear/headaddresses for the individual Nymphs, jewellery, bracelets, armlets, rings, brooches and other accessories.

Some considered the Goddesses that the spirits were representing, Juno, the Goddess of marriage, Ceres the Goddess of agriculture and Iris the Goddess of the Rainbow and they themed the costumes accordingly. Others appeared not to know what the Spirits were representing.

Some candidates included Ariel as one of the spirits which was perfectly acceptable. Other candidates made the mistake of designing for the human characters, Prospero, Miranda and/or Ferdinand. Designs for these characters could attract no credit.

At the other end of the scale, there were answers that referred entirely to the colour of the outfits to be worn by the Spirits. They failed to justify their ideas; they made no reference to the play at all.

In terms of displaying knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play, more successful answers made purposeful reference to conventions of Shakespearian comedy and to the tradition of the Masque in Elizabethan and Jacobean popular entertainment. Some also referred to Jacobean interest in spirits and the supernatural.

(b) How would you direct the performer playing PROSPERO to show his changing moods and attitudes within this extract?

There were a few answers to this question. Not all the candidates who attempted this question noticed that it was set from a director's perspective rather than from a performer's perspective.

Candidates focused on Prospero's display of power, over the Spirits and Ariel and over his own daughter, Miranda and her suitor, Ferdinand. They noted Prospero's shift in attitude towards Ferdinand in this extract and his kindly, fatherly demeanour with both Miranda and Ferdinand. Some commented on Prospero's passionate hatred towards Caliban whom he had tried but failed to 'reform'; the very mention of his name reminding Prospero of Caliban's villainy and ruining the mood of harmony that existed throughout the masque.

Some mentioned Prospero's regard for Ariel and tenderness towards him and others used Prospero's speech about this 'insubstantial pageant' to explore their direction of Prospero in a contemplative mood as he considers his own mortality and that of all living creatures.

Some candidates took up the directorial reins with some aplomb and created a vivid realisation of moments from the extract. In these answers there were directions for Prospero's changing tones of voice, for his gestures and movements and for the delivery of individual lines; better answers also focused attention on Prospero's reactions to what the other characters were doing or saying. The more detailed attention to the delivery of the text the more likely candidates are to achieve marks in the upper levels of mark scheme. Others offered a narrative account of some of Prospero's attitudes, but failed to create a clear enough picture of how the action could be brought to life on stage.

In terms of displaying knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play, some made successful answers made purposeful reference to conventions of Shakespearian comedy and to the tradition of the Masque in Elizabethan and Jacobean popular entertainment. Some also referred to Jacobean interest in spirits and the supernatural. There were also references to contemporary theories about the influence of nature versus nurture. Some referred to *The Tempest* as Shakespeare's farewell to the stage.

Question 3

Death of a Salesman

(a) As a designer, explain how your ideas for setting, lighting and sound would help to support smooth transitions between the shifting locations of the action within the extract.

No candidates attempted this question.

(b) How would you perform the role of LINDA in selected moments from the extract, to emphasise her fierce protectiveness of Willy and her disgust at the actions of her sons?

The most successful candidates chose moments that covered the arc of the unfolding action, from the arrival of Biff and Happy with the bunch of flowers for Linda, to her final words of vitriol for her 'good for nothing' boys.

While it is not to be expected that candidates are able to include every important moment from the given extract, it should be fairly clear that candidates who only deal with the beginning and the end of the extract would struggle to show the range of emotions that Linda displays towards both Willy and her sons over the course of the extract.

A number of candidates adopted a highly selective approach to Linda, which was self-penalising.

The best answers were from candidates who selected moments based on the opportunities afforded by key moments to explore Linda's utter devotion to Willy and her disgust at her sons' abandonment of him in the restaurant. Having made careful selection, they then offered detailed ideas for Linda's vocal, physical and facial expressions that would convey those feelings to an audience. There were some very inventive ideas for ways for Linda to show her feelings that are not included in the stage directions, for example, a few candidates wrote about different ways in which she handled Willy's jacket, with care and reverence.

