

# DRAMA

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| <p><b>Paper 9482/11</b><br/><b>Open-Book Written Examination</b></p> |
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## Key messages

In this, the third series of this examination, many interesting and inventive answers were seen from candidates who had engaged in some depth with the complexities and nuances of the texts that they were studying.

In this series, answers were seen on each of the optional set texts, although some optional questions attracted too few responses to warrant a detailed report.

The best responses came from candidates who had mastered an understanding of each of their chosen plays, including the themes, issues and characters within it, as well as understanding its social context, style and genre.

In less successful papers, there were examples where practical ideas ran counter to the dramatists' intentions and/or they revealed only a flimsy grasp of the wider plays.

At times, candidates made directorial or performance suggestions that revealed a limited theatrical understanding. This was often demonstrated through the absence of the use of specialist terminology and, especially in response to design questions, suggestions that were impossible to achieve on stage.

The majority of candidates timed their answers carefully and accorded their **Section A** and **Section B** answers equal attention in terms of timing and of the development of their responses. Others offered an uneven paper with some answers in **Section B** grinding to an abrupt halt after only a paragraph or two. Exam technique is always worth mastering, during the course of study.

Many good answers were the result of forethought, a brief but purposeful plan, and an approach to the extract or play that worked chronologically and selectively through the material making judicious choices of exemplification.

It is the job of the candidate to bring the extract, the character or the design ideas to vivid theatrical life for the reader, in direct response to the precise focus of the chosen question. This can only be accomplished, in 'directing' or 'performing' questions, by supporting ideas with direct reference to the words of the text. This is equally important in both sections. Candidates should never refer to line numbers or page numbers with the expectation that the examiner will have the same translation or edition that they have, and this is especially important in **Section B** where answers may draw from any part of the chosen play.

Some candidates peppered their responses with references to theatre practitioners. This is not a requirement of this paper and is to be avoided. Some candidates referred to multiple and, indeed, competing theorists at the expense of offering their own ideas for realising a scene or character or creating a particular atmosphere. Similarly, there was occasionally reference made to rehearsal techniques or acting process points, when approaching a role and although this information might be helpful for a candidate to establish the intended style of performance, extended details about the application of a theorist's methodology only tended to draw candidates further away from the actual focus of the question selected.

Crucially, there is a requirement to consider the play's style, genre and context and to write explicitly about how these aspects of the play have informed their interpretation. Despite this aspect of candidates' knowledge and understanding being worth a third of the total marks available, examiners are still reporting that some candidates offer no evidence of having considered these factors.

The most frequent mistake that candidates made in this series of the examination was to rely on generality. An actor cannot perform in a generalised way, nor can a director or designer achieve any effects by working

in a generalised manner. Candidates need to approach their texts with rigour and in detail. Where a design candidate suggests using music, for example, it is unhelpful to refer to wanting a 'sad' or 'jolly' piece of music. In the theatre, a real designer has to find the precise piece of music that will work in a scene or section of the play. This principle of specificity is crucial in any answer to a design question and should inform a candidate's study and revision of each text.

Some candidates failed to address the prescribed extract in **Section A** and wrote about an alternative section or roamed freely through the text. These answers could only attract token marks, if any at all were made relevant to the question.

In **Section B**, some candidates did not choose enough of a range from their chosen play and took all examples from a narrow part of the text.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1**

##### ***The Tempest***

- (a) Many answers focused on the idea of creating the storm to excite the audience, though often these ideas would be difficult to achieve practically, or they were not described in enough detail to be convincing.

Given that **Question 1(a)** is a director's question, the most successful answers tended to be the ones that discussed acting as well as technical effects.

Many answers centred on the desperate actions of the Boatswain and his crew and how their frantic attempts to avoid a wreck created excitement for the audience.

There were some interesting interpretations of both the storm and the calm that follows, although candidates struggled to find 'exciting' material in the exchange between Prospero and Miranda. As the question refers to 'selected moments from the extract', it was not expected that candidates would necessarily include both scenes.

Some answers failed to name a single character who is present in the first scene.

- (b) The majority of answers did not focus closely enough on the idea of the contrast between the specific atmospheres of the two scenes presented.

Good answers explored the design elements in relation to the delivery of text and/or to precise moments of action/dialogue between the characters present, for example, connecting thunder crashes to specific moments, which enhanced the effectiveness of the response.

At times the 'design' ideas suggested would be difficult to achieve on stage and were more suited to the cinema.

There was often a focus on the use of projection to create the storm, but this was not explained in enough detail. Candidates were unclear about where the projections might be projected and often candidates failed to understand the potential and the limitations of projection as a creative tool.

Many candidates offered suggestions for sound and lighting that were basic and frequently reduced to 'blue wash, flashing lights and thunder sounds'. These were frequently not connected to the delivery of text nor was the intended outcome stated.

Some candidates suggested costume ideas and considered the use of 'wet look' fabrics, others drenched their actors, and they were to perform in soaking-wet garments. Others suggested that the Mariners' and/or the royal dignitaries would appear in soiled and ripped clothing but without explaining how a storm at sea would create such damage.

Some candidates mixed sophisticated technology to recreate the sensations of being in a real storm with an effect of the raging sea created by billowing silks, handled by 'nymphs' in blue costumes. These candidates failed to recognise the incongruity of such an approach.

The ship itself was sometimes present and sometimes not, and ideas were frequently impractical for a scene that lasts less than five minutes. A whole ship or merely a 'steering wheel' appeared in some designs.

Often the scene transition to Scene 2 relied on the use of stagehands or clunky scenic devices, which detracted from the effectiveness of the ideas shown.

Scene 2, if it was attempted, was invariably accompanied by birdsong and/or the gentle sounds of lapping waves.

Many candidates offered costume designs for Miranda and Prospero but had clearly given no prior thought to how Prospero and Miranda had furnished their wardrobe since arriving on the Island.

A number of the answers focused solely on the storm and did not explain how the transition would be made into scene 2.

### **Style, Context, Genre**

Those who seamlessly integrated SCG material into their answer by considering seventeenth century notions of 'power', 'hierarchy', usurpation, colonialism and Jacobean attitudes to 'magic' were often more successful when answering on this text than those who merely listed these concerns at the start of the response (or not at all). Many candidates referred to the original performance of the play at the Blackfriars theatre and they wrote about the sound effects created by the rolling of cannon balls backstage. Some candidates opted to include this in their own productions despite the advantages of modern technology.

### **Question 2**

#### ***The Country Wife***

- (a) There were very few responses to this question. The answers that were given often drifted too far from the demands of the question, and centred on the visual presentation of the characters, rather than on the delivery of their witty dialogue or on their sexism.

One of the barriers to success appeared to be the candidates' lack of understanding of what the lines of the text actually mean – an absolutely basic requirement for any candidate studying this text.

There was frequently a large amount of attention given to the non-verbal communication of the characters, which occasionally worked effectively, but often ideas were unjustified, not linked to any specified passage of exchanges and it was not always clear that the candidates' intended effects would be achieved. Text was rarely used to support answers, and where it was, there was frequently also evidence that it had been misunderstood.

- (b) There were very few responses to this question. There was an opportunity for this question to be closely connected to the style, genre and context of the play for any candidate who had undertaken appropriate research into the period setting. Unfortunately, answers often betrayed the complete absence of any such fundamental research into the 'lifestyle' of young men (and women) in the late seventeenth century and, consequently, design ideas were frequently entirely inappropriate.

Answers offered were often further limited in their skimpy approach to stage design, which should be described in detail and accompanied by sketches.

Candidates generally failed to clarify the staging configuration selected and this impacted upon their ability to create a stage picture for the reader. Set design was restricted to listing the colour of the furniture used, which was rarely described in any other detail.

Some ideas about Sparkish's character were evident in the proposed flamboyance of his costume but rarely translated into any detail about the garments that he would wear. Some candidates revealed a complete ignorance of the 'Fop' caricature that Sparkish embodies.

## Style, Context, Genre

Better candidates generally understood the social and historical context of the play and what a Restoration comedy/comedy of manners represented within the movement of the time – ‘sexual freedom’ and a sense of rebellion were occasionally mentioned. Some understood the satirical aspect of the play but few alluded to its risqué element and how that might have been suggested to an audience.

## Question 3

### *Death of a Salesman*

- (a) This was one of the most attempted questions, and many good responses were seen.

The most successful answers centred on the question’s precise demands and offered multiple suggestions from both Willy’s ‘idealised past’ and his unsettling ‘present’, as seen in the extract, demonstrating a sensitive understanding of the character and of Miller’s intentions.

The most successful were those who closely followed the text and quoted from it, to create a structure for their answers and this then helped them with their discussion of the transition from present to ‘idealised past’. These candidates also discussed the past and present in equal measure.

Occasionally, only the moment with ‘Frank’ was used to display the movement into the ‘idealised past’. The omission of the sequence with Ben, Linda and Biff tended to reduce the candidates’ chances of achieving marks in the upper levels of the mark scheme.

Least successful were those candidates who proposed complete make-up and/or costume changes between the two ‘temporal states’ or had Willy’s character exiting and re-entering the stage.

Better answers contained references to vocal and physical changes made by an actor playing Willy, reflective of a more youthful, dynamic and optimistic Willy, in the past, compared to a weary, listless, ‘slumped’ and disillusioned Willy, in the present.

Some candidates appeared not to understand the play’s distinctive chronology and they suggested that Willy was offered ‘a lifeline’ by Ben, to join him in Alaska, *after* Howard had fired Willy.

Often responses were narrative or theoretical, focusing on Willy’s emotions or intentions rather than how he would be performed.

Better candidates adopted the first person and wrote precisely about how they would use their performance skills to highlight the contrast between the performance of Willy in ‘past’ and present. They gave detailed examples of how lines would be delivered and how Willy would speak, respond and interact with other characters, including with Linda and Biff in the ‘idealised past’.

- (b) This question was less frequently attempted, but it did attract some answers. A common mistake was not to address the question as a set designer but as a designer of lighting/sound and costume. Clearly such answers did not score highly.

Even when the focus was on set design, the majority of answers did not describe the setting in enough detail; often restricting design fundamentals to stage type, or colours and materials.

It was evident that few candidates had undertaken adequate research into the period setting.

Often the composite set was eschewed for a complicated series of scene changes. Where most candidates did recognise that the scene with Howard is set in his office, they frequently failed to notice that the scene with Ben is an outdoor setting. There were few attempts to ‘signal’ the transition from present to past in design terms.

## Style, Context, Genre

Often candidates were able to integrate relevant SCG into their responses. Willy's disillusionment and failure of reaching 'The American Dream' featured frequently, as did the economic circumstances of the era. Most candidates discussed or implied the adoption of naturalism and/or expressionism in their 'production'.

### Question 4

#### *The Lion and the Jewel*

One of the least discussed extracts.

