

DRAMA

Paper 9482/11 Open-Book Written Examination 11

Key messages

This syllabus is now well-established, although 2024 sees the first November series examinations based on the 'new' prescribed texts.

It may be worth reiterating some of the most important aspects of the assessment of this Drama Component.

Component 1 of the Drama syllabus assesses candidates' knowledge and understanding of practical theatre, and it is important for candidates that, in their study of the set texts that they have explored, they have had some practical experience of the application of the skills of a director, a performer and/or a designer. This equips candidates to face the demands of the questions, all of which require responses that show practical experience and understanding of how plays may be interpreted on stage.

General comments

Candidates generally responded well to a range of question in this November series.

In this series, candidates mainly answered questions on *As You Like It* and *A View from the Bridge* in **Section A** and *Oedipus Rex*, *The Government Inspector*, *Blood Wedding* and *Boom* in **Section B**.

Some of these plays attracted very few responses, however.

Some candidates wrote detailed, practical responses to the precise focus of individual questions, which resulted in clear realisations of the drama extract or selected sections. In these answers, candidates tended to use the text frequently to support their ideas, which were expressed clearly and contained appropriate theatrical terms

In less successful answers, candidates appeared less well equipped to use subject-specific vocabulary with confidence and/or they did not integrate adequate textual support to make their ideas sufficiently clear for the Examiner.

Some candidates did not use the text from the extract, in **Section A**, or from the play 'as a whole', in **Section B**, to illustrate their answers. This resulted in generalised responses where it was sometimes difficult for the Examiner to identify the precise moments that candidates were writing about.

In **Section B**, where editions of the plays are not prescribed, candidates should be reminded not to use page or line numbers to identify moments from the text. These should always be identified using short but complete phrases or longer quotations from the set text. Use of ellipses should also be avoided, as so frequently the sense of the quotation is removed and the immediacy of the unfolding moment on stage is lost.

Performance questions remained popular but were not always well executed with many candidates restricted themselves to a narrow range of performance strategies which were frequently limited to exaggerated facial expression, stage positioning and tone of voice. Examiners sometimes wondered if candidates had very much experience of watching actors at work.

Design questions were only occasionally attempted in this series.

Whatever perspective candidates were writing from, they need to be reminded that only through the use of judiciously selected textual support can they access the higher mark levels where the descriptors refer to the

selected detail 'strongly' supporting the practical interpretation, in Level 5, and 'effectively' supporting the practical interpretation for Level 4.

Candidates should also be reminded that their practical interpretations of a character, section, or design element is only credit-worthy if the interpretation is closely matched to the demand of the question and is clearly justified.

A reminder about the mark for SGC. Many candidates made very little apparent attempt to demonstrate their knowledge or understanding of the chosen play in terms of its style, genre and context. This cost many candidates dearly, since this part of the task is worth a third of the total marks available.

It continued to be the case that candidates often referred, at some length, to previous productions of their chosen text, but without making any attempt to explain the connection between previous productions and their own ideas. Such references attracted little credit and took up time and space that would have been better directed towards interpretation of the play/extract in question.

Section A

Question 1

As You Like it

This was a minority choice.

- (a) There were very few responses to this question.

Candidates displayed some knowledge of the situation presented in the given extract from *As You Like It* but comic invention was limited and there was insufficient attention paid to the delivery of the text – where most of the gentle comedy could have been found.

- (b) There were very few responses to this question.

Only a few candidates tackled this question. Answers were brief and not consistently focused on conveying Phoebe's changing emotions. A little reference to her changing attitudes towards 'Ganymede' and 'Silvius' was offered in some instances.

SCG

Those who referred to the comic action of the play or its pastoral genre were more successful than those who traced the history of Elizabethan theatre without reference to the given extract.

Question 2

The Rivals

No answers were seen on this play in the November series.

Question 3

A View from the Bridge

- (a) This was the most frequently attempted question on the paper.

Unfortunately, very few candidates attempted to meet the precise demand of the question. The question demanded that candidates identify their intended audience response to Eddie in the given extract. Where candidates ignored this demand, any ideas for performing the role that were offered attracted little credit, as they were not focused on achieving a properly defined intended response.

The minority who did identify an intended response usually aimed for audience sympathy or pity for Eddie, who has invested his adult life in bringing up his niece. One or two felt that he deserved the contempt of the audience, because his 'love' for Catherine is 'tainted' with inappropriate feelings.

Candidates must answer the question that appears on the examination paper and they need to understand that if they offer generalised ideas about the character named in the question- that do not meet the question demand – they will under-achieve.

Some candidates included too much material about the Ivo Van Hove production, without making it absolutely relevant to the question, so that it became a distraction from, rather than a positive addition to focused work on the question.

In less successful responses, candidates all but ignored Eddie's 'growing desperation'.

(b) This designer's question was chosen by only a few candidates.

The question specifically refers to creating a suitable setting for the action and reflecting the social divide between the characters through the use of set and costume.

In better answers, candidates provided a sketch of the set showing entrances and exits and positioning of key pieces of furniture. Candidates showed an awareness of the brevity of the scene in relation to the whole play and they had evidently given some thought to how and where the scene might be played.

One or two candidates in stronger answers opted to use a revolve and described, for example, a large desk with a chair in expensive-looking dark wood, with smaller items such as a desk lamp, telephone, paperweight, family photographs in silver frames. Some mentioned filing cabinets and/or plush soft furnishings, comfortable chairs for clients. Candidates who had prepared themselves to answer on design had clearly formulated ideas.

