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# A-LEVEL DRAMA AND THEATRE

7262/W Component 1 Drama and Theatre  
Report on the Examination

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## General Comments

- Teachers are to be commended for navigating the unique challenges posed by teaching a subject such as Drama and Theatre in the turbulent times presented by the pandemic.
- There were very few rubric infringements, where students had selected a forbidden combination of texts for Section A or written about the wrong extract for Section B although several instances of were seen of students going outside the limits of the extract in Section, or contravened rubric requirements in Section C.
- There were, however, some poor production/question combinations for Section C, where a student's favourite production (or only production studied) was paired with an unsuitable question.
- The use of sketches and diagrams for relevant questions in all three sections was varied in terms of quality and usefulness. However, examiners noted a marked improvement in the quality of costume design sketches, which were generally more detailed and often more skilfully executed than in previous series. Students should be reminded that they must provide sketches to support their answers to questions on design for set, costumes, make-up and accessories.
- Students' references to 'Social, Cultural and Historical contexts' were varied in quality. Most students attempted at least a passing reference to context in Section A. For Section B questions, a good number of students unfortunately included a 'freestanding' generic SCH paragraph as an 'introduction' to all three of their answers; this information, not being aligned with the specific focus of the three discrete answers that followed, attracted no credit.
- Students who had memorised a 'chunk' of SCH 'matter' and repeated this 'matter' at the beginning of each of their three answers simply wasted time which would have been better expended on making 'question - relevant' points.
- Students should be reminded that the most effective method of quotation is to use complete phrases or lines. Use of line numbers or page numbers to identify text is not acceptable, as editions differ. Nor is it helpful to offer individual words and phrases from a speech joined together by ellipses.
- Reference to Total Dramatic Effectiveness for Section C was also inconsistent. Many wrote 'which contributed to the total dramatic effectiveness of the production' at the end of each paragraph, without explaining how. Some answers didn't include reference to TDE at all.
- There was still some confusing or inaccurate use of terminology. Most frequently misused terms include reference to 'proxemics' and to 'gait'.
- Student should be encouraged to use phrases such as 'I would move closer to Creon' or 'I would direct the sisters to stand on either side of the stage' rather than offering garbled suggestions involving the 'opening' or 'closing' of their 'proxemics', such phrases are meaningless.
- Students should also be made aware that nothing to do with 'proxemics' will ever be credited as a 'performance skill'.
- The term 'gait' is also frequently misunderstood and/or misused. As 'gait' refers to a style of walking, it is never appropriate as a term applied to a character either sitting or standing. It is also impossible to walk with a 'sympathetic' or 'loving' gait, though students frequently did suggest these qualities might be communicated through gait.

- Some students have also mistakenly referred to action occurring ‘backstage’ when meaning ‘upstage’.
- Examiners reported seeing evidence of a much-reduced range of performance ‘vocabulary’, this series. Students should be encouraged to think carefully about how effective it is for a performer to ‘scrunch’ their faces or foreheads, to ‘frown’ their brows, to ‘clench’ their jaws, to ‘purse’ their lips (often referred to as ‘pierce my lips’) to ‘squint’ their eyes, to ‘hunch’ or ‘arch’ their backs or to stand with their legs ‘planted shoulder-width apart’ - especially in an allegedly naturalistic performance.
- It has been an unfortunate result of the pandemic that students have been unable to access live performances. For a majority of centres, this has meant that all students in a centre have answered on the same production, with varying degrees of success, as they do not have the range of experience to draw upon when selecting their questions.
- Students should be reminded that the purpose of the Question C question is to assess their ability to evaluate a piece of theatre in terms of the focus of the question and that a general description of what they have seen does not fulfil the demands of the question.
- Some answers in Section C reflected the filmic qualities of streamed productions. It is to be hoped that the 2023 cohort have more opportunities to experience live theatre and can reflect on the impact of live performances.
- One marked feature of this series, which has occurred as a result of the ‘Advanced Information’ issued by Awarding bodies, was the tendency for students to have over-prepared answers to questions that they expected to see.
- This resulted in swathes of students reproducing their prepared responses on, for example, Tiresias or Ralph, or on a ‘streamed’ production that they had seen, and ignoring the actual question as set on the paper. This resulted in many students writing responses that were ‘off-focus’.