- (a) Some candidates' interpretation of Lakunle seemed out of line with Soyinka's intentions and they failed to recognise his complete self-centredness, his arrogance and his stinginess in his reluctance to pay the 'bride-price' in exchange for Sidi's hand in marriage.

Others had more understanding of the character but not of the style of the play.

The most successful answers recognised Lakunle's 'melodramatic' streak and when they exploited the potential for comedy within his performance, they were also more successful.

Some candidates also showed a strong understanding of the allegorical nature of his character as an emblem of 'Progress.'

In good answers, candidates focused on the changing nature of Lakunle's character as he responds to the unfolding events that continue to unsettle him. Most candidates included relevant reference to his Westernised costume and how this also helped to define their interpretation of him.

- (b) Only a handful of answers to this question were seen.

Some attention was given to the dramatic action of the scene, and the creation of joy as shown in the music and the dancing in contrast to the despair felt by Lakunle, but this was not given enough specific direction to achieve a detailed response to the question.

Often candidates found it difficult to create a dramatic climax within their suggestions.

The good answers seen were centred on achieving specific effects and rooted in a strong knowledge of the play, the characters and the cultural context. These answers tended to deal with the arrival of the revellers with their energetic music and dance, Sidi's revelation of herself in her bridal attire and her rude put-down of Lakunle. They also noted Lakunle's fickleness as he dances with the young girl.

There was also good mention of the use of music at times, but this was sometimes not very sensitive to the world of the play.

## Style, Context, Genre

The most successful candidates in this area were those who were able to explain how the characters and their actions reflected the themes of the play – 'modernity' versus 'tradition.' Very few gained marks on the genre or style of the piece due to lack of understanding. There was some reference made to the context of Nigeria's achievement of independent status.

## Question 5

### *Enron*

- (a) This was the more popular question on this text and often drew on a knowledge and understanding of Claudia's role as the sole representation of how women were perceived within the Enron company.

Often the answers did not focus closely enough on the 'growing bitterness' of Claudia – the focus of the question. Instead, candidates discussed the delivery of her 'presentation lecture' focusing on her 'sassiness' before turning attention to her exchanges with Skilling, where some, surprisingly, saw her as attempting to win him back.

Better answers considered Claudia Roe's initial sense of authority in her presentation, her ill-concealed disdain towards Skilling and her sense of injustice. Her bitter jibes about Skilling's origins and her 'parting shot' about selling the shares were also considered.

The main problem with answers on this question was that candidates seemed reluctant to use the dialogue between Roe and Skilling to support their answers and to realise, in a practical way, how wretched Claudia feels at being removed from the job she loved and especially in the underhand way that this removal was engineered. Instead, candidates offered a third person view of a woman 'scorned', apparently 'floating' in a vacuum of unhappiness; crying, sniffing and smoking but not saying anything to the odious Skilling.

- (b) There were very few responses to this question, and they tended to be even less rooted in the text than answers to 5(a).

Candidates did not focus closely enough on the question, with some not providing an interpretation of Skilling, and how the character would be seen/received across the extract.

Some answers gave interesting interpretations of Skilling's different attitudes towards Ken Lay and Claudia but that was not the focus of the question which required a clearer pinpointing of different aspects of his character.

Better answers noted Skilling's sycophancy towards Ken Lay and his insecurity in his presence; they noted his vindictiveness towards Claudia and his general duplicitousness founded, it was speculated, on an 'inferiority complex' based on not having been Harvard-educated. Where a couple of these aspects were explored practically, there were engaging suggestions given.

### **Style, Context, Genre**

Most candidates were able to discuss the social and historical context of the play in relation to the downfall of Enron, and its impact on the character of Roe. There was also an awareness of this being a 'non-naturalistic' play but where 'naturalistic' acting was used to create the emotion, especially in the interaction between Roe and Skilling.

The only additional context offered was centred on Claudia's position as a woman, but negligible attention was given to the time-period or to the style and genre of the piece.

### **Section B**

## Question 6

### *Medea*

- (a) Examiners reported seeing the full range of answers to this question. Most candidates appeared to have understood Medea's complex character and her chameleon-like ability to adapt to the expectations of the male characters who came within her orbit.

The most successful responses were those where candidates used the text to support well-conceived ideas for showing Medea's powers of manipulation.

Candidates did best where they gave some thought to what opportunities were available to them in Medea's exchanges with different male characters *before* they decided which male characters to choose and launched into their answers.

It is an aspect of good examination technique to 'think' before 'writing'. Some candidates chose to show Medea with Jason in two separate sections but if they chose the final section between Medea and Jason there was less manipulation to discuss, as this is the section where Medea is gloating over making Jason suffer.

Some chose to write about Medea with Creon and then with Aegeus and these were often good choices as candidates distinguished between Medea's histrionics with Creon, her attempts to make him believe that she is weak and dependent upon him. She appealed to his paternal nature, and she presented herself as a fragile female. This was often effectively contrasted with her more familiar relationship with Aegeus. Here she was depicted as more wheedling in her attempts to secure a safe haven from a former friend.

In short, there was more scope to show Medea's manipulative skills where she behaved differently -but still manipulatively- with different male characters.

Better candidates always focused frequently on precise suggestions for the delivery of the text which included physical detail and attitudes as well as looking at vocal and physical expression.

Some candidates discussed how Medea might use her costume as part of her manipulative tactics, but a description of Medea's costume alone, without any reference to the question, attracted no credit.

**(b)** This was the less popular option.

Some candidates would have been better placed to answer **Question 6(a)** as they revealed quite a limited understanding of how 'dramatic tension' may be achieved on stage through judicious direction.

The best answers discussed a combination of the staging choices and direction ideas for individual performers.

Weaker answers exclusively offered ideas for lighting/sound and/or set, often unrelated to specific moments of action. This was perhaps due to a confusion about the role of the director in the theatre and his/her responsibilities.

Better answers considered the stage picture that they wished to create at particular moments, and they discussed how this could be achieved through the combination of production and performance elements. There was also a tendency, in stronger work, for candidates to consider the function of the Chorus in increasing the dramatic tension. Some powerful moments in the heated exchanges between Medea and Jason were also brought to theatrical life where candidates used the dialogue between them to support interesting fluctuations in the dynamics of their relationship.

Effective work was seen, for example, on the exchanges between the Nurse and Medea and the concerns of the Chorus of Corinthian women at the start of the play, the fraught exchanges between Medea and Jason at different points in the play, the Messenger's report of the deaths of Creon and his daughter and the final exchange between Jason and Medea following the murder of the children.

### **Style, Context, Genre**

The most successful responses here were those who understood the origins and function of Greek Theatre. These included the use of the Chorus, the use of levels and stage space, the use of masks and the dramatic intentions for catharsis. Top band candidates were confident in their use of the terminology associated with the classical Greek stage and always integrated their knowledge of SCG into the body of their answers.

## Question 7

### *Tartuffe*

- (a) The question was attempted by relatively few candidates. The question gave candidates the opportunity to define their design vision for the play and as such all candidates should have been prepared to answer it. Part of the study of any of the set texts should involve candidates preparing their design ideas and close attention should be given to all design elements during the preparation and revision period.

In successful responses, candidates had considered the original style, genre and period of *Tartuffe* and had appreciated how their designs could be used to reflect either the original production style or to reflect the style of a justified transposed period. These candidates first identified their selected style of comedy and then found design solutions for some of the key scenes of the play.

Those with some design invention considered appropriate furnishings for the period and provided lavish Louis XIV style furnishings, such as richly coloured, padded, chaise longue and upholstered chairs with potential for facilitating some of the comic scenes involving Tartuffe and Elmire. They included ornate gilded mirrors and elaborately framed family portraits to decorate the 'rooms'.

Some considered the need to conceal Damis, in one scene, and Orgon in another, where Tartuffe is obviously trying to 'woo' Elmire, thinking that he is alone with her, and they invented alcoves or cupboards or appropriately styled tables or bureaux to conceal the eavesdroppers.

Weaker answers included some crudely sketched chairs and tables with no reference to the sections that they were intended to serve.

- (b) This was the more popular question and there were some genuinely comical interpretations of the chosen sections.

Candidates chose sections where Dorine attempts to interfere in Orgon's proposed 'match' for Mariane, which is an ongoing 'theme', and included, for example, her encouragement of Mariane to defy her father and her ridiculing of Tartuffe, as well as her reconciling the 'soppy' lovers, Mariane and Valere, in direct opposition to Orgon's will.

Although there were some apt suggestions for physical comedy in better answers, for example, Orgon's failed attempt to slap Dorine sending him hurtling into the scenery, top answers revealed an appreciation that Molière's brand of comedy relies for its effectiveness on the appropriate delivery of lines of witty text. Without textual support and good detail about the delivery of text, candidates simply could not achieve the level of comedy necessary for upper-level marks.

### Style, Context, Genre

There was some evidence of cultural or social context in candidate's answers in reference to conventions of eighteenth century French society relating to parental and filial obligations. Some candidates mentioned the religious background to Tartuffe being installed in Orgon's household as a private cleric.

The fact that Dorine is a most unconventional servant in her relationship with her master, Orgon was also mentioned.

## Question 8

### *The Seagull*

- (a) This was the more popular question on *The Seagull*, but examiners reported seeing very few adequate responses.

In the work of better candidates, where there was evidence of some awareness of the period setting of the play, of Arkadina's status and her profession as an actress, of her vanity and extravagance – as mentioned in the question – there were some acceptable descriptions and even sketches of Arkadina's costume.

These candidates mentioned lavish fabrics, such as silk, lace, fur, brocade. They often included reference to the colour of Arkadina's garments. Many candidates also suggested Arkadina's choice of accessories, such as hats and parasols, jewellery and scarves or gloves.

Sketches helped to reveal an understanding of period through the silhouette in the design.

Better answers always linked the designs offered to the part of the play where the designs would be worn. Many answers included Arkadina making a 'statement' entrance in Act One, for example, trying to 'steal the limelight' from both Nina and Konstantin. Some dealt with Act Two where Arkadina is competing with Masha in terms of her own more youthful appearance.

However, such responses were in the minority and candidates appeared not universally in possession of detailed knowledge of the character.

In weaker answers, candidates often offered an array of tiny sketches of individual items of clothing that Arkadina might wear, that in no way constituted 'costume design'. Of these, few were appropriate for the period of the play or for its action. No justification was offered for dressing Arkadina in a trouser suit, for example, or in designer stiletto heels.

Few candidates appreciated that dresses would be floor length and that Arkadina is unlikely to be sporting a ponytail.

- (b) This was the more successfully approached question when exploring *The Seagull*. Many candidates offered informed and dynamic interpretations of Konstantin, particularly in relation to his love for Nina and desperate seeking for attention from his mother and other characters.

The best answers explored Konstantin as a complex character, revealing his jealousy, desperation, love, cruelty and pettiness, at different moments throughout the play.