The social divide was largely attempted through costume ideas. For Eddie, for example, suggestions included a Tee-shirt or open-neck flannel shirt, a 'donkey jacket' or casual denim jacket, workmen's trousers and boots, flat cap or beanie. Alfieri was imagined in a smart dark-coloured suit, shirt and tie or bow tie, with a waistcoat, tie pin, cufflinks, watch chain, occasionally with a coloured handkerchief in the breast pocket and with polished leather shoes. The more precise the design detail, in each case, the stronger the answers tended to be.

In weaker answers, it appeared that candidates had not considered the demands of the setting or the costumes before faced with this question in the examination hall.

SCG

Candidates wrote relevantly about the laws surrounding immigration. Others wrote less helpfully about gender inequality which was not made pertinent to the events of the extract.

A competent grasp of the naturalistic style of the play was apparent in many answers, both implicitly and explicitly.

Question 4

Beatification of Area Boy

No answers were seen on this play in the November series.

Question 5

Small Island

No answers were seen on this play in the November series.

Section B

Question 6

Oedipus Rex

- (a) Only a small number of candidates offered responses on *Oedipus Rex* in this series. Those who did answered **Question 6(a)**.

The question asked for performance ideas for *Oedipus* that focused on his tragic fall from 'greatness' to 'ruin' over the course of the play.

Candidates tended to write about *Oedipus*' pride in his name and reputation at the start of the play and his pledge to find the root cause of Thebes' problems, not knowing that his actions would result in his own punishment and banishment.

Some candidates selected moments from *Oedipus*'s confrontations with Creon and Tiresias. These candidates noted how his once secure position began to crumble in the face of their attitudes towards him.

Most candidates focused on the events towards the end of the play, such as his discovery that he has indeed killed his father and married his own mother, despite the measures that he took to avoid his fate.

This led candidates to consider his response to Jocasta's death and his act of blinding himself. Most considered this to be *Oedipus* moment of 'ruin'.

Better answers offered vivid performance detail which was supported with useful, short, pertinent textual evidence.

In some answers no text was used. Some candidates paid little attention to the demands of the question.

- (b) There were no responses to **Question 6(b)**.

SCG

Often, marks for the understanding of style and context of the play were derived from sensitive directorial detail that reflected the nature of the tragic form, and/or the delivery style most appropriate to the play.

Top level candidates were those who demonstrated a confident use of appropriate terminology associated with the classical Greek stage and always integrated their knowledge of SCG into the body of their answers, rather than as a 'bolted-on' section.

Question 7

The Government Inspector

This was a minority choice.

Candidates should be studying a translation of Gogol's play not a 'free adaptation' of the play.

- (a) A few answers were seen on performing Anna to convey an interpretation of her character. Not all candidates offered an interpretation of Anna's character but focused on creating comedy instead.

Those candidates who did write about their interpretation of Anna often referred to her self-importance, vanity and selfishness. Most mentioned her flirtatiousness with Khlestakov, as well as her gullibility. Some good work was seen in performance ideas for revealing her jealousy of and rivalry with her own daughter, Maria.

Inevitably, there were some very comical moments included, but, in better answers the ideas were always linked to interpreting Anna's character and were not offered as stand-alone 'slapstick' moments.

- (b) There were too few answers to this question to make any meaningful observations.

SCG

There was some evidence of the social context of the play in candidate's answers and some reference to the political corruption which Gogol was intent on exposing within his contemporary society.

Most candidates made reference to the play's comic style and need for caricature.

Question 8

The Cherry Orchard

No answers were seen in the November series.

Question 9

Blood Wedding

This was a minority choice.

- (a) There were too few answers to this question to make any meaningful observations.
- (b) As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the most successful answers were from candidates who read the question, understood its demands and shaped their answers to meet those demands.

In this case, the question asked for performance ideas for the Bridegroom that would achieve the candidate's preferred audience response to his character.

Unfortunately, some of the candidates who answered this question focused on interpreting the Bridegroom's character, rather than on achieving an intended audience response to his character.

Those candidates who found the appropriate focus often wanted the audience to respond sympathetically to the character.

Some suggested that an audience might feel respect for the Bridegroom's attempts to placate his Mother, or empathy in his awkward exchanges with the Bride, at the betrothal.

Most nominated sympathy for him as the Bride does not reciprocate his happiness in the marriage and all suggested that he was deserving of audience pity at his untimely and completely unwarranted death.

There were a few very good answers seen to this question, where candidates displayed both a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Bridegroom's character and a sensitive approach to performing the role in carefully selected moments.

SCG

In relations to the question on the Bridegroom, there were occasionally references to cultural expectations about marriage in Spain during the middle of the twentieth century.

Some candidates, as reported in previous series, overloaded their answers with material relating to the origin of the play – the newspaper report of the elopement of a Bride with another man at her wedding. While it is valid to allude to this source, some candidates discussed it at length and at the expense of other cultural links. but not worth more than a sentence or two.

Question 10

Boom

- (a) There were too few answers to this question to make any meaningful observations.
- (b) This was the question that the handful of candidates who had studied this play chose to answer.

There were a few successful answers where candidates selected appropriate moments and where their focus was on the creation of comedy.

Moments selected were varied. Some candidates focused on the comedy created by the inter-generational squabbles between the Mother and Boon, throughout the play. Others found comic moments in Jeremiah's encounters with Corpse and/or in Mother's feisty interactions with her neighbours.

There was some sensitive, albeit comical, treatment of the relationship between Young Mother and Young Father.

Some candidates demonstrated quite limited comic invention, and they depended upon assertion to attempt to convince the Examiner that their, often quite pedestrian, ideas would create comedy.