## Section A

### *Antigone*

#### Q 01

- This was a popular question. Most students who chose to answer on Tiresias opted to write from the perspective of an actor rather than from the perspective of a costume designer.
- Most responses did include some costume suggestions which were credited, provided that they contributed to defining Tiresias’ character.
- Tiresias was seen as a wise man, a respected elder, a prophet whose prophecies were usually accurate, and he was referred to as the ‘mouthpiece of the gods’.
- The most successful answers included a section from the beginning of Tiresias’ confrontation with Creon, when he was still hoping to make Creon see sense, and a section near the end when Tiresias has lost patience with Creon’s stubborn refusal to pay attention to his warnings.
- Occasionally students chose two sections that ran straight into each other which tended to limit the practical options open to them.
- Tiresias’ blindness caused some problems. Many students mentioned Tiresias’ physical blindness, initially, in relation to Tiresias being led by the boy, but later in their answers they

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offered suggestions which included ‘direct eye contact’ with Creon or even had Tiresias navigating a series of steps, unaided, as he sought to come on a level with Creon.

- Straightforward answers dealt with Tiresias’ warning in fairly simple terms; more successful ones saw the more anguished side to Tiresias, his desire to prevent yet more misfortune happening to Antigone’s and Ismene’s family.
- In previous series, the use of Greek theatre terms has been more successfully applied than in this series, where students sometimes sprinkled them throughout but with no real sense of understanding their meaning.
- Those that tackled this question as a designer, usually costumed Tiresias in a chiton and sandals and many included references to, for example, peplos, himation, and chlamys.
- Some students mistakenly dressed Tiresias in a Roman Toga.
- Some students transposed the period and setting, not always with the necessary justification and had Tiresias wearing a doctor’s coat or a military uniform. These were rarely successful as the concept was not carried through and ideas were frequently abandoned after the opening sentences.
- A few interpreted Tiresias as a ‘supernatural’ being with direct connections to the Gods and these tended to give him more elaborate costumes in purple or gold to emphasise his importance.
- Whatever perspective was adopted, the real determinant of success was whether students recognised the need for an interpretation of Tiresias’ character and not merely of his changing moods or attitudes towards Creon.

#### Q 02

- This was an extremely popular question and attracted some very successful answers.
- There was evidence of good social, cultural and historical knowledge which was, for the most part, focused on the question.
- A few students spent too long explaining the history of Antigone’s family without relevant reference to the question focus.
- There was some secure use of specific terminology of classical Greek theatre.
- Most of the responses offered justified casting decisions which focussed on creating contrast between Antigone and Ismene.
- Many referenced a fiery hair colour for Antigone and a more athletic build, suggesting her physical boldness.
- This was often contrasted by a softer and less robust build for Ismene, often accompanied by a paler complexion to suggest that she remained indoors due to her more compliant nature.
- Less successful were suggestions for named actors, which often did not specify what features or physicality were appropriate to the roles.
- Some students opted for family resemblance between the actors playing the sisters which, although a perfectly valid interpretation, had the question been a different one, was unhelpful in an answer to a question whose focus was on creating a contrast between the pair.

- Some students did not attempt casting ideas at all. Others ignored the question demand for a 'brief' outline and spent almost the entire answer considering the characters' physical appearance and psychological make-up.
- There was generally good direction of the two characters, with detail being given of movement, gesture and facial expression – always supported by reference to the delivery of a specific line.
- There was some excellent detail of Ismene's hesitancy in her first meeting and of Antigone's impatient responses.
- Many students interpreted Antigone as a harsh character, but there were some more subtle answers which interpreted her as having a genuine love of her sister when they confronted Creon, delivering her exhortation for Ismene to "live" with genuine feeling.
- These answers sometimes referenced Antigone's own fears and regret and the contrast in how this shows in her performance and Ismene's.
- A few students interpreted Ismene as being more sensible and mature than Antigone, showing a caution through maturity. These answers were often very successful in offering nuanced performance ideas, focusing on Ismene's concern about the consequences for Antigone, of burying Polyneices' body, rather than her timidity and fear for herself.