When these characteristics were explored practically and were supported with ideas for the delivery of his lines, rather than just explained in a narrative form, the highest levels were achieved.

Some candidates centred on rehearsal approaches and a naturalistic method of character creation, which is effective for a reference to the style, but does not meet the demands of the question in terms of concrete performance ideas.

### **Style, Context, Genre**

Some understanding of period could be inferred from appropriate costume design and the same may be said of the style being inferred from performance ideas but negligible explicit awareness of the period or setting or genre of the play was seen.

Unfortunately, within the costume designs, very few candidates were credited with many marks for SCG due to them not explicitly considering the naturalism within the suggestions or being very specific about the costumes from the time period.

### **Question 9**

#### ***The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time***

- (a) This was a popular question. There was a range of responses seen.

The majority of answers presented Roger as a wholly negative character, which was unfortunate, as the character has his lighter moments. Some candidates were prepared to acknowledge that while Roger appears to be a possessive partner to Judy and is certainly resentful of Christopher as time goes on, he can also be seen as a reasonable man trying to cope in a difficult situation.

Most candidates focused on his aggressive and sarcastic side in his dealings with both Judy and Christopher. Some candidates dismissed him by simply calling him 'a drunk'.

The presentation of Roger was frequently largely physical, with only the best responses offering an interesting and detailed approach to the delivery of lines at moments within the scenes. Good work was seen on Roger's initial response to Christopher's unexpected arrival, his attempt to mediate between Judy and Ed when Ed turns up at the flat, and his interaction with Judy over the 'star chart' for Christopher's eating habits. Almost all candidates dealt with Roger's drunken assault on Christopher.

Some candidates focused more on Roger as a representative of a person unable to cope with Christopher's neurodiversity and, while this may be an aspect of Roger's attitudes, the question asked for an interpretation of Roger's character – not of his views.

Some candidates had obviously put their own titles to the different parts of the play, and they used these as if an examiner would know which part of the play was being alluded to. This is not good practice.

- (b) The majority of candidates responded well to this question, and many exhibited a clear influence from the original National Theatre production, although this was rarely explicitly stated.

Stronger answers began with clear statements about the candidate's chosen staging configuration, style of performance, the notion of ensemble playing and there was a strong sense of the technical facilities at their disposal in the chosen venue.

Many candidates chose to write about the opening of the play, the chaotic train station scene and/or the final scenes, and these answers often revealed a clear grasp of how to create specific atmospheres using the technical elements at their disposal.

Other candidates did not address either the question of atmosphere or the application of design elements directly.

The description of the designs was mostly effective, but there was some confusion over the practicalities of stagecraft. Some candidates had given little thought to, for example, the positioning of projectors, the surfaces that the projections would appear on, the technical terms for the lights used and/or for the positioning of the speakers for transmission of sound.

Some answers did not give enough precise detail about the projections, for example and it was not possible to visualise what an audience might see/experience as a result of a generalised approach to design issues.

Most designs implicitly referenced previous productions, the style and the genre of the play, but very few explicitly outlined this in detail.

Sometimes the focus on 'the atmosphere' being created by designs got lost.

### Style, Context, Genre

Very few candidates seem to appreciate the actual genre of this play – many suggested it was a murder mystery or a 'Brechtian' play but very few alluded to 'physical theatre'. Much misunderstanding of Brecht's work was in evidence. Frantic Assembly's style was rarely discussed.

Some candidates overloaded their answers with extended references to neurodiversity and there was quite a lot of superfluous material purporting to be SCG for this play.

### Question 10

#### *Snow in Midsummer*

- (a) This play was a minority choice with **Question 10(a)** being the most frequently attempted.

Most candidates chose to write about the 'proposal' scene and the 'break-up' scene. Most candidates offered predictable ideas for Scene 1 with the characters gazing at one another, kissing and holding hands, with very little supporting text and very little depth. Scene 10 was more successfully realised, and candidates offered more original responses, created tension and made it clear that the relationship was changing.

- (b) There were some original answers here but most of the candidates who tackled this design question revealed very basic technical knowledge and there was a plethora of blue lights and fog machines in use. The most successful answers came from candidates who created a complete concept which included the costume of the characters and what each might symbolise. Lights were used to create shadows, and some used scrims with actors moving behind, creating an ethereal quality.

### **Style, Context, Genre**

Candidates did not often consider the cultural context of the play. Some did link it to the original Chinese version of the play. Those that considered the play's episodic and 'non-naturalistic' genre were most successful.

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Many good answers were the result of forethought, a brief but purposeful plan, and an approach to the extract or play that worked chronologically and selectively through the material making judicious choices of exemplification.

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The most frequent mistake that candidates made in this series of the examination was to rely on generality. An actor cannot perform in a generalised way, nor can a director or designer achieve any effects by working

in a generalised manner. Candidates need to approach their texts with rigour and in detail. Where a design candidate suggests using music, for example, it is unhelpful to refer to wanting a 'sad' or 'jolly' piece of music. In the theatre, a real designer has to find the precise piece of music that will work in a scene or section of the play. This principle of specificity is crucial in any answer to a design question and should inform a candidate's study and revision of each text.

Some candidates failed to address the prescribed extract in **Section A** and wrote about an alternative section or roamed freely through the text. These answers could only attract token marks, if any at all were made relevant to the question.

In **Section B**, some candidates did not choose enough of a range from their chosen play and took all examples from a narrow part of the text.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1**

##### ***The Tempest***

- (a) Many answers focused on the idea of creating the storm to excite the audience, though often these ideas would be difficult to achieve practically, or they were not described in enough detail to be convincing.

Given that **Question 1(a)** is a director's question, the most successful answers tended to be the ones that discussed acting as well as technical effects.

Many answers centred on the desperate actions of the Boatswain and his crew and how their frantic attempts to avoid a wreck created excitement for the audience.

There were some interesting interpretations of both the storm and the calm that follows, although candidates struggled to find 'exciting' material in the exchange between Prospero and Miranda. As the question refers to 'selected moments from the extract', it was not expected that candidates would necessarily include both scenes.

Some answers failed to name a single character who is present in the first scene.

- (b) The majority of answers did not focus closely enough on the idea of the contrast between the specific atmospheres of the two scenes presented.

Good answers explored the design elements in relation to the delivery of text and/or to precise moments of action/dialogue between the characters present, for example, connecting thunder crashes to specific moments, which enhanced the effectiveness of the response.

At times the 'design' ideas suggested would be difficult to achieve on stage and were more suited to the cinema.

There was often a focus on the use of projection to create the storm, but this was not explained in enough detail. Candidates were unclear about where the projections might be projected and often candidates failed to understand the potential and the limitations of projection as a creative tool.

Many candidates offered suggestions for sound and lighting that were basic and frequently reduced to 'blue wash, flashing lights and thunder sounds'. These were frequently not connected to the delivery of text nor was the intended outcome stated.

Some candidates suggested costume ideas and considered the use of 'wet look' fabrics, others drenched their actors, and they were to perform in soaking-wet garments. Others suggested that the Mariners' and/or the royal dignitaries would appear in soiled and ripped clothing but without explaining how a storm at sea would create such damage.

Some candidates mixed sophisticated technology to recreate the sensations of being in a real storm with an effect of the raging sea created by billowing silks, handled by 'nymphs' in blue costumes. These candidates failed to recognise the incongruity of such an approach.

The ship itself was sometimes present and sometimes not, and ideas were frequently impractical for a scene that lasts less than five minutes. A whole ship or merely a 'steering wheel' appeared in some designs.

Often the scene transition to Scene 2 relied on the use of stagehands or clunky scenic devices, which detracted from the effectiveness of the ideas shown.

Scene 2, if it was attempted, was invariably accompanied by birdsong and/or the gentle sounds of lapping waves.

Many candidates offered costume designs for Miranda and Prospero but had clearly given no prior thought to how Prospero and Miranda had furnished their wardrobe since arriving on the Island.

A number of the answers focused solely on the storm and did not explain how the transition would be made into scene 2.

### **Style, Context, Genre**

Those who seamlessly integrated SCG material into their answer by considering seventeenth century notions of 'power', 'hierarchy', usurpation, colonialism and Jacobean attitudes to 'magic' were often more successful when answering on this text than those who merely listed these concerns at the start of the response (or not at all). Many candidates referred to the original performance of the play at the Blackfriars theatre and they wrote about the sound effects created by the rolling of cannon balls backstage. Some candidates opted to include this in their own productions despite the advantages of modern technology.

### **Question 2**

#### ***The Country Wife***

- (a) There were very few responses to this question. The answers that were given often drifted too far from the demands of the question, and centred on the visual presentation of the characters, rather than on the delivery of their witty dialogue or on their sexism.

One of the barriers to success appeared to be the candidates' lack of understanding of what the lines of the text actually mean – an absolutely basic requirement for any candidate studying this text.

There was frequently a large amount of attention given to the non-verbal communication of the characters, which occasionally worked effectively, but often ideas were unjustified, not linked to any specified passage of exchanges and it was not always clear that the candidates' intended effects would be achieved. Text was rarely used to support answers, and where it was, there was frequently also evidence that it had been misunderstood.

- (b) There were very few responses to this question. There was an opportunity for this question to be closely connected to the style, genre and context of the play for any candidate who had undertaken appropriate research into the period setting. Unfortunately, answers often betrayed the complete absence of any such fundamental research into the 'lifestyle' of young men (and women) in the late seventeenth century and, consequently, design ideas were frequently entirely inappropriate.

Answers offered were often further limited in their skimpy approach to stage design, which should be described in detail and accompanied by sketches.

Candidates generally failed to clarify the staging configuration selected and this impacted upon their ability to create a stage picture for the reader. Set design was restricted to listing the colour of the furniture used, which was rarely described in any other detail.

Some ideas about Sparkish's character were evident in the proposed flamboyance of his costume but rarely translated into any detail about the garments that he would wear. Some candidates revealed a complete ignorance of the 'Fop' caricature that Sparkish embodies.

## Style, Context, Genre

Better candidates generally understood the social and historical context of the play and what a Restoration comedy/comedy of manners represented within the movement of the time – ‘sexual freedom’ and a sense of rebellion were occasionally mentioned. Some understood the satirical aspect of the play but few alluded to its risqué element and how that might have been suggested to an audience.

## Question 3

### *Death of a Salesman*

- (a) This was one of the most attempted questions, and many good responses were seen.

The most successful answers centred on the question’s precise demands and offered multiple suggestions from both Willy’s ‘idealised past’ and his unsettling ‘present’, as seen in the extract, demonstrating a sensitive understanding of the character and of Miller’s intentions.

The most successful were those who closely followed the text and quoted from it, to create a structure for their answers and this then helped them with their discussion of the transition from present to ‘idealised past’. These candidates also discussed the past and present in equal measure.