SCG

Some reference to urbanisation and to the Singapore property boom was offered. Candidates also referenced Singaporean identity and attitudes towards family. Themes of displacement and references to Singaporean laws about 15 years' 'tenancy' of funeral plots were generally recounted.

DRAMA

Paper 9482/12 Open-Book Written Examination 12

Key messages

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Component 1 of the Drama syllabus assesses candidates' knowledge and understanding of practical theatre, and it is important for candidates that, in their study of the set texts that they have explored, they have had some practical experience of the application of the skills of a director, a performer and/or a designer.

This equips candidates to face the demands of the questions, all of which require responses that show practical experience and understanding of how plays may be interpreted on stage.

General comments

Candidates generally responded well to a range of question in this November series.

In this series, candidates answered questions on *As You Like It*, *A View from the Bridge*, and *Small Island* in **Section A** and on *Oedipus Rex*, *The Government Inspector* and *Blood Wedding*, in **Section B**.

Some of these plays attracted very few responses, however.

Some candidates wrote detailed, practical responses to the precise focus of individual questions, which resulted in clear realisations of the drama extract or selected sections. In these answers, candidates tended to use the text frequently to support their ideas, which were expressed clearly and contained appropriate theatrical terms

In less successful answers, candidates appeared less well equipped to use subject-specific vocabulary with confidence and/or they did not integrate adequate textual support to make their ideas sufficiently clear for the Examiner.

Some candidates did not use the text from the extract, in **Section A**, or from the play 'as a whole', in **Section B**, to illustrate their answers. This resulted in generalised responses where it was sometimes difficult for the Examiner to identify the precise moments that candidates were writing about.

In **Section B**, where editions of the plays are not prescribed, candidates should be reminded not to use page or line numbers to identify moments from the text. These should always be identified using short but complete phrases or longer quotations from the set text. Use of ellipses, which was seen frequently in this series' responses, should also be avoided, as so frequently the sense of the quotation is removed and the immediacy of the unfolding moment on stage is lost.

Performance questions remained popular but were not always well executed with many candidates restricted themselves to a narrow range of performance strategies which were frequently limited to exaggerated facial expression, stage positioning and tone of voice. Examiners sometimes wondered if candidates had very much experience of watching actors at work.

Answers to Design questions were few and far between in this series.

Candidates need to be reminded that if they choose to answer on set or costume design, they should accompany their written responses with appropriately sized, labelled sketches.

Whatever perspective candidates were writing from, they need to be reminded that only through the use of judiciously selected textual support can they access the higher mark levels where the descriptors refer to the selected detail 'strongly' supporting the practical interpretation, in Level 5, and 'effectively' supporting the practical interpretation for Level 4.

Candidates should also be reminded that their practical interpretations of a character, section, or design element is only credit-worthy if the interpretation is closely matched to the demand of the question and is clearly justified.

A reminder about the mark for SGC. Many candidates made very little apparent attempt to demonstrate their knowledge or understanding of the chosen play in terms of its style, genre and context. This cost many candidates dearly, since this part of the task is worth a third of the total marks available.

It continued to be the case that candidates often referred, at some length, to previous productions of their chosen text, but without making any attempt to explain the connection between previous productions and their own ideas. Such references attracted little credit and took up time and space that would have been better directed towards interpretation of the play/extract in question.

Section A

Question 1

As You Like it

- (a) There very few responses to this question.

Candidates displayed some enthusiasm for *As You Like It* and appeared to enjoy writing about the ending of the play which was declared to be both satisfying and uplifting.

- (b) No responses were seen to this Q

SCG

Those who referred to the comic action of the play or its pastoral genre were more successful than those who traced the history of Elizabethan theatre without reference to the given extract.

Question 2

The Rivals

No answers were seen on this play in the November series.

Question 3

A View from the Bridge

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

The most successful answers centred on the question's precise demands and showed real understanding of Eddie's growing desperation through well-developed performance ideas linked to specific moments from the unfolding scene. In these answers, short quotations were used, accompanied by ideas for the vocal delivery of the quoted lines. Stronger answers included details about Eddie's physical gestures, actions or movements.

The best answers were firmly focused on revealing Eddie's growing desperation. However, several candidates did not focus on the question appropriately. Some included pre-prepared material about Eddie's obsession with Catherine and spent far too long looking at Eddie's interaction with Catherine, at the start of the extract. Unless this was dealt with quickly before moving on to Eddie's

horror when he learns about the other ‘boarders’, too much time was spent on Eddie’s insistence on trying to help Catherine, at the expense of focusing on Eddie’s growing desperation.

In better answers, candidates captured Eddie’s panic when the immigration men arrive, his defensiveness as he desperately tries – wordlessly – to convince Beatrice and Catherine that he has had nothing to do with the reporting of ‘illegals’, and his ill-placed display of a sense of injustice at Marco’s act of contempt, spitting in his face, when Eddie claims to have given the brothers ‘the blankets’ off his own bed.

There were some highly detailed responses to this question that suggested that this scene, and Eddie’s part in it, was very well understood. Some good work was focused on the phrase ‘growing desperation’, while less attentive candidates presented Eddie as ‘desperate’ from the start.

Some candidates included far too much material about the Ivo Van Hove production, without making it absolutely relevant to the question, so that it became a distraction from rather than a positive addition to the focus of the question.

In less successful responses, candidates all but ignored Eddie’s ‘growing desperation’.

(b) This director’s question was chosen by only a few candidates.

The question specifically refers to achieving ‘intended effects’, and a candidate’s success, or otherwise, depended upon a clear statement of directorial intentions that could then be demonstrably achieved through clear direction of the action and the cast.