### *Much Ado about Nothing*

#### Q 03

- This was the less popular of the two questions on this text, with most students approaching their answer from the perspective of a director.
- Most students demonstrated at least some understanding of how to incorporate a range of directorial strategies including use of space and staging elements to achieve comedy.
- Better answers also included precise details about how the characters might deliver the text.
- The majority of answers focused on the 'tricking' scenes, revealing an appreciation of the need for the 'tricksters' to over-exaggerate their lines, so that Benedick or Beatrice would hear their conversations 'loud and clear'.
- There were some imaginative ideas for where and how Benedick and then Beatrice might conceal themselves as they 'swallowed the bait'.
- These included Benedick hiding up a tree or behind a tree or behind a massive shrub in a pot that he kept edging ever nearer to Claudio and Don Pedro, until the shrub was actual touching Don Pedro's back.
- There were some instances where the student had failed to consider in sufficient detail how Beatrice might be seen by the audience as she delivers her asides, but most students appreciated the need for both Benedick's and Beatrice's dawning realisation of being 'beloved' to be fully visible, to maximise the comic effect.
- Other popular choices of section included those with Dogberry and the Watch where some students opted to focus so much on the comic casting of the roles that they left themselves little time to actually direct the actors and their delivery of the text.
- Of the few responses seen that adopted the perspective of a set designer, there were one or two highly detailed explanations of Italianate gardens with ponds, statues and ornamental hedges – ideal for hiding behind.

- However, there were also several poorly thought through designs that opted for an almost bare stage that afforded few opportunities for the creation of comedy and revealed a lack of understanding of design fundamentals.
- Only in a couple of cases was the social, cultural and historical aspects sufficiently linked to an awareness of Elizabethan comedy conventions; the majority of answers considered the role of women, irrespective of whether any women appeared in the answer.

## Q 04

- Of the two questions on this text, this was the more popular.
- There was some appropriate knowledge shown of context, and an awareness of the style and form of Elizabethan comedy and staging conventions.
- Most students answered from a performer's perspective, but a few did not acknowledge this question demand.
- Most answers commented on Beatrice's lively character and strong will and chose appropriate sections of the text in illustration.
- Good answers also highlighted her intelligence and wit, demonstrated in her interactions with Benedick.
- Good answers also drew on the playfulness of Beatrice as demonstrated in many sections of the text, offering detailed ideas for delivery and performance.
- There were also some very secure answers which showed Beatrice's loyalty to her cousin and her strength of character in her defence. These answers offered good contrasts between the nimble wit of earlier scenes and her quiet assurance and dignity following the 'disgrace'.
- Some students chose to focus on the comedy Beatrice creates and some of these interpretations were highly appropriate, offering details of timing and comic business, for example when Beatrice overhears Hero and Ursula in the 'bower'.
- Some answers were less successful in their interpretation, suggesting slapstick routines and portraying Beatrice as bumbling or melodramatic, which is not supported by the text.
- A few answers had chosen to stage their production with entrances and exits through the audience and had included interaction with audience members and 'ad lib'. This staging needed justification, which was not always given. For example, it is unlikely that Beatrice would sit on an audience member's lap, for comic effect.
- Some answers lost focus on the interpretation of the text, as written, and lost opportunities to demonstrate their understanding.

*A Servant to Two Masters*

## Q05

- Focused answers showed an understanding of Pantalone and Dr Lombardi as character types.
- Where Commedia was used as a reference, features of Pantalone and Il Dottore as members of the Vecchi were used to support the more rounded Goldoni equivalents, always linking to the main focus of creating comedy.
- The Commedia traits of the characters (mean and avaricious for Pantalone and blusteringly nonsensical for Dr Lombardi) created opportunities for comedy or at least a starting point for it.

- Focused detail on vocal delivery and physical business, including elements of slapstick and lazzi, when used appropriately and linked closely to the text, provided clear and detailed comic moments.
- Less effective answers didn't understand the relationship between the old men or who they were in relation to Clarice and Silvio, making their interactions less comedic.
- As with many other answers on other texts, the lack of practical detail using the text became a major weakness in less effective answers.
- Some students selected sections where Pantalone and Dr Lombardi don't appear together.