Too many candidates offered a narrative retelling of the 'story' of the extract, written in the third person and completely devoid of a practical theatre dimension. Some candidates wrote about Linda's contrasting feelings but without the necessary accompanying practical detail, so they wrote, for example, 'I would look disgusted' or 'I would look sad' but left it to the Examiner to imagine how those 'looks' might be conveyed.

There were some very detailed responses, which conveyed Linda's contrasting feelings very powerfully and sometimes with great economy, referring to movement, gesture and speech and quoting the text to support the answer. Some good answers commented upon the fact that it was only when Willy had been badly treated by the boys that Linda allowed her true feelings for them to come to the surface. By referring to them as 'louse' and voicing her real opinion on Happy's womanizing, Linda uncovers the facade of the 'all-American happy family' that they have attempted to embody.

Some candidates included references to other plays in their answer. In particular, some candidates wasted valuable time and space by writing in some detail about the character of Nora from *A Doll's House*. Such an approach is beyond the scope of the requirements for questions in this paper and, unfortunately, attracted no credit.

In terms of displaying knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play, more successful answers made purposeful reference to Miller's intentions to present a modern tragedy.

Candidates were frequently able to articulate an understanding of the importance of 'The American Dream' and some identified Linda as a kind of 'Everywoman' within this 'dream'.

Most candidates revealed, through the nature of their performance suggestions, that they understood the naturalistic style of performance required. Better answers contained more explicit reference both to context and style.

Question 7

Tartuffe

- (a) **As a set designer, explain how your designs would be appropriate to the play's comic style and action. You should refer to two separate moments where your set design would enhance the comedy.**

No candidates attempted this question.

- (b) **How would you direct ORGON in two separate sections of the play to highlight his blindness to Tartuffe's true nature?**

A handful of candidates attempted this question. Some of them misread the precise demands of the question and they wrote from the perspective of a performer rather than a director.

There were some comical interpretations of Orgon, and some quite detailed answers were seen. Most candidates chose to include direction of the first appearance of Orgon where he interrogates Dorine about the health of the household and only pays attention to her cheerful descriptions of Tartuffe's rude health, ignoring the ailments of his wife.

Many of the funniest scenes involving Orgon include his wrangles with Dorine, and these were often selected. However, others considered his exchanges with Mariane whose feelings Orgon was

prepared to sacrifice in order to have Tartuffe 'in the family'. His discussions with Cleante were rarely considered.

Some useful work was seen on his reluctant agreement to hide under the table while Elmire attempted to entice Tartuffe into repeating his propositioning of her

A common error that candidates made, in response to this question (and in response to other questions that require a director's perspective), was to simply narrate the action with minimal directorial intervention.

Often a candidate would begin discussing a section in *medias res* and with so little textual support as to render the choice of section unclear. Candidates should be reminded that, especially when they are writing about a text in translation, they need to be very clear about which part of the play they are dealing with, as different editions/translations can be vastly different from one another. *Tartuffe*, for example, appears in many different editions and some are written in prose and some in Moliere's original verse style of alexandrines.

Candidates should never identify sections of text by quoting page numbers, line numbers or truncated phrases from the text supplemented with ellipses.

In terms of displaying knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play, some candidates referred to Moliere's patronage from Louis XIV, to Moliere's attack upon contemporary religious hypocrisy and to the tradition of commedia dell'arte as the stylistic forerunner of Moliere's comedies. Better answers showed an understanding of the importance of the use of language in Moliere's plays to create comedy, rather than a reliance upon physical knockabout comedy as found in commedia. Some general comments about the patriarchal society of the time were made relevant to Orgon's refusal to hear the voices of Elmire, Mariane and Dorine.

Question 8

The Seagull

- (a) **How would you direct two separate sections of interaction between NINA and KONSTANTIN to convey how their relationship changes in the course of the play?**

A handful of candidates answered this question. Some read the question carelessly and they wrote about the characters in scenes where they were interacting with characters other than each other. Unfortunately, material that lies outside the scope of the question attracts no credit.