Where candidates offered clear intentions, such as creating tension for the audience, revealing Eddie’s sense of helplessness as events spiral beyond his control or highlighting the sense of betrayal felt by Beatrice and Catherine, they were more likely to write focused and detailed responses.

There were a few strong answers seen where candidates did just this. One or two focused on highlighting the breakdown of trust between Eddie and his close ‘family’. Others wrote about revealing the disintegration of Eddie’s reputation in the neighbourhood. A couple of answers were focused on highlighting the abject despair of Rodolpho and Marco’s utter contempt for Eddie.

When these answers were supported with detailed directions for communicating that breakdown, candidates were successful.

More frequently, unfortunately, candidates did not identify their intended effects, so that whatever directions they included had no apparent purpose, or they required the Examiner to infer an intention, which in some instances was not possible to do.

Candidates need to be aware that they must fulfil the precise demands of the selected question if they are to be successful.

SCG

Candidates wrote relevantly about the laws surrounding immigration and the importance of the ‘green card’ in America in the mid twentieth century. Other wrote less helpfully about gender inequality which was not made pertinent to the events of the extract.

A competent grasp of the naturalistic style of the play was apparent in many answers, both implicitly and explicitly.

Question 4

Beatification of Area Boy

No answers were seen on this play in the November series.

Question 5

Small Island

- (a) A number of candidates wrote about *Small Island*. **Question (b)** attracted more candidates than **Question (a)**.

As is so frequently reported, candidates who ignored the focus of the question, fared less well than those who noticed that the question required that the 'strong emotions' felt towards Michael both by Hortense and by Miss Ma were required. Some candidates focused exclusively on Hortense, and this affected their achievement.

Where candidates did include both women, they were likely to be more successful.

Most included Hortense's confession that she almost fainted with pride when she overheard someone suggest that she and Michael were a 'couple'. In these answers there were comments on Hortense's rage and pain seeing Michael embracing Mrs Ryder.

Where candidates wrote about Miss Ma, they considered her heartbreak at Michael's decision to leave, her worry about him joining the RAF. Some mentioned that both women are overly invested in a selfish young man. Several remarked on the 'chorus' of sobbing as both women lament the loss of Michael in the same way.

- (b) This question attracted slightly more answers and there were some very good ideas for presenting an interpretation of Michael.

Despite some candidates overlooking the requirement to provide 'an interpretation' of Michael, Examiners saw some very good responses. Most candidates interpreted Michael as confident and mischievous. Some saw his disrespect for his father to be deplorable, others quite enjoyed his youthful rebelliousness.

Most criticised Michael for hurting both Hortense and Miss Ma.

In better answers, candidates provided clear practical examples of how these qualities would be realised on stage and they used short, apt quotation to support their ideas.

SCG

As reported in the summer, Examiners were surprised to find that, given the amount of contextual information that there is available on the 'Windrush generation', many candidates appeared not to have much to say about the play's context.

Some mentioned the generally comic tone of some parts of the play and others wrote quite well about the play's blend of theatrical styles.

Section B

Question 6

Oedipus Rex

- (a) Too few candidates attempted the question about Jocasta to draw any meaningful inferences.
- (b) Candidates who attempted this question often identified suitable sections for the creation of tension but seemed not to know which of the director's tools to employ to make that tension palpable to an audience.

A number of candidates only wrote about one section of the play, which was self-limiting.

Where only one section was selected, it was invariably the hostile exchange between Oedipus and Creon when Oedipus suspects Creon of conspiring against him.

This was a good choice, and, in secure answers, candidates explored the tense exchanges and considered tone of voice as well as facial expression and body language to convey the tension in each character's attitude towards the other. Astute observations included recognition of the fact that the 'power-play' is mainly in Oedipus' mind.

In better answers, candidates wrote about a second section as demanded by the question and wrote either about sections leading up to the unravelling of Oedipus' real parentage or they wrote about the Messenger's report of the death of Jocasta, and Oedipus' reaction to it. Some wrote of the section involving Tiresias, making good points about the potential for tension of his portrayal of his blindness.

In addition to exploring the direction of the characters involved, the delivery of lines and the nature of their facial and physical reactions to the unfolding story, successful candidates considered how the audience might experience tension through the creative use of lighting and sound – as deployed by a director, rather than as part of an overarching design.

SCG

Often, marks for the understanding of style and context were derived from sensitive directorial detail that reflected the nature of the tragic form, and/or the delivery style most appropriate to the play.

Top level candidates were those who demonstrated a confident use of appropriate terminology associated with the classical Greek stage and always integrated their knowledge of SCG into the body of their answers, rather than as a 'bolted-on' section.

Question 7

The Government Inspector

This was a minority choice.

Candidates should be studying a translation of Gogol's play not a 'free adaptation' of the play.

- (a) No answers were seen.
- (b) This was the question that candidates selected, but there were very few responses seen.

Bobchinsky was the selected character, and most candidates discussed him as part of their discussion of the 'double act' with Dobchinsky.

Sometimes there was no attempt to direct Bobchinsky as an individual at all. While this is understandable from a reader's point of view, it does not make sense in theatrical terms, as the director must make decisions for each actor's performance, however synchronised - or not – the actions of this 'pair of buffoons' may appear to the audience.

The key to success was in finding ways to direct the chosen character in such a way that their performance contributed to the comedy. Where comic invention was lacking, candidates struggled.

SCG

There was some evidence of the social context of the play in candidate's answers and some reference to the political corruption which Gogol was intent on exposing within his contemporary society.

Most candidates made reference to the play's comic style and the need for caricature.

Question 8

The Cherry Orchard

No answers were seen on this play in the November series.