Occasionally, only the moment with ‘Frank’ was used to display the movement into the ‘idealised past’. The omission of the sequence with Ben, Linda and Biff tended to reduce the candidates’ chances of achieving marks in the upper levels of the mark scheme.

Least successful were those candidates who proposed complete make-up and/or costume changes between the two ‘temporal states’ or had Willy’s character exiting and re-entering the stage.

Better answers contained references to vocal and physical changes made by an actor playing Willy, reflective of a more youthful, dynamic and optimistic Willy, in the past, compared to a weary, listless, ‘slumped’ and disillusioned Willy, in the present.

Some candidates appeared not to understand the play’s distinctive chronology and they suggested that Willy was offered ‘a lifeline’ by Ben, to join him in Alaska, *after* Howard had fired Willy.

Often responses were narrative or theoretical, focusing on Willy’s emotions or intentions rather than how he would be performed.

Better candidates adopted the first person and wrote precisely about how they would use their performance skills to highlight the contrast between the performance of Willy in ‘past’ and present. They gave detailed examples of how lines would be delivered and how Willy would speak, respond and interact with other characters, including with Linda and Biff in the ‘idealised past’.

- (b) This question was less frequently attempted, but it did attract some answers. A common mistake was not to address the question as a set designer but as a designer of lighting/sound and costume. Clearly such answers did not score highly.

Even when the focus was on set design, the majority of answers did not describe the setting in enough detail; often restricting design fundamentals to stage type, or colours and materials.

It was evident that few candidates had undertaken adequate research into the period setting.

Often the composite set was eschewed for a complicated series of scene changes. Where most candidates did recognise that the scene with Howard is set in his office, they frequently failed to notice that the scene with Ben is an outdoor setting. There were few attempts to ‘signal’ the transition from present to past in design terms.

## Style, Context, Genre

Often candidates were able to integrate relevant SCG into their responses. Willy's disillusionment and failure of reaching 'The American Dream' featured frequently, as did the economic circumstances of the era. Most candidates discussed or implied the adoption of naturalism and/or expressionism in their 'production'.

### Question 4

#### *The Lion and the Jewel*

One of the least discussed extracts.

- (a) Some candidates' interpretation of Lakunle seemed out of line with Soyinka's intentions and they failed to recognise his complete self-centredness, his arrogance and his stinginess in his reluctance to pay the 'bride-price' in exchange for Sidi's hand in marriage.

Others had more understanding of the character but not of the style of the play.

The most successful answers recognised Lakunle's 'melodramatic' streak and when they exploited the potential for comedy within his performance, they were also more successful.

Some candidates also showed a strong understanding of the allegorical nature of his character as an emblem of 'Progress.'

In good answers, candidates focused on the changing nature of Lakunle's character as he responds to the unfolding events that continue to unsettle him. Most candidates included relevant reference to his Westernised costume and how this also helped to define their interpretation of him.

- (b) Only a handful of answers to this question were seen.

Some attention was given to the dramatic action of the scene, and the creation of joy as shown in the music and the dancing in contrast to the despair felt by Lakunle, but this was not given enough specific direction to achieve a detailed response to the question.

Often candidates found it difficult to create a dramatic climax within their suggestions.

The good answers seen were centred on achieving specific effects and rooted in a strong knowledge of the play, the characters and the cultural context. These answers tended to deal with the arrival of the revellers with their energetic music and dance, Sidi's revelation of herself in her bridal attire and her rude put-down of Lakunle. They also noted Lakunle's fickleness as he dances with the young girl.

There was also good mention of the use of music at times, but this was sometimes not very sensitive to the world of the play.

## Style, Context, Genre

The most successful candidates in this area were those who were able to explain how the characters and their actions reflected the themes of the play – 'modernity' versus 'tradition.' Very few gained marks on the genre or style of the piece due to lack of understanding. There was some reference made to the context of Nigeria's achievement of independent status.

## Question 5

### *Enron*

- (a) This was the more popular question on this text and often drew on a knowledge and understanding of Claudia's role as the sole representation of how women were perceived within the Enron company.

Often the answers did not focus closely enough on the 'growing bitterness' of Claudia – the focus of the question. Instead, candidates discussed the delivery of her 'presentation lecture' focusing on her 'sassiness' before turning attention to her exchanges with Skilling, where some, surprisingly, saw her as attempting to win him back.

Better answers considered Claudia Roe's initial sense of authority in her presentation, her ill-concealed disdain towards Skilling and her sense of injustice. Her bitter jibes about Skilling's origins and her 'parting shot' about selling the shares were also considered.

The main problem with answers on this question was that candidates seemed reluctant to use the dialogue between Roe and Skilling to support their answers and to realise, in a practical way, how wretched Claudia feels at being removed from the job she loved and especially in the underhand way that this removal was engineered. Instead, candidates offered a third person view of a woman 'scorned', apparently 'floating' in a vacuum of unhappiness; crying, sniffing and smoking but not saying anything to the odious Skilling.

- (b) There were very few responses to this question, and they tended to be even less rooted in the text than answers to 5(a).

Candidates did not focus closely enough on the question, with some not providing an interpretation of Skilling, and how the character would be seen/received across the extract.

Some answers gave interesting interpretations of Skilling's different attitudes towards Ken Lay and Claudia but that was not the focus of the question which required a clearer pinpointing of different aspects of his character.

Better answers noted Skilling's sycophancy towards Ken Lay and his insecurity in his presence; they noted his vindictiveness towards Claudia and his general duplicitousness founded, it was speculated, on an 'inferiority complex' based on not having been Harvard-educated. Where a couple of these aspects were explored practically, there were engaging suggestions given.

### **Style, Context, Genre**

Most candidates were able to discuss the social and historical context of the play in relation to the downfall of Enron, and its impact on the character of Roe. There was also an awareness of this being a 'non-naturalistic' play but where 'naturalistic' acting was used to create the emotion, especially in the interaction between Roe and Skilling.

The only additional context offered was centred on Claudia's position as a woman, but negligible attention was given to the time-period or to the style and genre of the piece.

### **Section B**

## Question 6

### *Medea*

- (a) Examiners reported seeing the full range of answers to this question. Most candidates appeared to have understood Medea's complex character and her chameleon-like ability to adapt to the expectations of the male characters who came within her orbit.

The most successful responses were those where candidates used the text to support well-conceived ideas for showing Medea's powers of manipulation.

Candidates did best where they gave some thought to what opportunities were available to them in Medea's exchanges with different male characters *before* they decided which male characters to choose and launched into their answers.

It is an aspect of good examination technique to 'think' before 'writing'. Some candidates chose to show Medea with Jason in two separate sections but if they chose the final section between Medea and Jason there was less manipulation to discuss, as this is the section where Medea is gloating over making Jason suffer.

Some chose to write about Medea with Creon and then with Aegeus and these were often good choices as candidates distinguished between Medea's histrionics with Creon, her attempts to make him believe that she is weak and dependent upon him. She appealed to his paternal nature, and she presented herself as a fragile female. This was often effectively contrasted with her more familiar relationship with Aegeus. Here she was depicted as more wheedling in her attempts to secure a safe haven from a former friend.

In short, there was more scope to show Medea's manipulative skills where she behaved differently -but still manipulatively- with different male characters.

Better candidates always focused frequently on precise suggestions for the delivery of the text which included physical detail and attitudes as well as looking at vocal and physical expression.

Some candidates discussed how Medea might use her costume as part of her manipulative tactics, but a description of Medea's costume alone, without any reference to the question, attracted no credit.

**(b)** This was the less popular option.

Some candidates would have been better placed to answer **Question 6(a)** as they revealed quite a limited understanding of how 'dramatic tension' may be achieved on stage through judicious direction.

The best answers discussed a combination of the staging choices and direction ideas for individual performers.

Weaker answers exclusively offered ideas for lighting/sound and/or set, often unrelated to specific moments of action. This was perhaps due to a confusion about the role of the director in the theatre and his/her responsibilities.

Better answers considered the stage picture that they wished to create at particular moments, and they discussed how this could be achieved through the combination of production and performance elements. There was also a tendency, in stronger work, for candidates to consider the function of the Chorus in increasing the dramatic tension. Some powerful moments in the heated exchanges between Medea and Jason were also brought to theatrical life where candidates used the dialogue between them to support interesting fluctuations in the dynamics of their relationship.

Effective work was seen, for example, on the exchanges between the Nurse and Medea and the concerns of the Chorus of Corinthian women at the start of the play, the fraught exchanges between Medea and Jason at different points in the play, the Messenger's report of the deaths of Creon and his daughter and the final exchange between Jason and Medea following the murder of the children.

### **Style, Context, Genre**

The most successful responses here were those who understood the origins and function of Greek Theatre. These included the use of the Chorus, the use of levels and stage space, the use of masks and the dramatic intentions for catharsis. Top band candidates were confident in their use of the terminology associated with the classical Greek stage and always integrated their knowledge of SCG into the body of their answers.

## Question 7

### *Tartuffe*

- (a) The question was attempted by relatively few candidates. The question gave candidates the opportunity to define their design vision for the play and as such all candidates should have been prepared to answer it. Part of the study of any of the set texts should involve candidates preparing their design ideas and close attention should be given to all design elements during the preparation and revision period.

In successful responses, candidates had considered the original style, genre and period of *Tartuffe* and had appreciated how their designs could be used to reflect either the original production style or to reflect the style of a justified transposed period. These candidates first identified their selected style of comedy and then found design solutions for some of the key scenes of the play.

Those with some design invention considered appropriate furnishings for the period and provided lavish Louis XIV style furnishings, such as richly coloured, padded, chaise longue and upholstered chairs with potential for facilitating some of the comic scenes involving Tartuffe and Elmire. They included ornate gilded mirrors and elaborately framed family portraits to decorate the 'rooms'.

Some considered the need to conceal Damis, in one scene, and Orgon in another, where Tartuffe is obviously trying to 'woo' Elmire, thinking that he is alone with her, and they invented alcoves or cupboards or appropriately styled tables or bureaux to conceal the eavesdroppers.

Weaker answers included some crudely sketched chairs and tables with no reference to the sections that they were intended to serve.

- (b) This was the more popular question and there were some genuinely comical interpretations of the chosen sections.

Candidates chose sections where Dorine attempts to interfere in Orgon's proposed 'match' for Mariane, which is an ongoing 'theme', and included, for example, her encouragement of Mariane to defy her father and her ridiculing of Tartuffe, as well as her reconciling the 'soppy' lovers, Mariane and Valere, in direct opposition to Orgon's will.

Although there were some apt suggestions for physical comedy in better answers, for example, Orgon's failed attempt to slap Dorine sending him hurtling into the scenery, top answers revealed an appreciation that Molière's brand of comedy relies for its effectiveness on the appropriate delivery of lines of witty text. Without textual support and good detail about the delivery of text, candidates simply could not achieve the level of comedy necessary for upper-level marks.