The best answers were seen where candidates had read the demands of the question carefully and chosen appropriate sections of interaction. Most frequently chosen sections were from the opening Act, before the performance of Konstantin's play, where Nina clearly has some affection for Konstantin (albeit not as much as he feels for her). Candidates were then divided in their choice of second section; some chose the moment in Act Two, where Konstantin lays the dead seagull at Nina's feet and some chose the section in Act Four where Nina returns to the estate, a changed woman, but one with the determination to 'endure'.

Some candidates did not appreciate the need to discuss how their direction would reveal the change in the relationship. There were some directions offered, but they were not focused on the set task. Better answers considered the change in the characters' vocal, physical and facial expressions between the two chosen sections, and they picked out key lines to show the deterioration in the relationship.

The best answers were always purposefully supported with textual detail. Where the reader is able to see (and hear) the interaction between the characters unfolding, as they read the candidate's answer, the scenes come alive as if on stage.

In terms of displaying knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play, there were some fairly successful responses where candidates referred to the setting of the play in the 'bygone' age of pre-revolutionary Russia. Some mentioned the immediate context of the action of the play set on Sorin's estate, but featuring characters drawn from various walks of life.

Some candidates referred to Chekhov's plays of 'indirect action' as a reaction to the Russian theatre of his day which he considered to be mediocre and 'dated'. Some candidates referred to the production history of the play and how its first performance in 1896 was a theatrical flop before being reinterpreted by Stanislavski who turned the play into a great success.

Others identified the play as a tragi-comedy or discussed Chekhovian comedy as a style in its own right.

- (b) As a designer of costumes and accessories, explain how your designs would reveal your interpretation of the character of two of the following: MADAME ARKADINA, MASHA, NINA, DR DORN, MEDVEDENKO.**

There were only a few answers to this question.

As mentioned in the comments on *The Tempest*, above, the better responses appeared to be from candidates who had prepared themselves for the possibility of answering about costume design and who had equipped themselves with the necessary vocabulary with which to describe items of costume. These candidates also offered clear ideas for costume design in terms of the play's period, its performance style and the context of the action in the play.

All the candidates who answered this question chose to design costumes for Madame Arkadina and Nina. This proved to be a good choice as it offered candidates opportunities to compare the women in terms of designs appropriate to their relative ages and levels of sophistication. While such a comparison was not a demand of the question, it proved to be quite a useful approach and lead to some detailed observations about character.

Carefully prepared candidates were specific about the details of each costume that they discussed. They had inventive or workable ideas for the use of different colours, and they considered the relative status of the two women they had selected to design for, reflected in the choice of fabrics and ornamentation. Some chose at least two costumes for each character and although this had not been a requirement, candidates were able to suggest Arkadina's extravagant style through her changes of costume as well as reflecting the changes of seasons that occurs throughout the play.

Good answers to design questions invariably include labelled sketches and they took an approach to design that included ideas for the whole costume, from head to toe and including accessories, so that the reader was able to envisage the costume(s) in some detail.

These candidates considered the style and silhouette of the costume; they considered necklines and hemlines and type of sleeves; they thought about and included ideas for belts/sashes, footwear, headgear, capes or shawls, jewellery such as earrings, bracelets, rings, brooches and other accessories.

Arkadina's costumes tended to be elaborate and ornate, in rich colours and with trimmings and flounces to highlight her vanity and her desire to remain attractive. In Act 4 she arrived in furs. Nina looked fresh and youthful, wearing pastel colours in simply-cut dresses or blouses in Acts 1 –3. Candidates added floral touches in the designs or in her accessories. If a second costume was designed for Act 4, Nina appeared haggard and drawn, wearing heavier garments in darker colours and drab materials.

Please see comments above for how candidates demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play.

Question 9

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

- (a) Explain how you would direct two or three separate sections of the play where CHRISTOPHER and his father appear together, to convey the nature of their relationship to the audience.**

A tiny number of responses to this question were seen, making it difficult to make meaningful comments.