Question 9

Blood Wedding

- (a) As mentioned throughout this report, the most successful answers were from candidates who read the question, understood its demands and shaped their answers to meet those demands. In this case, the question asked for performance ideas for the Bride that would convey the candidate's interpretation of the Bride's character to the audience.

Unfortunately, a significant proportion of candidates who answered this question focused on the Bride's feelings, rather than her character.

There were a few very good answers seen to this question, where candidates displayed both a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Bride's character and a sensitive approach to performing the role of the Bride which were attuned to conveying that character.

Candidates who understood the difference between 'character' and 'feelings/emotions' noted the following aspects of the Bride's character: obedience to her father; polite/deferential towards the Mother; impatience with her Maid, passionate and reckless in her act of elopement, courageous when she faces the Mother after the death of the Bridegroom and Leonardo.

The question required only two separate sections to be explored, so making the right choice of section was crucial to candidates' success. Some candidates did not deal with the Bride's elopement with Leonardo or her final meeting with the Mother and this narrowed the range of characteristics that could be considered. Where candidates wrote about a third (or fourth) appearance, the additional section(s) had to be disregarded by the Examiner. Examiners are instructed to credit the strongest two sections in these instances.

- (b) A number of responses to this question were seen and candidates generally responded well to the terms of the question that asked for directorial ideas that would create an appropriate atmosphere for two sections of the play that feature the Beggarwoman, the Moon or the Woodcutters.

There were some imaginative ideas, especially for the appearances of the character of the Moon. A number of candidates chose to focus on this single character in her two appearances.

Most candidates aimed to create an 'other-worldly' atmosphere. Other atmospheres nominated included: surreal, unsettling, eerie, gloomy, horrific and violent.

Candidates who chose the Moon or the Beggarwoman often included details about their costumes. Beggarwoman's role both in her human and in her supernatural form was often reflected in the fabrics, colours and layers of her large cloak. Candidates acknowledged through her costume that she symbolises not just 'Death' but a greedy and predatorial figure of death, whose appetite was never satisfied.

Moon was sometimes presented as a man and sometimes as a woman and sometimes as a being of indeterminate gender. Candidates associated the Moon with white and blue coloured light or costumes, often in combination with silver threading or highlights in 'her' hair, headdress or make-up.

More important in terms of creating the chosen atmosphere were the directorial ideas; sometimes these were fewer in number than was required to create a convincing atmosphere.

SCG

In relations to the question on the Bride, there were occasionally references to cultural expectations about marriage in Spain during the middle of the twentieth century. Candidates frequently referred to the way in which the Bride's actions challenged, contemporary attitudes towards the sanctity of the family and towards adultery.

Some candidates, as reported in previous series, overloaded their answers with material relating to the origin of the play – the newspaper report of the elopement of a bride with another man at her wedding. While it is valid to allude to this source, some candidates discussed it at length and at the expense of other cultural links. but not worth more than a sentence or two.

Question 10

Boom

No answers were seen on this play in the November series.

DRAMA

Paper 9482/13
Open-Book Written Examination 13

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

DRAMA

Paper 9482/02 Practical Drama
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Key messages

- The choice of scripted piece is crucial to allowing all members of the group to achieve of their best. Centres should work through a selection of choices to see which is the best fit for the group.
- Devised work needs to be physically varied and engaging, as well vocally clear in delivery. Some devised work was mundane and unvaried.
- The reflective account should be a structured reflection based on the details of the devised piece rather than an improvised commentary to camera.

Administration

The November series had a much smaller entry than in June and there were few issues of administration. Please note that all ICMS forms should be uploaded on Submit for Assessment and not merely those in the moderation sample.

There were some problems with candidate identification in the performances and Moderators had to spend addition time working out the identity of each to ensure that the correct candidate was being watched. Centres are reminded that a full description of appearance should be included on the ICMS forms, and that each candidate should announce their name and candidate number at the start of each piece. Please also include a description on the ICMS form of what each candidate is wearing for each piece.

Quality of marking

Most centres awarded marks in accordance with the assessment criteria in the syllabus and were therefore closely in line with the Cambridge standard. Where Moderators made scaling recommendations, it was most often because Performance Skills had been overmarked across all three pieces. However, there were many examples of considerable overmarking in AO2, devising original drama. There was a tendency to reward candidates for effort and committed attendance rather than their contribution to the devising process. It should be noted, though, that simply turning up is not worthy of marks.

Devised Piece (30 marks)

There were examples of powerful pieces of devised drama where the candidates had a clear sense of the intention of the piece and had worked very cohesively together as a group. These pieces had a clear message and, most importantly, there was clear evidence of structuring the work so it made impact on the audience. Pieces were based on a variety of scenarios, mostly offering a perspective on social, domestic or political situations. These pieces were able to present rounded characters who interacted with each other through believable dialogue.

There were several mid-band pieces that struggled hard to communicate, despite having some good ideas and creditable performances. This was often because of the variable structure of the piece – some scenes too lengthy, others too short-winded – and a sense that the group's intentions was not helped by the form of the piece.

Several weaker pieces lacked energy, which mean that the piece ran at slow speed, which in turn communicated a sense that the group was struggling to communicate with the audience. Sometimes there was potential source material, but candidates were unable to select and refine from it. In other cases, the group had become straitjacketed in their approach in the early stages and could not break free of these initial ideas.

Self Evaluation

These were in most cases, effective reviews of the devised work.

The strongest submissions engaged with the entirety of the working process, from initial idea to final performance. Such candidates were able to say a lot in a short space of time, not by talking quickly, but by slimming down the number of points this wished to make and making high-level points supported by a few detailed examples. Some candidates helpfully had a selection of PowerPoint slides to reinforce their main points.