## Q6

- This was a reasonably popular question and students seemed to enjoy writing about Smeraldina's 'cheeky' personality.
- It was a feature of some answers that they had prepared to answer a question on Smeraldina, but the question on the paper was not the one that they were expecting.
- Where students had prepared an answer on Smeraldina's 'feistiness' or on her role as a 'proto-feminist', the less sophisticated among them failed to adapt their responses.
- Rather than being 'cheeky', Smeraldina came over as strident or as a fierce 'feminist'. By selecting sections of confrontation – such as Smeraldina's angry tirade against Silvio in Act Two – her cheekiness had hardened into aggression and the nature of the comedy created was altogether darker.
- Act Two, Scene Five and Act Two, Scene Fourteen were the most popular choices but where two scenes from the same Act were explored, the students' overview of the play tended to be restricted.
- In the opening scene and in Act Two, Scene Fourteen, where Smeraldina is flirting with Truffaldino better answers were able to explore the lighter side of Smeraldina's 'cheekiness'.
- In some interpretations Smeraldina was presented as genuinely unaware that 'Truffaldino Battocchio' was, in fact, 'Truffaldino', revealing a misunderstanding of her role especially as regards her relationship with the audience.
- Students often displayed a restricted range of comic invention.

*Hedda Gabler*

## Q 07

- This was a predictably popular question with negligible reports of students having chosen to adopt a costume designer's perspective in their interpretation of Hedda.
- Hedda was generally interpreted as being manipulative, domineering and cold; some excellent responses were seen.
- As has been reported in many Examiner's reports over the years, students do themselves no service if they rush into their answers without fully considering the terms of the question that they have selected.
- In this question, an interpretation of Hedda was required and this focus needed to be addressed at the beginning of the answer, so that the 'interpretation' would guide both the two sections to be explored and the performance ideas required to convey that interpretation.



- Popular scenes to tackle were Hedda's deliberate humiliation of Aunt Juliana in her initial appearance; her wheedling of information out of Mrs Elvsted in Act One, the gifting of her pistol to Eilert with the entreaty to kill himself 'beautifully' in Act Three and Hedda's realisation of being trapped by Judge Brack, in Act Four.
- Hedda's cruelty and her indifference to the feelings of others was brought out well in her first scene with Mrs Elvsted.
- Some students chose the scene where Hedda forces Eilert to take a drink and revealed her malicious pleasure in taunting both him and Thea.
- This proved a good contrast to her defiant, (deadly) reaction to her own feelings of helplessness when she realises that Brack has power over her at the end of the play.
- Some students failed to notice that the question required focus on **two** sections of the play and they either wrote about a single section or they wrote about multiple moments chosen from various points in the play as a whole. This was self-penalising. Students need to be reminded that they must shape their answers to the precise demands of the question, in every particular.

## Q 08

- This question was less popular, but many good answers were seen.
- There was good understanding shown of the style of the play and its cultural context. A few students offered contextual detail which was not relevant to the question, including biographical material about Ibsen.
- Casting ideas for Loevborg and Tesman were generally appropriate, with many students choosing to cast Tesman as slightly plumper and less attractive figure than Loevborg, for whom a taller and slimmer actor was suggested, with more pronounced classical features.
- Some students focused on Loevborg's alcoholism and wild past. Some of these answers were successful in creating his sense of restlessness and 'edginess' through his actions and interactions with Hedda and his intense delivery style
- Tesman was contrastingly seen as 'boring' as defined by his research specialism and evident lack of imagination as shown in his bewilderment at Loevborg's book about the future.
- Some held Tesman's excitement over his slippers against him and failed to note his sentimentality towards his aunts and his capacity for true affection.
- Loevborg was equated with passion and transgression of society's norms as demonstrated by his affair with Thea, his excessive drinking and his association with women of dubious reputation.
- Some answers took the influence of Loevborg's past to an extreme, presenting Loevborg as dishevelled or "grubby" which was unlikely to find favour with Hedda.
- Good answers offered a detailed direction of the two men together, showing a contrast between Loevborg's self-confidence and Tesman's self-deprecation.
- There were useful suggestions made for their interactions with Hedda, contrasting Tesman's admiration for Hedda which is awkwardly expressed, and Loevborg's more intimate and very personal approach whilst looking at the albums.