### Style, Context, Genre

There was some evidence of cultural or social context in candidate's answers in reference to conventions of eighteenth century French society relating to parental and filial obligations. Some candidates mentioned the religious background to Tartuffe being installed in Orgon's household as a private cleric.

The fact that Dorine is a most unconventional servant in her relationship with her master, Orgon was also mentioned.

## Question 8

### *The Seagull*

- (a) This was the more popular question on *The Seagull*, but examiners reported seeing very few adequate responses.

In the work of better candidates, where there was evidence of some awareness of the period setting of the play, of Arkadina's status and her profession as an actress, of her vanity and extravagance – as mentioned in the question – there were some acceptable descriptions and even sketches of Arkadina's costume.

These candidates mentioned lavish fabrics, such as silk, lace, fur, brocade. They often included reference to the colour of Arkadina's garments. Many candidates also suggested Arkadina's choice of accessories, such as hats and parasols, jewellery and scarves or gloves.

Sketches helped to reveal an understanding of period through the silhouette in the design.

Better answers always linked the designs offered to the part of the play where the designs would be worn. Many answers included Arkadina making a 'statement' entrance in Act One, for example, trying to 'steal the limelight' from both Nina and Konstantin. Some dealt with Act Two where Arkadina is competing with Masha in terms of her own more youthful appearance.

However, such responses were in the minority and candidates appeared not universally in possession of detailed knowledge of the character.

In weaker answers, candidates often offered an array of tiny sketches of individual items of clothing that Arkadina might wear, that in no way constituted 'costume design'. Of these, few were appropriate for the period of the play or for its action. No justification was offered for dressing Arkadina in a trouser suit, for example, or in designer stiletto heels.

Few candidates appreciated that dresses would be floor length and that Arkadina is unlikely to be sporting a ponytail.

- (b) This was the more successfully approached question when exploring *The Seagull*. Many candidates offered informed and dynamic interpretations of Konstantin, particularly in relation to his love for Nina and desperate seeking for attention from his mother and other characters.

The best answers explored Konstantin as a complex character, revealing his jealousy, desperation, love, cruelty and pettiness, at different moments throughout the play.

When these characteristics were explored practically and were supported with ideas for the delivery of his lines, rather than just explained in a narrative form, the highest levels were achieved.

Some candidates centred on rehearsal approaches and a naturalistic method of character creation, which is effective for a reference to the style, but does not meet the demands of the question in terms of concrete performance ideas.

### **Style, Context, Genre**

Some understanding of period could be inferred from appropriate costume design and the same may be said of the style being inferred from performance ideas but negligible explicit awareness of the period or setting or genre of the play was seen.

Unfortunately, within the costume designs, very few candidates were credited with many marks for SCG due to them not explicitly considering the naturalism within the suggestions or being very specific about the costumes from the time period.

### **Question 9**

#### ***The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time***

- (a) This was a popular question. There was a range of responses seen.

The majority of answers presented Roger as a wholly negative character, which was unfortunate, as the character has his lighter moments. Some candidates were prepared to acknowledge that while Roger appears to be a possessive partner to Judy and is certainly resentful of Christopher as time goes on, he can also be seen as a reasonable man trying to cope in a difficult situation.

Most candidates focused on his aggressive and sarcastic side in his dealings with both Judy and Christopher. Some candidates dismissed him by simply calling him 'a drunk'.

The presentation of Roger was frequently largely physical, with only the best responses offering an interesting and detailed approach to the delivery of lines at moments within the scenes. Good work was seen on Roger's initial response to Christopher's unexpected arrival, his attempt to mediate between Judy and Ed when Ed turns up at the flat, and his interaction with Judy over the 'star chart' for Christopher's eating habits. Almost all candidates dealt with Roger's drunken assault on Christopher.

Some candidates focused more on Roger as a representative of a person unable to cope with Christopher's neurodiversity and, while this may be an aspect of Roger's attitudes, the question asked for an interpretation of Roger's character – not of his views.

Some candidates had obviously put their own titles to the different parts of the play, and they used these as if an examiner would know which part of the play was being alluded to. This is not good practice.

- (b) The majority of candidates responded well to this question, and many exhibited a clear influence from the original National Theatre production, although this was rarely explicitly stated.

Stronger answers began with clear statements about the candidate's chosen staging configuration, style of performance, the notion of ensemble playing and there was a strong sense of the technical facilities at their disposal in the chosen venue.

Many candidates chose to write about the opening of the play, the chaotic train station scene and/or the final scenes, and these answers often revealed a clear grasp of how to create specific atmospheres using the technical elements at their disposal.

Other candidates did not address either the question of atmosphere or the application of design elements directly.

The description of the designs was mostly effective, but there was some confusion over the practicalities of stagecraft. Some candidates had given little thought to, for example, the positioning of projectors, the surfaces that the projections would appear on, the technical terms for the lights used and/or for the positioning of the speakers for transmission of sound.

Some answers did not give enough precise detail about the projections, for example and it was not possible to visualise what an audience might see/experience as a result of a generalised approach to design issues.

Most designs implicitly referenced previous productions, the style and the genre of the play, but very few explicitly outlined this in detail.

Sometimes the focus on 'the atmosphere' being created by designs got lost.

### **Style, Context, Genre**

Very few candidates seem to appreciate the actual genre of this play – many suggested it was a murder mystery or a 'Brechtian' play but very few alluded to 'physical theatre'. Much misunderstanding of Brecht's work was in evidence. Frantic Assembly's style was rarely discussed.

Some candidates overloaded their answers with extended references to neurodiversity and there was quite a lot of superfluous material purporting to be SCG for this play.

### **Question 10**

#### ***Snow in Midsummer***

- (a) This play was a minority choice with **Question 10(a)** being the most frequently attempted.

Most candidates chose to write about the 'proposal' scene and the 'break-up' scene. Most candidates offered predictable ideas for Scene 1 with the characters gazing at one another, kissing and holding hands, with very little supporting text and very little depth. Scene 10 was more successfully realised, and candidates offered more original responses, created tension and made it clear that the relationship was changing.

- (b) There were some original answers here but most of the candidates who tackled this design question revealed very basic technical knowledge and there was a plethora of blue lights and fog machines in use. The most successful answers came from candidates who created a complete concept which included the costume of the characters and what each might symbolise. Lights were used to create shadows, and some used scrims with actors moving behind, creating an ethereal quality.

### **Style, Context, Genre**

Candidates did not often consider the cultural context of the play. Some did link it to the original Chinese version of the play. Those that considered the play's episodic and 'non-naturalistic' genre were most successful.

# DRAMA

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| <p><b>Paper 9482/13</b><br/><b>Open-Book Written Examination</b></p> |
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## Key messages

In this, the third series of this examination, many interesting and inventive answers were seen from candidates who had engaged in some depth with the complexities and nuances of the texts that they were studying.

In this series, answers were seen on *The Tempest*, *Death of a Salesman* and *The Lion and the Jewel* in **Section A** and on *Medea*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *Snow in Midsummer* in **Section B**, although some of the optional questions attracted too few responses to warrant a detailed report.

The best responses came from candidates who had mastered an understanding of each of their chosen plays, including the themes, issues and characters within it, as well as understanding its social context, style and genre.

In less successful papers, there were examples where practical ideas ran counter to the dramatists' intentions and/or they revealed only a flimsy grasp of the wider plays.

At times, candidates made directorial or performance suggestions that revealed a limited theatrical understanding. This was often demonstrated through the absence of the use of specialist terminology and, especially in response to design questions, suggestions that were impossible to achieve on stage.

The majority of candidates timed their answers carefully and accorded their **Section A** and **Section B** answers equal attention in terms of timing and of the development of their responses. Others offered an uneven paper with some answers in **Section B** grinding to an abrupt halt after only a paragraph or two. Exam technique is always worth mastering, during the course of study.

Many good answers were the result of forethought, a brief but purposeful plan, and an approach to the extract or play that worked chronologically and selectively through the material making judicious choices of exemplification.

It is the job of the candidate to bring the extract, the character or the design ideas, to vivid theatrical life for the reader, in direct response to the precise focus of the chosen question. This can only be accomplished, in directing or performing questions, by supporting ideas with direct reference to the words of the text. This is equally important in both sections. Candidates should never refer to line numbers or page numbers with the expectation that the examiner will have the same translation or edition that they have, and this is especially important in **Section B**, where answers may draw from any part of the chosen play.

Some candidates peppered their responses with references to theatre practitioners. This is not a requirement of this paper and is to be avoided. Some candidates referred to multiple and, indeed, competing theorists at the expense of offering their own ideas for realising a scene or character or creating a particular atmosphere. Similarly, there was occasionally reference made to rehearsal techniques or acting process points, when approaching a role and although this information might be helpful for a candidate to establish the intended style of performance, extended details about the application of a theorist's methodology only tended to draw candidates further away from the actual focus of the question selected.

Crucially, there is a requirement to consider the play's style, genre and context and to write explicitly about how these aspects of the play have informed their interpretation. Despite this aspect of candidates' knowledge and understanding being worth a third of the total marks available, examiners are still reporting that some candidates offer no evidence of having considered these factors.

The most frequent mistake that candidates made in this series of the examination was to rely on generality. An actor cannot perform in a generalised way, not can a director or designer achieve any effects by working

in a generalised manner. Candidates need to approach their texts with rigour and in detail. Where a design candidate suggests using music, for example, it is unhelpful to refer to wanting a 'sad' or 'jolly' piece of music. In the theatre, a real designer has to find the precise piece of music that will work in a scene or section of the play. This principle of specificity is crucial in any answer to a design question and should be built into the study and revision of each of the chosen texts.

Some candidates failed to address the prescribed extract in **Section A** and wrote about an alternative section or roamed freely through the text. These answers could only attract token marks, if any at all were made that were relevant to the question.

In **Section B**, some candidates did not choose enough of a range from their chosen play and took all examples from a narrow part of the text.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1**

##### ***The Tempest***

- (a) The question required a directorial focus with the emphasis on creating comedy and there was plenty of scope in the extract for comic invention derived from the reunion of Trinculo and Stephano and their various reactions to Caliban.

There were some creative ideas for the section where Stephano literally stumbles upon the Trinculo/Caliban 'monster', seen taking cover from the storm, under the gaberdine.

Better answers focused on Stephano's drunken confusion when seeing the four-legged creature and there were some potentially funny directorial ideas for Stephano 'counting out' the four legs and then the two mouths of the 'monster', on his fingers, and, scratching his head in disbelief, starting the counting again.

Much was made of Stephano's ladling the liquor into the mouths of the mysterious creature before reaching the delighted conclusion that two of the legs belonged to his friend, Trinculo.

Some candidates gave attention to the increasingly 'drunken' states of the trio as the scene proceeds. There was also some more subtle humour extracted from Trinculo's increasing irritation with Caliban who favoured Stephano and adopted him as his 'King'.