There were other candidates who read a pre-written piece, and some, who had clearly intended to be spontaneous, giving the impression that they were making it up as they went along. Although this sometimes created the illusion of spontaneity, it was seldom a successful vehicle for communication.

Scripted piece

As may be seen from the list below, the choice of repertoire overlapped significantly with that in previous sessions and the list is representative of the plays used in recent examination sessions.

Most extracts were selected with due regard to the skills and abilities of the members of the group and showed a perceptive understanding of the play. There were instances, however, where the extract did not give sufficient coverage to all members of the group, or where there was not enough opportunity to vary pace and create contrast in the selected extract.

The strongest work conveyed a powerful sense of ensemble, which had the potential to sustain audience engagement for the full duration of the piece. These pieces presented a selection of well-rounded characters, each with a clear performance intention.

Weaker work was often typified by undifferentiated pacing and delivery and character realisation that did little justice to the nuances in the performance text. In the most extreme examples, candidates had learned their words but put little or no expression into the delivery of them.

Indicative list or performance texts

The following list of performance texts provides examples of what was seen by Moderators in 2024. They are provided only for information and there is no requirement for centres to use any of them for their own work, although they may consider doing so if they wish.

Edward Albee	<i>Three Tall Women</i>
Steven Berkoff	<i>The Fall of the House of Usher</i>
Deborah Bruce	<i>Dixon and Daughters</i>
John Cariani	<i>Almost Maine</i>
Jim Cartwright	<i>Two</i>
Anton Checkov	<i>Uncle Vanya</i>
Caryl Churchill	<i>Top Girls</i>
Nick Dear	<i>Frankenstein</i>
Euripides	<i>Medea</i>
Dario Fo	<i>Accidental Death of an Anarchist</i>
Stephen Gregg	<i>Why we like Love Stories</i>
Lauren Gunderson	<i>The Revolutionists</i>
Debbie Isitt	<i>The Woman Who Cooked her Husband</i>
David Ives	<i>Sure Thing</i>
Oliver Lansley	<i>Immaculate</i>
David Lindsay Abaire	<i>Rabbit Hole</i>
Federico Garcia Lorca	<i>The House of Bernada Alba</i>
Ken Ludwig	<i>Leading Ladies</i>
Robert Luxford	<i>Cashless</i>
Arthur Miller	<i>Death of a Salesman</i>
Don Nigro	<i>Barefoot in Nightgown by Candlelight</i>

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Marsha Norman	<i>Night Mother</i>
Nick Payne	<i>Constellations</i>
Harold Pinter	<i>The Dumb Waiter</i>
J.B Priestley	<i>An Inspector Calls</i>
Mark Ravenhill	<i>Pool, No water</i>
Yasmina Reza	<i>Art</i>
Jean-Paul Satre	<i>No Exit</i>
John Patrick Shanley	<i>Women of Manhattan</i>
Neil Simon	<i>Barefoot in the Park</i> <i>The Odd Couple</i>
Shelagh Stephenson	<i>The Memory of Water</i>
Tom Stoppard	<i>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead</i>
Jessica Swale	<i>Blue Stockings</i> <i>Nell Gwynn</i> <i>Thomas Tallis</i>
Polly Teale	<i>Bronte</i>
Oscar Wilde	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>
Amanda Whittington	<i>Be My baby</i>
Tennessee Williams	<i>A Streetcar named Desire</i> <i>The Glass Menagerie</i> <i>The Pink Bedroom</i>

DRAMA

Paper 9482/03 Theatre-Making and Performing
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Key messages

- This is an externally moderated component and therefore centres must provide Cambridge with all the materials necessary for moderation. It is essential for the centre to provide the ICMS, the Group Devised Cover Sheet and the written evaluations in hard copy. It is the centre's responsibility to check that the video files for group and individual performances that are saved on a USB or a DVD are present and working prior to submission. There were some missing video files this series, which delayed the moderation process.
- When researching for the Group Devised Performance, candidates should focus on identifying the distinctive traits of the practitioner, tradition or style.
- Evaluations must be structured to address the process of devising and the individual's contribution to the artistic outcome.

General comments

In general, the Individual Candidate Mark Sheet (ICMS) forms were fully completed. The first box to be completed for the Group Devised Performance under Element 1 is titled *Role and identifiers or Design skill*. It is essential that this is completed in such a way that each candidate can be clearly identified from the opening of the piece. Name of character or role alone are not usually sufficient to identify a candidate when the piece begins. An identifier can be costume, hair colour/style or a general aspect of appearance that may be distinctive, such as height. It is not a specified requirement that candidates should identify themselves in a line-up at the start of a performance, but it is helpful to include this at the opening of the video recording. In some cases, the centre did not provide identifying descriptors on the ICMS or a group line-up, and in these situations, it was difficult for moderators to identify which candidate was which. It is the responsibility of the centre to provide sufficient evidence of each candidate's identity for each performance. Some centres made use of captioning technology; this was helpful, particularly in some group pieces where there were multiple performers on stage.

Comments made by the teacher/assessor on the ICMS form need to identify each candidate's individual qualities and contributions to the devising process that have been credited in the marking. Duplicated comments for devising and role for several or all of the group members are not helpful to moderation.

There were instances where the centre had not listed all individual texts on the ICMS form accurately or in order of performance. It is essential to list all individual texts for performance. The texts should be listed in the order in which they were presented.

Where a non-assessed performer is included in the Group Devised Performance, this should be clearly accounted for in the centre's administrative documentation. It would not be usual to approve additional performers beyond the minimum group number of two performers, except where the work of the practitioner, tradition or style would be likely to require ensemble performance.