Better answers always started with direct focus on the terms of the question and put the nature of the relationship at the heart of their answers. Candidates noted that the nature of the relationship between Christopher and his father was in constant flux.

Candidates chose key moments that define the relationship, and these included the first time that Ed and Christopher appear together on stage, Ed's confrontation with the school over Christopher's Maths A Level, the section where Ed ends up hurting Christopher and the final scene of reconciliation when Ed brings Christopher the gift of the puppy, to show the changing nature of the father/son relationship.

Stronger answers were always well-structured, usually adopting a chronological approach to the relationship. Candidates used the strategies available to a director to communicate the relationship and offered ideas for the interaction between the characters in terms of their body language and facial expressions as well as to the delivery of specific lines. Attention to eye-contact and to the necessary avoidance of physical contact due to Christopher's phobias was also usefully applied.

In weaker responses, candidates did not identify the sections that they were exploring. In some instances, text was used so sparingly and the approach to the text was so vague as to make it very difficult for a reader to locate the scene in the play that was being 'directed'.

In terms of displaying knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play, there were very few references to the style or genre of the play; no mention of the role of Frantic Assembly in the construction/creation of the original production and very limited reference to the historical or social context of the play.

(b) As a designer of lighting, sound and projections, explain how your designs for one or more sections of the play would enhance the audience's understanding of Christopher's perceptions of the world.

Of the very few candidates who selected this question, all appeared prepared to design in such a way as to suggest Christopher's perceptions of the world and stronger answers tended to be prefaced with a definition of the style adopted for the production.

Where candidates had approached the text in a practical way in their own studios they tended to be more aware of the design challenges presented by the play.

If they had actually seen a production of the play or had had access to a recording of some extracts from a live production, they had a clearer grasp of how the original team created Christopher's world view using technical elements. These candidates tended to adopt an approach that utilised lighting and sound and LED lights and projections to help create individual locations for the action, which is punctuated with Christopher's memories/thoughts/perceptions or fantasies to create a constantly evolving 'environment'.

Some impractical suggestions were seen that suggested some limitations in the candidate's theatre experience.

Candidates are advised to undertake research and have a good level of understanding of the underpinning principles of technical design before tackling such a question in the examination room.

Please see comments above for how candidates demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the style, genre and context of the play.

DRAMA

Paper 9482/02 Practical Drama
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Key messages

- This component contains two performance activities, scripted and devised, which are of equal worth and candidates are advised to spend equal amounts of time on each.
- The most successful performances were able to communicate their intention to an audience, irrespective of whether the work was scripted or devised.
- The strongest scripted performances were of carefully chosen extracts that allowed an appropriate level of exposure for all candidates and where the group had a shared vision for how they would approach the work.
- The most effective devised performances were well crafted, with believable roles that required all members of the group to develop their performance skills as well as their ability to devise.

Administration

This was the first session of the new AS Drama syllabus and Cambridge has been flexible during the COVID-19 pandemic in supporting candidates to continue to take part in practical assessment. Candidates were allowed to perform with face coverings and/or in performance spaces that may not have been the ones originally intended but with the intention of fostering a creative performance environment in the challenging circumstances of social distancing. That notwithstanding, the majority of candidates rose to the challenge of rehearsing remotely and produced some exciting absorbing work.

Despite the COVID-19 restrictions, a number of centres were able to allow live audiences although the majority of performances were delivered only to camera. Some centres arranged for their performances to take place in the open air in order to allow for an audience, although this created its own challenges in the sound quality of the recordings. It is recommended that filming takes place as close as possible to the performance so that the recordings are of sufficient quality for the Moderator to hear the candidates.