- Less successful were directions for their interaction with Thea, as some students lost the question focus and discussed how both men provoke Hedda's jealousy through 'similar' interaction.
- There was some good direction of both characters towards the end of the play, contrasting Loevborg's passionate and intense scene as he leaves Hedda with Tesman's pragmatic response to the loss of the manuscript and his practical actions.
- Good answers also highlighted how Loevborg is acutely attuned to Hedda's moods and desires whereas Tesman is largely oblivious to her as he starts working with Thea on 're-arranging' Loevborg's original material.
- There was a range of responses to this question with good answers keeping a secure focus on the contrast between the characters.

### *Caucasian Chalk Circle*

#### Q 09

- Examiners reported seeing very few responses to this question.
- Among the few answers that were seen, some focused on establishing a contrast between Grusha and the Governor's Wife. It is possible that this had been an anticipated question based on 'Advance Information' and the focus was not as sharp as it should have been on reinforcing Brecht's message about the differences between the rich and the poor.
- Those very few students who attempted to highlight the differences between the classes through design frequently betrayed a misunderstanding of Brecht's general approach to theatre design. These students based their answers on an erroneous belief that Brecht adopted a minimalist approach to design.
- Some repeated the misleading notion that Brecht chose not to use props in his productions, when photographic and written records show that he was meticulous in sourcing authentic props that reflect the period and setting of his plays.
- Some students also repeated the misguided belief that characters in Brecht's productions wore 'theatre blacks' to perform in.
- Some students repeated the mistaken notion that characters in Brecht's productions wore placards round their necks to indicate their character or a change of character in multi-role productions.
- Any or all of these approaches to design were inappropriate and unlikely to help establish the differences between the rich and the poor.

#### Q10

- Some lively answers were seen from well-prepared student with a good understanding of Brecht's political agenda within his plays.
- Many began their answers with a succinct paragraph of the function of the Governor's Wife within Brecht's model of social relations.
- Better answers focused on the stipulated two sections with the strongest looking at the Governor's Wife either in the Easter Sunday section or where she is supervising the packing of her clothes and then in the Chalk Circle scene.

- In each section most students intended to elicit a negative response from the audience which was dependent upon a performance in which the Governor's Wife demonstrated her selfishness, snobbishness and complete disregard for the welfare of anyone but herself.
- Some students included far too much, occasionally muddled, information about the *Verfremdungseffekte*.
- Not all students were equally equipped to discuss their application of Brechtian performance techniques such as acting in the spirit of criticism, adopting the 'not/but', using *gestus* (frequently confused with gesture) and attempting to create *Spaß*.
- Some students had been unduly influenced by garbled accounts of a Brechtian style from a range of unregulated sources.
- Weaker answers became side-tracked into a narrative of the plotline, became bogged down with a comparison between dramatic theatre and epic theatre or spent too much time focused on descriptions of the Governor's Wife's costume. Many of these answers showed limited understanding of context.

### *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*

#### Q11

- Focused answers showed an understanding of Fo and his methods which gave them a head start whether they were answering as a director or as a designer.
- Some students were not focused on the squabbles between the police officers and had clearly hoped for an opportunity to discuss the idiosyncrasies of the Maniac.
- The use of slapstick by those approaching the question from the perspective of a director was often successfully applied, with the sense of ever-increasing chaos highlighting the tensions between them.
- Successful answers also recognised the comic potential of the farcical style of the play where the panic about the consequences of the 'cover-up' within the Police Headquarters begins to spiral out of control.
- Designers although not many in number, usually opted for a cartoon approach to design which was seen with larger-than-life desks, chairs, cabinets, doors and, most significantly, the window. Such designs were supported by psychedelic colour schemes, loony tunes style, or monochrome shades to parody the 'professionalism' of the police force.
- Some interesting interpretations of characters were seen, with a clown-like Bertozzo, the Superintendent and Pissani as a comic double act and the Constables as characters from 'Dumb and Dumber', with varying success.
- As always, a clear focus on the question, with detailed and relevant practical detail and appropriate use of the text with an explanation as to how the ideas offered highlighted tensions between the police officers produced the strongest responses.
- The weaker answers showing little or no understanding of the style, text or its satirical intention.