The video recording is evidence of an assessed performance. The video recording must be a continuous recording from a single camera without editing of any kind. It should be shot from the perspective of the audience and must be of sufficient quality to represent what an audience member would have seen. The purpose of the video recording is to provide the moderator with a view similar to that of the audience present at the live event.

Overly bright lighting that washes out or blurs facial expressions should be avoided. Similarly, very dark lighting that prevents the camera from clearly capturing the performance should also be avoided. Centres are advised to check the quality of camera and sound equipment and the stage lighting in a full test

recording before making the final examination recording.

For this component there must not be audience participation as part of any assessed performance. Centres should inform the audience that they must not record or take photographs during the performance.

Most Group Devised Performances were within the specified time limits, and most Individual Performances also adhered to the specified timings. However, some work was excessively long. Centres should be aware that it is for candidates to apply performance discipline to shape their own work in devising and rehearsal under the guidance of teacher/assessors, and this must include timings. As an assessed performance, the work must be within the time limits specified. Any material beyond the maximum time limit should not be considered for assessment.

Centres should apply the assessment criteria carefully for each element of the mark scheme and include some reference to these on the ICMS forms, but not solely citing the wording from the syllabus. Some individual commentary is also useful in order to show where credit has been given.

Comments on specific tasks

Devised Performance and Evaluation (40 marks)

Devising

Most submissions showed competent or broad understanding in devising in a chosen practice or style.

The Group Devised Performance must be limited to a maximum of 20 minutes in length. Centres should note that this maximum limit is fixed and is not optional or flexible. Part of the assessment for devising skills includes the ability to shape material to remain within the specified maximum time.

When researching for the Group Devised Performance, candidates should focus on identifying the distinctive traits of the practitioner, tradition or style through the study of **one** appropriate professional production, either current or historic.

Care should be taken when selecting the professional production for the investigation. This is the fundamental starting point for the devising process. The production researched must represent the work of the chosen practitioner or must bear the distinct hallmarks of the chosen tradition or style for devising. A broadly or generally relevant work is unlikely to lead to very good group devising for the purposes of this component. Devising must not treat the production merely as a stimulus to free-form devising. The investigation must include careful analysis in order to identify the key elements of the practitioner, style or tradition to be applied in candidates' own devising. When undertaking the investigation, candidates should bear in mind that contemporary companies performing to present-day audiences may aim to be innovative and therefore may not always be rigorous in applying the traits of more historical theatrical styles. When investigating such productions, care should be taken to distinguish the key elements of the style for devising as distinct from other aspects of performance in a contemporary professional production that may have been included for broader entertainment effect. An example also cited in the June 2024 Principal Examiner Reports for Teachers was Goldoni's *A Servant to Two Masters* adapted to the present-day commercially recorded production as *One Man, Two Guvnors*, which has very evident traits of Commedia but is not entirely in keeping with the tradition. The modernisation in this performance does not include the use of masks and some other significant character elements of the tradition.

Where masks have been designed in the centre for performance, they must be viable for practical acting on stage.

It is not a requirement that a production for investigation has to be viewed live, from a film or from a video recording. A well-documented historical performance from the pre-film period, which has been reviewed by critics of the time and where the practitioners or performers have left some record of their experiences in preparing and performing, may be a very viable subject for investigation.

Additional research into the conventions of the practitioner, tradition or style prior to the investigation of a professional production is likely to be beneficial to candidates as this may help them to make essential distinctions when undertaking the investigation. From this research they can judiciously adopt or discard elements from the professional production investigated. Most devised work appeared to be seeking to achieve this in creating material that fulfilled the distinctive traits of the practitioner, tradition or style.

However, work from more than one centre introduced characters from other traditions and styles in addition to the one that had been researched. This was not in keeping with the requirements of the task. Blended devising of this kind cannot be considered to meet the Level 5 descriptor for 'Use of tradition, practice or style to create a piece of theatre as performer or designer', which is defined as: *Excellent understanding and sustained application of the distinctive traits of the chosen practitioner, tradition or style*, nor can it be considered to meet the Level 5 descriptor for 'Devise and communicate a role', which is defined as: *A highly developed, sustained and coherent role in keeping with the style of the piece*.

Centres citing more than one work investigated tended towards a more generalised presentation of the intended traits of practitioner, tradition or style. The devising in any of the listed options in the syllabus should seek to identify and apply the full range of potential aspects of a practitioner, tradition or style as they can be drawn from the production of the work investigated. Less thorough application of traits is likely to meet the Level 2 descriptor, which is defined as: *Partial understanding and uneven application of the distinctive traits of the chosen practitioner, tradition or style*.

Written evaluations

The assessment criteria for the written evaluation for the Group Devised Performance state that candidates are to be awarded marks for their ability to:

- set out a written analysis of the process of devising the group piece and the success of the group in achieving its artistic intentions
- evaluate their personal contribution to the success of the devised piece in achieving its artistic intentions.

Some of the written evaluations addressed the criteria well and, in general, candidates were careful to adhere to the limit of 800 words. Some candidates focused more on an evaluation of performance, including audience responses as evidence of success, rather than considering to what extent they had fulfilled the aim to devise in the chosen style. Some evaluations identified a practitioner or style, but did not clearly identify a work investigated and how the qualities that it represented had been identified and applied. This tended to limit the depth of analysis.