Better answers gave equal attention to the physical, almost slapstick, nature of the action and to the delivery of the text.

Some candidates failed to refer to a single line of text and they therefore missed the most significant source of comedy in the scene – the verbal interaction of Caliban with two new 'mortals' and the interaction of Stephano and Trinculo in their amazement over Caliban's 'conversion' and 'worship' of Stephano who appears God-like in his provision of the 'wonderous' liquor.

Some candidates, intent on 'getting in' their prepared ideas for staging the play, spent valuable time outlining their staging ideas, none of which were exploited to comic effect.

A number of candidates did not identify the scene correctly and assumed that it is in this extract where Caliban persuades Stephano and Trinculo to murder Prospero. This mistake was shared by some candidates who answered Question 1b.

- (b) The question was focused on an interpretation of Stephano's character.

Examiners were surprised to discover how few candidates who attempted this question actually knew who Stephano is.

More than one candidate described him as an adviser to the King, while another confused him with Ferdinand.

Some candidates struggled with the task of expressing an interpretation of Stephano's character and appeared never to have considered the role as anything other than a comic device.

In better answers, candidates suggested that Stephano was an eternal optimist as seen in his joy at having survived the wreck; they cited his mercenary qualities in his attempts to revive Caliban, whom he had already thought might be worth exploiting for financial gain.

Most recognised Stephano's egotism and noted his pride at being worshipped by the 'monster'. They ascribed his willingness to accept the sudden 'promotion' from 'butler to a king' to 'king', in his own right, as a sign of his 'delusions of grandeur'.

Other merely described Stephano as a 'drunk', which although undoubtedly accurate in terms of this scene, is more of a state of mind than a character trait.

As with all performance questions, better answers were written from the perspective of the performer, were written in the first person and accorded due attention to both physical expression and delivery of text.

In this instance, a key discriminator between candidates was whether Stephano's character was 'interpreted;' weaker answers focused solely on creating comedy, and this was not always achieved.

### **Style, Context, Genre**

Those who seamlessly integrated SCG material into their answer by considering the comic style of the play and seventeenth century notions of 'hierarchy', usurpation and kingship were often more successful when answering on this text than those who merely listed these concerns at the start of the response (or not at all).

A number of candidates recognised, in Stephano's desire to exploit Caliban for his own personal gain, the epitome of colonialism and in his willingness to be proclaimed 'King' they saw Shakespeare's enquiry into the notion of 'fitness to govern.'

Some candidates appeared to believe that the play is a 'tragi-comedy.'

### **Question 3**

#### ***Death of a Salesman***

- (a) This was one of the most frequently attempted questions, and many good responses were seen.

The most successful answers centred on the question's precise demands, and they opened their essays by stating their precise directorial intentions for the extract, noting the aspects of the scene that they wished to highlight to achieve those intentions.

Some candidates stated their intentions to rouse the audience's anticipation of a potential mental collapse for Willy as Bernard, knowingly or unwittingly, reminds him of the events in Boston that caused Biff to 'give up on life' and the American Dream.

Other intentions included creating sympathy for Willy, who has been in denial about the 'Woman' in his bathroom, for years. Some focused more on creating admiration for both Charley and Bernard who have always treated Willy with kindness despite his cruel mockery of them both. This led to some intelligent discussion of Miller's intentions for the audience to compare Willy and Charley as father-figures whose own actions had shaped the futures of their sons.

The most successful were those who closely followed the text and quoted from it in a methodical way to ensure good coverage of the extract. Better answers were disciplined in only including material that was related to their stated aims or which revealed an understanding of context, genre or style.

Weaker answers were wholly descriptive and/or literary in approach suggesting a limitation in the candidates' experience of working practically on the text in the course of their studies.

Some candidates offered description of one or more productions of the play that they had seen, (usually these were film versions) but unless they cited particular moments from the productions that were relevant to this extract, such references were of no value in supporting their directions.

Some candidates appeared not to understand the play's distinctive chronology and they struggled to understand how Bernard had evolved from 'nerdy neighbour' to successful lawyer.

Often responses were narrative or theoretical, focusing on Willy's emotions or intentions rather than how his interactions with Bernard and Charley could be directed.

Better answers always included detailed examples of how the actors would be directed to deliver individual, specific lines or phrases and what effect was intended behind each moment under discussion.

- (b) This question was more frequently attempted with better answers written in the first person and from the perspective of the actor playing Willy. The question focus was on bringing out Willy's state of mind at this point in the play and many candidates revealed a good understanding of this.

In good answers, candidates first established Willy's dejection having just been fired. They referred to Willy's surprise when discovering Bernard's success in life, clearly comparing his achievements to Biff's failure to acquire the 'golden future' that Willy had dreamed of for him.

Some candidates focused on Willy's recurring bitterness over Biff having 'flunked' maths, blaming the teacher for Biff's decline rather than acknowledging his own part in Biff's disillusionment and subsequent careless attitude to his career.

Others looked more closely at Willy's relationship with Charley as a factor in his state of mind; a relationship founded on dependency and jealousy.

Some candidates did not mention Charley at all.

Most recognised Willy's inability to tell the truth or to remember the truth and they found inventive ways to convey this aspect of his mindset to the audience, using close reference to Willy's vocal and physical skills tied precisely to moments from the extract.

### **Style, Context, Genre**

Often candidates were able to integrate relevant SCG into their responses. Willy's disillusionment and failure of reaching 'The American Dream' featured frequently, as did the economic circumstances of the era. Most candidates discussed or implied the adoption of naturalism and/or expressionism in their 'production.'

### **Question 4**

#### ***The Lion and the Jewel***

One of the least discussed extracts.

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Only a handful of answers to this question was seen.

Some attention was given to the dramatic action of the scene, with most only dealing with the section where Lakunle and Sidi appear on stage together.

Better answers considered Lakunle's strong emotions as he waited impatiently for Sidi's return, venting his fury on Sadiku.

There were some detailed references to Sidi's return, her breathless entry and violent self-abasement as she hurls herself onto the ground.

Some focused on Lakunle's melodramatic offer to kiss away Sidi's tears, met only by a violent rebuff. They considered Lakunle's empty threats to kill Baroka and to make him suffer for any hurt inflicted on Sidi and how his posturing causes Sidi to reveal what has happened to her.

Unprepared for the truth, Lakunle's faltering attempt to hear what Baroka has done was sometimes given quite a comical treatment. Some candidates focused on the shocked reaction from both Sidi and Lakunle to Sadiku's pragmatic conclusion 'Cheer up. It happens to the best of us.'

Some candidates did not consistently focus on the strong emotions of Lakunle and Sidi, offering quite extensive direction for Sadiku which fell outside the scope of the question.

### **Style, Context, Genre**

The most successful candidates in this area were those who were able to explain how the characters and their actions reflected the themes of the play – 'modernity' versus 'tradition.' Very few gained marks on the genre or style of the piece due to lack of understanding. There was some reference made to the context of Nigeria's achievement of independent status, but few were able to make this relevant to the prescribed section.

### **Section B**

#### **Question 6**

##### ***Medea***

- (a) This play was a minority choice and there were too few responses to this question to draw any general inferences.

In one response, where the candidate chose to design costumes for Creon and for the Chorus, the offered ideas were not in themselves inappropriate, but they were not presented in such a way as to suggest that they would contribute to the dramatic effectiveness of the chosen section. Design fundamentals were limited and there was very little sense of a designer at work.

- (b) Examiners reported seeing a few answers to this question.

Most candidates appeared to have understood Medea's volatile character, which is displayed especially in her interactions with Jason.

The most successful responses were those where candidates used the text to support well-conceived ideas for showing Medea's volatility.

Candidates did best where they gave some thought to what opportunities were available to them in Medea's various appearances and they did not simply start at Medea's first appearance and work their way through the play until they ran out of time.

Some candidates did not use the term 'volatility' in their answers, but they provided enough evidence of Medea's mercurial mood-swings to imply understanding of what was expected of them. Some candidates argued that much of Medea's apparent volatility may be observed to be entirely 'put on' for effect, when, for example, she is self-pitying and apparently fragile in her interaction with Creon or appears (briefly) to be loving and tender with Jason.

Some candidates cited the recent Helen McCrory version of the play as inspiration for a transposition of the play to modern times. Generally, this 'transposition' was dropped entirely once it had been established and proved to be something of a 'red herring', taking up valuable time without offering scope for credit.

Better candidates always focused frequently on precise suggestions for the delivery of the text which best exemplified 'volatility.' For example, some explored Medea's rapid shift from cuddling her children to butchering them.

Others looked at the scene where Medea charms and wheedles Jason into allowing their boys to give gifts for his new bride, then juxtaposed this with the gruesome sight of Medea exulting over the Messenger's graphic descriptions of the hideous deaths of Glauce and Creon.

Some candidates spent a disproportionate amount of time/effort describing the *mise-en-scene* for the action.

### Style, Context, Genre

The most successful responses here were those who understood the origins and conventions of Greek Theatre. These included the absence of violence on stage and the dramatic intentions for catharsis. Top band candidates were confident in their use of the terminology associated with the classical Greek stage and always integrated their knowledge of SCG into the body of their answers.

### Question 9

#### *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

(a) A number of answers were seen.

The majority of answers presented Mrs Alexander as a wholly positive character, a universal 'Grandmother' figure and a real friend to Christopher.

Other candidates felt that she was unnecessarily interfering in Christopher's life and were particularly censorious of Mrs Alexander's informing Christopher about his mother's affair with Roger Shears.

Some candidates did not offer an interpretation of Mrs Alexander, although they described some of her interactions with Christopher.

Some candidates did not deal with each of Mrs Alexander's appearances, as required by the question.

While some candidates offered descriptions of Mrs Alexander's appearance and occasionally quoted from her speeches, only the better answers had details of how an actor might portray the qualities identified, using facial, physical and vocal expression. Some did not adopt a first-person approach to the task.

(b) Fewer answers were seen to this question.

Most candidates wrote about Christopher's memory of Judy when he was on holiday with her in Cornwall. Quite a number wrote about Christopher's 'melt-down' in the supermarket, as re-lived by Judy.

Some wrote about the letter sequences, but most focused on Christopher's trip to London and his exchanges with Judy in the 'present' and in 'real time.'

There was some useful direction of Judy in the scenes that take place in Roger's flat, although some candidates appeared more interested in the relationship between Christopher and Roger than between Judy and Christopher.

Quite a few candidates remarked on Judy's inability to provide Christopher with the stability that he requires, and while this might be a reasonable conclusion to draw, the comments were not credit-worthy unless they were supported with actual directions for how Judy's 'shortcomings' might be portrayed on stage.

Some good work was seen on Judy's maternal instinct, once Christopher arrives in London, and her frantic attempt to protect him from assault when Roger is drunkenly abusing him.

Most candidates treated sequences between mother and son naturalistically, even when the characters were not sharing the same physical or temporal space.