#### Q12

- This was the more popular of the two questions on this text with the majority of responses demonstrating at least some understanding of Bertozzo's role and function within the play.

- Preferred effects tended to be linked to the explanation of the social, cultural and historical significance of the play, largely considering the incompetence and/or corruption of the police force, however, all too frequently, this outweighed the actual practical performance detail.
- Many students wrote very lengthy introductions describing the events on which Fo based the play but made little or no reference to Bertozzo.
- Responses to this question frequently suffered as a result of the student providing negligible context for their ideas. To simply quote an (all too often) very brief line of text and then offer some over-simplified performance suggestions that culminate in, 'this would show the audience how corrupt the police force is' is insufficient either to adequately reveal an understanding of the potential of the script and which, more significantly, fails to explore any kind of creative overview.
- Most frequently tackled sections were the opening sequence of the play with the Maniac and the latter section with the bomb.
- Students should be reminded that even though the play has considerable political significance, it is written to be performed in a comic style – very few answers considered this, with Bertozzo, in many cases, because of his general incompetence was played as 'boring' or 'dull'. This did little to convince examiners that the student had fully understood the style of the play.

### *Jerusalem*

#### Q 13

This was a popular question.

- Most students attempting this question were able to recognize the connection between Ginger and Johnny, however not all understood the need to discuss Ginger's attitudes towards Johnny – the focus of the question.
- Most students considered Ginger's first entrance into the play and his last appearance.
- Where the student looked at these in detail and referred to Ginger's journey throughout the play, there were some very clear answers that demonstrated sound understanding not only of character but also of the means by which a director or performer could convey this.
- Less convincing responses adopted a snapshot approach, either writing in considerable, but often not convincing, detail about his 'rap' entrance or selecting the briefest of lines from across their chosen section and believing that it is sufficient to make performance suggestions that were, at best, generalised to indicate an 'all-round', 'friendly' attitude.
- Some students considered Ginger's narrative in the 'giant' section, but all too often failed to link this to a corresponding attitude towards Johnny, only considering Ginger's attempts to ingratiate himself with the rest of the group.
- For their second section, nearly all students wrote about Ginger's final appearance. Few however, considered his aborted brief entrance, seeing Johnny being beaten up.
- In some weaker answers, there appeared to be some confusion regarding Ginger's attitude towards his 'fallen hero' at the end of the play.
- Only a few of the strongest responses, actually considered how Ginger might demonstrate his final sense of betrayal to an audience.
- SCH was nearly always included, sometimes at considerable length and all too often without discussing how this 'state of the nation' play might affect the performance or

direction of Ginger. Several students, for example mentioned where the play was set and then proceeded to perform Ginger with a cockney accent ‘to demonstrate his class’.

- Less coherent responses drifted towards a generalised description of the narrative through-line of the text

#### Q 14

- Few students attempted this question, those that did focused largely on set, props and costume.
- In relation to set/props, in some cases there were some very detailed sketches of the clearing and Johnny’s caravan but all too often there was little added beyond Butterworth’s stage directions.
- In a couple of good responses, the students considered precise moments of action from the text and demonstrated theatrical understanding by the way in which members of the cast used the stage space to enter or exit and/or to interact with the stage furnishings.
- There were a couple of very detailed explanations of the opening of the play.
- Unfortunately, weaker responses failed to consider mood – indeed many skirted over this element with little more than a cursory nod to ‘increasing tension’.
- In relation to costume, this lack of focus was even more pronounced many assertions regarding Johnny’s dirty vest being attributed to a mood of aggression.

### Section B

*Yerma*

#### Q15.1

- This question produced some good responses. The clash in attitudes between Yerma and the Pagan Woman were clearly identified and Yerma’s anguish because of her inability to go against her society’s expectations was usually discussed with appropriate practical suggestions linked closely to the text.
- Most students dealt with the first part of the extract and then moved to Yerma’s final speech in this section.
- The middle section dealing with water was often ignored.
- Students were generally more confident in discussing the direction of Yerma than the Pagan Woman; they seem less sure of their interpretation of her.
- Several students gave quite detailed costume designs for Yerma and the Pagan Woman which are not required for this question and meant that they wasted time that would have been better spent on actual practical direction.