In some evaluations, performance candidates stated that they had been assigned a technical role relating to either lighting, sound, costume or props. Their written evaluations discussed and evaluated their contribution to these aspects of staging, as well as to their performance contribution. Page 18 of the syllabus states: *If no candidates offer design skills, the performers may also gain experience in using simple props, costume, set, lighting or sound as part of their developing understanding of the devising process*. Centres should understand from this statement that the inclusion of simple staging elements as part of candidates' developing understanding of the devising process is to facilitate the basics of devising, without the need to allocate additional roles within the group. In addition, page 34 of the syllabus states that *candidates may work as performers or designers* and that *each group should have no more than one design candidate*. The syllabus states that candidates should be assessed on **one** of the following: **either** *their ability to create and communicate a role as part of an ensemble* **or** *their creation and realisation of a technical design element in support of the performance*. Candidates cannot therefore evaluate both performance and design contributions in their written evaluation. A performance candidate who evaluates their contribution to design elements in the written evaluation will limit their account of the devising and their contribution to it accordingly.

Centres may wish to refer candidates to the assessment criteria for the written evaluation, which are on page 41 of the syllabus, as they may find it a useful guideline for what is expected in their writing.

Individual Performance (20 marks)

Most Individual Performances were of an appropriate length. It is an expectation that the candidate will refine their work in rehearsal to meet the syllabus requirements. Assessment includes the candidate's ability to shape material to fall within the specified timeframe. Material beyond the maximum length should not be included in marking.

The performing space for the Individual Performances was appropriate in all cases, although the performances were occasionally recorded at some distance from the candidate.

For the Individual Performances there are no marks available for the quality of staging nor for any stage effects that a candidate chooses to use.

Musical or dance performances are not assessable in Group Devised Performances or Individual Performances.

There were no examples of a second performer participating in a performance. However, where a candidate opts to perform as more than one character within a text, it is necessary to adopt devices of physicality, voice and staging in order to distinguish one character from another.

Links between texts performed

Centres were careful to ensure that candidates included linking material from at least the point between first and second extract. It was not clear that all centres were aware that the candidate could also introduce the theme and identify the first extract at the outset of the programme of performance texts.

Page 35 of the syllabus states that *Links will introduce each piece, explain the relationship between pieces, for example identifying contrasts or similarities, and comment on how each piece relates to the theme. They are intended to guide the audience through the programme.* In a number of instances, candidates' linking material discussed the theme only and this was not always adequate in guiding the audience through the programme. The centre marking needed to take account of this.

When making the links, some candidates offered personal opinions and points of view, which was not part of the given task. The syllabus states that the links should be brief and should not outweigh the performance of the texts. The syllabus also states that there is no need for a concluding comment after the final piece.

The majority of marking was within the appropriate mark bands for the Individual Performances. Some ICMS forms contained commentaries regarding credit awarded, or not, for the variety of texts and how the programme might offer complexity in the difference between texts. Centres should not require nor reward a variety of styles to be presented; there is no specific requirement that the Individual Performance should present a contrast between pieces, or as a contrast to the Group Devised Performance.

There is no specified nor preferred way to introduce a text. The candidate should devise links to ensure that the progression is clear, engaging and informative to the audience.

Where a lectern, book or clipboard are chosen as props, candidates must be very clear when performing that they are not using written material as any kind of prompt. Candidates should avoid giving the impression that they might be reading from a document during the Individual Performance. Any performance that requires a written or spoken prompt for this task cannot be considered as secure in terms of the assessment criteria.

Examples of texts chosen for November 2024

A range of texts and themes were chosen for performance. Social themes of justice, love, trauma, family relationships, gender and gender equality issues were popular. In general, candidates showed commitment to and enthusiasm for the chosen texts and their chosen theme.

Candidates need to remember that, for component 3, they must not use extracts of any texts that are set for component 1, as stated in the syllabus.

Theatre Traditions and Styles	
<i>Commedia dell'arte</i>	<i>A Servant to Two Masters/ One Man, Two Guvnors</i>
<i>Revenge tragedy</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>
Practitioners	
<i>Bertolt Brecht</i>	<i>The Caucasian Chalk Circle</i>
<i>Complicité</i>	<i>Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead</i>
<i>Katie Mitchell</i>	<i>Ophelias Zimmer</i>

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Paper 9482/04 Theatre in Context

Key messages

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

Bibliographies should be correctly formatted, and all material referenced in the body of the essay should appear in the bibliography.

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

Much work was varied, often interesting and engaging, and some responses showed genuine enthusiasm for the chosen topic.

Positives to emerge from the work seen by Examiners include:

- Some introductions were well written, concise and presented a robust argument.
- Some conclusions drew the essay together very effectively and demonstrated the criteria of Analysis and Evaluation very well.

In summary, 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.

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.

Weaker essays usually struggled from having either no clear research question or one that was too broad to meaningfully explore salient material within the word count given. As a consequence, some did not produce a succinct argument.

Common issues affecting approaches to this component are typified by candidates not 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 correctly formatted bibliography although some did include in-text references. Sometimes a bibliography did not include all in-text references. On p. 42 of the syllabus it states 'candidates must present their findings in accordance with the conventions of academic writing, including thorough referencing of sources and a full bibliography'.

Comments on specific criteria

Criteria A.

Many candidates secured good marks here with many showing assured K and U. 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.

Criteria B.

This was the second strongest criteria with several essays showing a good level of practical K and U. Some more careful selection of effective illustrative material would help.

Criteria C.

There were examples of essays with frequent, well-focused analysis whereas in the case of others analysis was inconsistent and uneven. Occasionally there was some confusion of ideas and centres could perhaps use the drafting process to assist candidates in checking these.

Criteria D.

As with criteria 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. All too often evaluative comment appears to be 'second hand' i.e. derived from the observations of cited sources as opposed to original comment from the candidate themselves.