Some candidates did not mention 'complexity' at all.

### **Style, Context, Genre**

Very few candidates seem to appreciate the actual genre of this play. Frantic Assembly's style was rarely discussed; a mainly naturalistic style was a feature of most responses.

Some candidates overloaded their answers with extended references to neurodiversity and there was quite a lot of superfluous material purporting to be SCG for this play.

### **Question 10**

#### ***Snow in Midsummer***

(a) This play was a minority choice with **Question 10(a)** being the only question attempted.

Most candidates chose to write about the 'opening' scene, the execution scene and the 'rape' scene. A couple of candidates included the section where Dou Yi reclaims her heart.

As is true of all the questions that require a performer's perspective, candidates who wrote in the first person and put themselves in the place of an actor playing the part were most likely to be able to write a credible response. These candidates used the lines of the text and wrote in some detail about their delivery of those lines, giving close attention to nuance and meaning.

Too many candidates used generic terminology in their answers and wrote about raising their pitch, lowering their volume or increasing their pace – all without application to specific lines.

A couple of candidates did not answer the question focus but, instead, considered Dou Yi's character when alive and contrasted it with her character as a spirit.

### **Style, Context, Genre**

Candidates did not often consider the cultural context of the play. Some did link it to the original Chinese version of the play. Those that considered the play's episodic and 'non-naturalistic' genre were most successful.

# DRAMA

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| <p><b>Paper 9482/02</b><br/><b>Practical Drama</b></p> |
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## Key messages

- The standard of performance skills is the same for both scripted performance and devised work.
- The strongest performances showed a very clear understanding of how to communicate the intention of the piece to an audience
- When selecting an extract of a play, it is important to make choices that allow each candidate sufficient exposure in order to avoid anyone having a peripheral role in the performance.

## **Administration**

There were several administrative issues this session, mainly concerned with the correct addition of candidates' mark on the ICMS forms. There were also several errors in the transcription of the total marks for candidates from the ICMS forms on to the Submit for Assessment platform. As in previous sessions, some centres did not include notes on identifying features of the performers, and neither did their candidates introduce themselves on the recordings by stating clearly their name and candidate number at the start of each performance.

Many centres completed the ICMS forms with helpful reference to specific aspects of a candidate's performance that supported the mark awarded. Others relied heavily on quoting from the assessment criteria, which was much less helpful as these are written generically. There was a worryingly high number of centres where no comments at all were made and moderators were often at a loss to see evidence of where marks had been awarded.

Centres are reminded that all ICMS forms must be uploaded on the Submit for Assessment platform as well as the performances for **ten** candidates. It is also essential that centres identify the sampled candidates.

## **Devised piece (30 marks)**

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

Moderators were pleased to report that there was much creative devising work seen. This was well-crafted and had a coherent vision of the intention of the piece. In these instances, the teacher comments indicated a coherent approach to working through the rehearsal process and a strong sense of shared endeavour among the members of the group. There were also examples of devised work where the group had taken on too great a challenge and struggled to express their ideas in a coherent format.

There was also a good deal of weaker work, which was lacked coherence or took a long time to make its impact. This was often the case with very static work that did not afford candidates the opportunity to really develop their role within the narrative of the piece. There was a worryingly high number of pieces that had their entire focus on a central table and/or chairs; too many lengthy speeches were delivered seated at a desk. Centres would benefit from workshopping ideas with candidates to wean them off standing rigid in the same spot for the period of the drama.

There were also a number of centres who did not stick to the prescribed group size of between **two** and **five** performers and some performances were overly long. In some groups, there were candidates who had very little stage time but were awarded high marks. Centres would benefit from optimising the amount of time candidates are present on stage. Centres are reminded that if it is necessary to use additional performers (for approved reasons) they should identify themselves at the start of each performance.

### Spoken self-evaluation

The strongest examples seen were analytical, evaluating the performance process and giving a clear indication of what took place in the rehearsal room physically to arrive at the end product. However, the spoken evaluations were often marked generously with candidates choosing to re-tell the story of their piece rather than giving an insight into the process they went through from stimulus to final performance. Some candidates became very focused on group dynamics, which limited their ability to evaluate objectively their practical work.

### Scripted piece (30 marks)

The assessment consists 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.

Moderators reported that it was often the case that candidates demonstrated a higher level of performance skills in scripted work than in devised work. There was some very strong character work on display this session with many candidates showing a full understanding and a command of the performance text they had explored. There was a great deal of successful work in a very wide range of theatrical styles, which reflected the rich cultural diversity of drama across the world.

There were also a number of pieces where candidates were limited by the static nature of their performance work. This had some commonalities with limiting aspects of the devised work, namely a restricted approach to physicality that did not allow performers to move away from a table or a chair. In extreme cases, there were occasions where candidates were still holding scripts during the performance, and this undermined these candidates' ability to inhabit the role they were performing. Centres are reminded that school productions are not appropriate for this examination, especially if it involves many non-assessed performers and/or is something that the teacher has directed.

### Repertoire seen in June 2022

|                      |                                         |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| David Lindsay-Abaire | <i>Rabbit Hole</i>                      |
| Richard Bean         | <i>One Man, Two Guvvners</i>            |
| Caryl Churchill      | <i>Almost, Maine</i>                    |
|                      | <i>Top Girls</i>                        |
|                      | <i>Cloud Nine</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>                       |
| Beth Henley          | <i>Crimes of the Heart</i>              |
| Henrik Ibsen         | <i>A Doll's House</i>                   |
| Debbie Isitt         | <i>The Woman Who Cooked her Husband</i> |
| Ben Jonson           | <i>Volpone</i>                          |

Cambridge International Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced Level  
9482 Drama June 2022  
Principal Report for Teachers

|                     |                                              |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 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>            |
| Mark Ravenhill      | <i>Pool, No Water</i>                        |
| F. Scott Fitzgerald | <i>Porcelain and Pink</i>                    |
| Jean Paul Sartre    | <i>No Exit</i>                               |
| Neil Simon          | <i>Barefoot in the Park</i>                  |
|                     | <i>Brighton Beach</i>                        |
|                     | <i>The Odd Couple</i>                        |
| John Steinbeck      | <i>Of Mice and Men</i>                       |
| Simon Stephens      | <i>Punk Rock</i>                             |
| Tom Stoppard        | <i>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead</i> |
| 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

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| <p><b>Paper 9482/03</b><br/><b>Theatre-Making and Performing</b></p> |
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## **Key messages**

- This component contains two performance activities, one group devised with written evaluation worth 66 per cent of marks, and one individual selection of texts linked by theme worth 33 per cent of marks. Candidates are advised to spend proportionate amounts of time on each.
- The most successful performances irrespective of whether they were group or devised were careful to match their use of dramatic style to the performance needs of their presentations.
- The most effective group devised performances were well crafted with close attention given to the distinctive traits of the practitioner, tradition or style, and enabling all group members to demonstrate their performance skills.
- The strongest individual performances were confident and controlled, using appropriate modes of address in delivering their programme of texts.

## **General comments**

This was the first series with entries submitted for the new A2 Theatre-Making and Performing component, in which Cambridge recognises that the Covid-19 pandemic is still affecting learning in centres worldwide. It was acceptable that some candidates performed in face coverings and with some social distancing evident in some group performances seen. It was apparent that there were some live audiences for group performance especially, and sometimes for individual presentations also.

There were a number of administrative issues. Some centres had not submitted the Group Devised Cover sheet for each group, which must be provided to inform the moderator of the investigation of practitioner, tradition or style and the work that was investigated for the Group Devised performances. The moderator should not need to read through evaluations to locate a performance text that has been explored in preparation to devised performance.

Some centres did not include clear identifying features of performers for the Group Devised piece on the ICMS forms in addition to roles taken. It is helpful for candidates to introduce themselves by clearly stating their name and candidate number at the start of the Group Devised performance, as they will be familiar with from doing the same for Component 2.

It was helpful for centres to refer to the assessment criteria aligned to the band in which marks had been awarded when justifying marks on the ICMS forms. Some specific comment on individual contribution to devising should also be provided. This assists moderation. Copy and paste duplication of comments on group devising offered little to distinguish those candidates' individual part in creating the work.

Some centre video performances did not appear from centre comments to be the same work that had been awarded marks on the ICMS forms. Moderators will assess what is seen and moderate the centre's marking accordingly. Centres are reminded that they should ensure they have submitted the correct work to be moderated.

It is also essential on the ICMS form to list all individual texts for performance, in order. Moderators require this information so that, when viewing the recording, they are clear about which texts have been selected and how many are being performed.

The majority of centres submitted candidate performance work on USB sticks, which is highly recommended. DVD submissions were also received, and these could generally be accessed without difficulty, but submission via USB is preferred, as not all of the diverse formats of DVD playback are universally accessible.

There were occasional problems with the quality of video and sound recording. In some cases, these issues impeded the process of moderation. Full level stage lighting sometimes had the effect of blurring facial features. Centres should check the quality of camera and sound equipment and stage lighting before making the examination recording. It is important to ensure that candidates are provided with a quiet space for performance, without additional sound from extraneous sources.

### **Comments on specific tasks**

#### **Devised Performance and Evaluation (40 marks)**

##### *Devising*

The practitioner/style investigated must be the same as the style chosen for performance. Investigation of the work of one listed practitioner may not be taken as a thematic stimulus for performance in a different tradition, style or practice.

To devise in the style of a practitioner or genre requires close and detailed focus on, and application of, their approaches. This includes staging, performance methods, and dramatic form, such as naturalistic, representational, or physical theatre; practitioner approach to characterisation, typical themes and subject matter. In the strongest devised pieces, there was evidence of close assimilation both of the features of the work investigated and the dramatic philosophy of the practitioner, genre or style chosen. In some submissions, there was a tendency for centres to apply the mark scheme too leniently where the application of the tradition or practice was found to be partial or competent at most.

There was some variability in the quality of devising in a chosen practice or style. Some of the styles in which some very good examples of precisely worked performances were seen include: Commedia dell'arte, Absurd drama, Frantic Assembly, and Steven Berkoff.

Brechtian Epic theatre was selected by a number of centres. Sustained application of the distinctive traits of the practitioner requires a thorough grasp of Brecht's representational acting method towards a dialectical engagement with an audience on Epic issues. To achieve marks in the higher range of the mark scheme, it is necessary to extend beyond simple staging, the use of projections and a campaigning approach to social themes.

Some highly creditable work was seen across the range of styles where groups had to take care to create full roles for all members of the ensemble.

Centres should be clear that the use by candidates of technology and other staging methods in their group performance is creditable only within the 10 marks available in **Part A** for *the application of the distinctive traits of the chosen tradition, practitioner or style*. Live video and recorded projections appear in some centres to have been credited in devising and communicating a role. The candidate's live performance on stage showing traits of practitioner or style is assessed in group performance. If the candidate is visible only to an audience via a screen on stage, that screen presence may not be included in marking except as it relates to **Part A** use of *tradition, practice or style*, not **Part B** *Devise and communicate role*.