There were a number of administrative errors, including incorrect addition of marks on the ICMS forms, inaccurate transcription of these marks for submission, failure to label the performances on the disks. Several centres did not include notes on identifying features of the performers, which was exacerbated by lack of introduction on the recordings. Candidates must introduce themselves by stating clearly their name and candidate number at the start of each performance

Moderators reported that ICMS forms often lacked detailed comment to support the marks awarded for each set of assessment criteria. Some centres simply copied out the assessment criteria in the syllabus, which added very little in support of the marks. The most effective comments were those that highlighted specific examples of the work that had led to the awarding of a particular mark and then related it to the assessment criteria. In a few instances, the full content of the ICMS forms could not be read as there was too much text in the box.

The majority of centres submitted candidates' work on USB memory sticks, which worked well and is highly recommended in future. DVD submissions were more problematic and a number did not play well, requiring the centre to submit duplicate copies.

Devised Piece (30 marks)

The assessment consisted of the group performance piece (20 marks) assessed under AO2 (Devising). Of these 20 marks, 5 marks were available for the use of the stimulus and a further 15 marks for the ensemble, structure and role. Candidates also submitted a spoken self-evaluation (10 marks), assessed under AO4 (Analysing and Evaluating).

Use of stimulus

There were many examples of creative stimuli that had considerable potential for powerful dramatic performances. Popular choices included fairy tales and short stories, well-known paintings such as *Mona Lisa* or *Guernica*, pieces of atmospheric orchestral music, and a variety of photographs. Reflections of the pandemic and its effects in different communities were very popular as were topical news stories, particularly those related to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Moderators reported that the strongest pieces were those that were able to translate research of the stimulus into performance ideas without resorting to obvious narrative approaches. The research and exploration of stimulus was varied in the devised pieces and, while there were excellent examples of creating physical work from still images, many pieces became hidebound by taking a literalistic approach to narrative. The strongest work was where candidates had considered creatively the potential of their ideas and were able to experiment with physicality and use of space rather than creating a storyline or plot.

Ensemble, structure and role

Some groups struggled to shape their ideas into the required length of between 10 and 15 minutes. This often meant that the piece lacked energy and drive and that there was a pointless revisiting of ideas. The strongest pieces demonstrated an energy and attack that derived from ideas that were well-structured, often playing with the time line of the piece, or using the performance space to its full potential. There was often a well-rounded sense of character with changing emotions and reactions, which varied as the play progressed. However, there was a considerable amount of one-dimensional characterisation, which created roles more akin to a soap-opera. A few groups of candidates created highly physical pieces that contained little or no dialogue. While some of these were successful, Moderators reported that where a piece had no spoken dialogue, the physicality needed to be especially powerful to compensate.

Spoken self-evaluation

The quality of these varied greatly, not least in the type of presentation chosen. Most candidates spoke for the required length of time of 3 mins and the best examples showed a detailed understanding of the process and individual contribution

A handful of centres included teachers' prompt questions to help candidates to think through their work. This was inappropriate as the candidates are required to structure their own evaluation. Some candidates prepared a printed script, which they then delivered from a podium. While this had the advantage of appearing slick and business like, it tended to lack spontaneity or very much sense of personal identification with the work. At the other extreme, some candidates simply held their mobile phone and spoke informally about how they felt their piece had gone, thereby creating something more appropriate to a social media clip. Neither approach was ideal. The most impactful work was where candidates had reflected on their devised work, were able to stand back from it to consider its effectiveness, and then delivered a structured evaluation. This typically included an analysis of the process of devising, a discussion of artistic intentions and an honest assessment of their own personal contribution to the group work.

Scripted piece

The assessment consisted of the group performance piece worth 30 marks, assessed under AO3 (Performing). These 30 marks were subdivided into Interpretation and Performance Skills (15 marks) and Communication (15 marks). Many candidates scored similar marks for both sets of criteria, which was a good indication that they had taken a holistic approach to the preparation of repertoire, considering fully the message they intended to communicate and the necessary technique to achieve it.