Centres are reminded that the maximum length for group performance is 15–20 minutes. Candidates should shape and edit their group performances accordingly. Material beyond the maximum length should not be included by the centre within the assessment. However, centres should also be aware that it is not an essential requirement to produce a complete play in the chosen practice or style within the performance time specified. A traditional Revenge Tragedy for example, will develop over three to five acts of intrigue and machinations before the climactic deaths and resolution. A 15–20 minute devised segment clearly demonstrating it is intended to form a coherent part of a larger structure with such a trajectory, and in which an audience can recognise events are likely to lead to the essential tragic revenge act, could form the basis for a successful group devised performance.

##### *Written evaluations*

There was considerable variation in the quality of the written evaluations, and this part of the submission was sometimes marked over-generously by teacher-assessors. Some Group Devised evaluations did not directly identify a work investigated. This was likely to limit the depth of analysis as it related to the study of a practitioner or style. Those which focused on the qualities of the practice or style tracing their progress in the

process of devising tended to be the most relevant and insightful in their analysis. In weaker submissions, there was sometimes a tendency for candidates to use the evaluation to comment on the failings of their group to work well together.

Centres may find it useful to make candidates aware of the assessment criteria for the evaluations, as a guideline for what is expected and what to aim for in their writing.

Almost all candidates adhered to the word limit of 800 words.

### **Individual performance (20 marks)**

#### *Texts chosen for performance*

A wide range of texts and a diversity of themes were chosen for performance. The great majority of presentations showed commendable enthusiasm, focus and much commitment to their chosen theme and texts. Some very high-level acting was sometimes seen. Centres usually marked within the appropriate bands for the individual performance, although both lenient and harsh marking were sometimes seen. There is no specific requirement for the individual performance to present a contrast to the Group Devised performance, but where there was very close similarity in style and substance between group and individual presentation a question is evident about the candidate's versatility as a performer and their range of performance knowledge and understanding of what is possible on stage.

The specified time for performance is 6–8 minutes. Very few were even slightly below the minimum. Some significantly longer presentations were seen. Centres should be aware that assessment should end at 8 minutes and material beyond the maximum time should not be marked. It is for candidates to plan, shape and edit their work, rehearsing to ensure they fulfil the requirements of the syllabus.

As this is a Drama syllabus, Dance and Music skills are not assessable as part of the individual presentations.

There are no marks available for the quality of staging for the individual performances, and sometimes those supported with prominent lighting, backing sound and music somewhat drew attention away from and in some instances almost overwhelmed the individual performance. Often the most effective presentations were those with just the actor and the stage space, occasionally with a key prop or item of costume for a specific text. Where a lectern is chosen for use on stage, candidates must be very clear in performance that they are not reading from any written material on that lectern.

#### *Links between texts performed*

All texts should be introduced as they are about to be performed, not as a list at the start of the presentations. It is for the candidate to create their own differentiation between link and performance in the progression of their programme of pieces, but it should be entirely clear by voice and manner when the candidate is presenting a text and when they are making a link. Performances that blend from one piece into the link and onwards to the next piece without that differentiation should be marked as not moving competently between pieces. Most candidates achieved this, usually by stepping out of performance role to comment and introduce the next piece, sometimes connecting the one just performed to that next one. A small number adopted a character for part or all of the periods between texts and made the links as that character. While making the links, candidates should not be drawn into a personal discussion of their opinions or a polemic on the subject of the theme. The syllabus states the links should be brief, and should not outweigh the performance of the texts. It should also be noted that there is no need for a concluding comment after the final piece.

Where links were not included between texts, the marks that could be awarded for communication were limited to a mark lower than clear communication of a theme, not moving effectively between pieces.

Candidates are to be reminded that they must not use extracts of any texts set for Component 1 (Written Examination) for Component 3 Theatre-Making and Performing, as stated in the syllabus.

Work based on the following practitioners, traditions and styles was seen in this series:

|                               |                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Theatre Traditions and Styles |                                                                                          |
| <i>Absurd drama</i>           | <i>Waiting for Godot</i>                                                                 |
| <i>Commedia dell'arte</i>     | <i>A Servant to Two Masters</i>                                                          |
| <i>Revenge tragedy</i>        | <i>Hamlet, Macbeth, Titus Andronicus</i>                                                 |
|                               |                                                                                          |
| Practitioners                 |                                                                                          |
| <i>Steven Berkoff</i>         | <i>East, Metamorphosis</i>                                                               |
| <i>Bertolt Brecht</i>         | <i>Mother Courage and her Children, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, The Threepenny Opera</i> |
| <i>Frantic Assembly</i>       | <i>Things I Know To Be True</i>                                                          |
| <i>Jerzy Grotowski</i>        | (no works identified)                                                                    |
| <i>Katie Mitchell</i>         | <i>Ophelias Zimmer, Anatomy of a Suicide</i>                                             |
| <i>Kneehigh</i>               | <i>The Red Shoes</i>                                                                     |

# DRAMA

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|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Paper 9482/04</b><br/><b>Theatre in Context</b></p> |
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## **Key messages**

The choice of an appropriate research question or statement is crucial in that it guides the direction of the essay. A well-focussed, specific research question or statement is key to accessing the full range of marks available.

A literary analysis of practitioners' work cannot score highly. The focus should be on theatre-making which implies practical, applied techniques and methodology with illustrative examples.

The format specified is that of an academic research essay which should adhere strictly to the word limit, should be thoroughly referenced with citations in accord with a recognised style guide and include a full bibliography (including websites accessed by date).

Extended biographical accounts of practitioners' lives are unlikely to be marked positively.

Centres must take care to upload only what is needed for this component – ensuring that the work is fully legible, well scanned and includes a bibliography. Teacher feedback to candidate should be removed before submission.

## **General comments**

It was encouraging to read work which, despite the challenges of the pandemic, encompassed a wide range of theatre practice. The work was varied, often interesting and engaging and some responses showed genuine enthusiasm for the chosen topic.

Some candidates made unwise choices in respect of their research question or statement being either too complex or too vague. As a consequence, a significant number did not produce a succinct argument while others presented a wholly literature-based study. Candidates should not focus their research on the set texts for component 1.

The strongest work was characterised by the following:

- a passion for the chosen topic
- a well-chosen question/title
- thorough research and exploration
- highly relevant, well-referenced/cited sources
- clear examples of wider reading/viewing as noted in a comprehensive bibliography
- a clear, concise conclusion.

The importance of teacher/centre guidance in making the right choices with regard to the title or research question or statement cannot be over-emphasised; ensuring that the essay is written under the correct parameters is crucial to achieving the higher mark bands.

Some candidates undertook highly relevant primary research including interviews with practitioners in the field of study. While this is highly commendable it was not always fully referenced thereby undermining the overall integrity of the work. A few responses made excellent use of 'recorded live' theatre using the range of online platforms now available but again, this was not always fully referenced which affected the marks awarded. A number of candidates used images to clearly support their research – given the nature of Theatre and Drama this should be encouraged.

The most successful essays had a carefully crafted question that allowed sufficient scope to meet the demands of the task. Weaker work often included extensive narration and/or biographical information that did not specifically relate to the focus of the question. Stronger work repeatedly sought to explicitly address the question whilst demonstrating Knowledge and Understanding of practical aspects of theatre-making with a good level of analysis and evaluation. Overall the component provided an opportunity for candidates to produce very robust work and to demonstrate in-depth knowledge and understanding.

It was noted that candidates occasionally seemed to treat the option to investigate ‘two complete performance texts’ in a similar way to the IGCSE 0411 style exam tasks (e.g. ‘*I would have the actor...*’) Whilst this was not necessarily an issue candidates do need to remember the broader scope and elevated demand of this task to help secure marks across the four criteria.

There was some work that fell outside the requirements of the task, and some incorrectly submitted work. This highlights the importance of centres taking care over the submission of evidence.

Furthermore, there were issues with candidates not quite fulfilling the requirements of the task. Examples of this include:

- Not taking full advantage of the word allowance (essays were often shorter which perhaps prevented enough detail and opportunity to analyse/evaluate). The word count is specified as ‘2 500–3 000’ on p. 41 of the syllabus and this is repeated on p. 42 along with the admonition to ‘not exceed 3 000’. Those candidates who wrote beyond the maximum words of 3 000 were self-penalising because examiners stopped marking at the count limit and hence candidates may have lost marks they might have earned by a well-written conclusion.
- Not referring to guidance provided in the syllabus on p. 41 where it explains what the essay ‘must’ explore and which ‘one or more’ aspects should be its focus.
- Several essays did not include a bibliography although some did include in-text references. The task requires a bibliography. Conversely, sometimes a bibliography was included but in-text references were not. Page 42 of the syllabus states ‘candidates must present their findings in accordance with the conventions of academic writing, including thorough referencing of sources and a full bibliography’.
- Some responses incorporated wild, unsubstantiated sweeping statements along the lines of – ‘it is clear practitioner X changed the world of theatre as we know it today’.

Positives to emerge from the work seen by examiners include:

- Some candidates replicated the work of practitioners with fellow students in their own centres; this is a potentially rich area for primary research and often produces fascinating results
- Some introductions were well written, concise and drew the reader in
- Some conclusions drew the essay together very effectively and demonstrated the criteria of Analysis and Evaluation very well.

## **Comments on specific criteria**

### **Criterion A**

Many candidates secured good marks here with many showing assured knowledge and understanding. However, candidates should bear in mind the second bullet point in the list, i.e. ‘range of appropriate and relevant supporting evidence’ as this was lacking in a significant number of examples. All quotations and any paraphrasing should be referenced carefully both in-text and in the bibliography. In a number of cases evidence could have been used better to support claims made.

### **Criterion B**

This was the second strongest criterion with several essays showing a good level of practical knowledge and understanding. Some more careful selection of effective illustrative material would help. For example, essays dealing with design aspects would do well to include useful visuals to better ‘illustrate’ points made.

### Criterion C

There was a range of marks here. Sometimes candidates showed a consistent effort to analyse, whereas in the case of others their analysis was inconsistent and/or patchy and therefore slipped into band 2. Occasionally there was some confusion of ideas and teachers should encourage candidates to check these through the drafting process.

### Criterion D

As with **Criterion C**, there tended to be a mix of attainment here with some well sustained and well-developed evaluation but also some work with superficial and intermittent evaluative comment. It is undoubtedly much easier for candidates to make sound evaluative judgements if they have created a research question or statement that clearly prompts an evaluative response (e.g. '*to what extent has Ancient Greek theatre influenced...?*').

Overall, in this first full session of the component the signs are most promising. Both centres and candidates have responded positively and enthusiastically to the challenges set down by the component and in general the outcome has been most encouraging.