Several groups seemed unable to decide even on how long the extract should be. The syllabus specifies (p.7) that the piece should be between 10 and 25 minutes in length, with the intention that each candidate has approximately five minutes' exposure on stage and that the length will be determined by how many performers are in the piece. There were examples, however, of two performers attempting a piece lasting 25 minutes, which tended to produce work that became tedious. Nonetheless, there was a higher proportion of duologues than might have been expected, largely as a result of the pandemic arrangements. At the opposite extreme, a handful of centres attempted to submit a school performance and recycle it as an examination piece. This approach was entirely unsuitable for the purpose as the plays were far too long and the examination candidates were swamped by the non-examined performers.

There were many examples of well-disciplined performances where the group had taken collective leadership of their work and were able to demonstrate the natural rhythms of the drama. It was evident in a small number of instances that the teaching staff at the centre had stepped in to direct the work, which is prohibited by the syllabus (p.23).

Performance memory was a feature of the strongest performances and there were some examples of highly disciplined, focused work where the vocal and physical aspects of delivery were very well matched. At the opposite extreme, there were some very weak performances with some candidates reading from the script.

Strong performances also took full account of the staging of the piece and showed a good understanding of how to manipulate the stage-space to create contrast and perspective in the performance. By contrast, weak performances often showed little or no understanding of how to define the stage-space. This was particularly the case where performances took place in a classroom setting where there was little or no attempt to define the performance space. This sometimes resulted in a cluttered or poorly-defined performance space, meaning that candidates had to work doubly hard to inhabit the space, often with limited success.

The choice of repertoire was an essential ingredient to the success of the performance. Weaker groups had often ended up with an extract that was unsuited to their strengths, or which had a complete imbalance of roles, or required significant adaptation for it to work. Several performances were marred by allowing one candidate to assume the starring role, thus consigning the other candidates to supporting roles. Moderators reported that the repertoire selected contained a high proportion of lesser-known texts. The following table gives a representative list of repertoire seen, but this should not be taken as either definitive or prescriptive.

Examples of repertoire used in June 2021

David Lindsay-Abaire	<i>Rabbit Hole</i>
David Auburn	<i>Proof</i>
Richard Bean	<i>One Man, Two Guvnors</i>
Amelia Bullmore	<i>Di and Viv and Rose</i>
John Cariani	<i>Love Sick</i>
	<i>They fell</i>
	<i>Almost, Maine</i>
Caryl Churchill	<i>Top Girls</i>
Martin Crimp	<i>Attempts on her life</i>
Nick Dear	<i>Frankenstein</i>
Anna Deavere Smith	<i>Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992</i>
Vickie Donoghue	<i>Mudlarks</i>
John Gay	<i>The Beggar's Opera</i>
John Godber	<i>Shakers</i>
Lauren Gunderson	<i>The Taming</i>
	<i>The Revolutionists</i>
	<i>I and You</i>
Lillian Hellman	<i>The Children's Hour</i>
Beth Henley	<i>Crimes of the Heart</i>
Andrew Hobgood	<i>5 Lesbians Eating Quiche</i>
Henrik Ibsen	<i>A Doll's House</i>
Ben Jonson	<i>Volpone</i>
Tony Kushner	<i>Angels in America</i>
Susan Glaspell	<i>Trifles</i>
Eric Overmyer	<i>On the Verge</i>
John Pielmeier	<i>Agnes of God</i>
Sarah Quick	<i>Knickers! A 'Brief' Comedy</i>
F. Scott Fitzgerald	<i>Porcelain and Pink</i>
Jean-Paul Sartre	<i>No Exit</i>
Roland Schimmelpfennig	<i>Push Up</i>
Neil Simon	<i>Barefoot in the Park</i>
	<i>Brighton Beach</i>
	<i>The Odd Couple</i>
Robin Soans	<i>Talking to Terrorists</i>
Simon Stephens	<i>Punk Rock</i>

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Daryl Watson	<i>The Blueberry Hill Accord</i>
Oscar Wilde	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>
Tennessee Williams	<i>A Streetcar named Desire</i>
	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i>

DRAMA

Paper 9482/03
Theatre-Making and Performance

There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.

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Paper 9482/04
Theatre in Context

There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.