#### Q15.2

- Successful answers provided detailed and focused performance ideas for Juan, with frequent use of the text, from his entrance to his demise, regardless of whether he was portrayed as a patriarchal tyrant or a misunderstood worker and provider.
- Many answers portrayed him as drunk (or on the way) which was fine where it was justified (although there is no indication of this in the text).

- Interpretations of Juan varied but whatever was chosen needed to be justified and then very clearly related to the nominated audience response to Juan. Many students failed to nominate a response and their answers therefore lacked focus.
- Some interpreted Juan's interaction with Yerma as harsh and vindictive, lecherous or drunk or simply as poor communicator.
- These answers carefully selected Yerma's lines for Juan to respond and react to, allowing a rounded and reasoned audience response to be justified.
- Weaker answers took Juan's lines and actions in isolation or switched their focus onto Yerma, often discussing an audience response to her, rather than Juan.
- The weakest answers (in common with many weak Section B answers) only dealt with a very small part of the section. It was surprising that so many omitted Juan's death.

## Q15.3

- There were some reasonable responses to this question, but the requirement to consider 'atmosphere' was generally ignored.
- Some quite detailed designs were offered – some with a lack of knowledge about aspects such as sight lines. For example, some students put a 'barren tree' downstage centre which would have obscured much of the action.
- Equally, the cart that Juan is behind was often positioned where it would cause sight line problems.
- Aspects such as scale, colour and materials were often not considered but more successful responses did manage to design a set that would be appropriate for the Andalusian setting.
- Those that chose to design costumes as well as set were varied. Some designed a flamenco dress for the Pagan Woman, and many had Yerma in white without elaborating further.
- Some remembered the festival and gave Yerma a veil to wear, which she used to strangle Juan with, in some answers.

*The Glass Menagerie*

## Q 16.1

- The best answers to this question identified the intended effects from the outset and then set about explaining precisely how these would be achieved, unfortunately many students proffered an intended effect only as an afterthought, and this frequently resulted in very generalised directorial ideas.
- Some students spent a disproportionate amount of time on the opening of the scene so that it was hard for their intended effects to go beyond Laura's initial reaction to the dancing and/or the breaking of the unicorn.
- Others offered casting ideas for the couple which was not a requirement and therefore was only credit-worthy if the casting contributed to the intended effects.
- Some students repeated their casting ideas for Laura, as a preamble to Question 2, which was a complete waste of valuable time.
- There were some answers which offered some quite subtle directorial details that revealed an understanding of how confused Laura feels. It was necessary for students to explore what Jim is saying, in order to show Laura's reactions to him moment by moment.

- Some students were unrealistic in their assumption that they could direct Laura to ‘blush’ on demand. They needed to have considered alternative practical ways to convey Laura’s shyness and/or embarrassment, before the day of the examination.
- Some students spent a considerable amount of their response in discussing design elements, particularly set and costume. Whilst an indication as to where the ‘glass menagerie’ is placed helped the examiner visualise the action, work of this nature was largely extraneous.
- There wasn’t a great deal of purposeful SCH used in answers to this question although some references were made to the ‘American Dream’ and there were some comments made about poverty.

#### Q16.2

- There were a variety of responses to this question. A few students had not noted the prescribed lines for the question and started their answers earlier in the extract, with a very few making irrelevant references to the wider text.
- Some students offered focused SCH, commenting on the social mores of the time, but some went into extensive detail of Amanda’s background and aims, which distracted them from the Question focus.
- Good answers referenced the stage directions and offered performance ideas for Laura’s dazed reaction and bright looks, with consideration of her posture, focus and with detail of how she looks at and/or holds the glass unicorn.
- These answers showed an understanding of Laura’s inexperience but also of the social conventions of the time. A few answers were less subtle, suggesting a passionate and “loving” response which is unlikely. Several students commented on how the kiss temporarily boosts Laura’s self-confidence, but she is still unlikely to “grab” Jim or hold her mouth up for another kiss.
- Some students lost the performance focus of the question and analysed the situation, commenting on how the unicorn represents Laura and her ‘freakishness’.
- Some students noted the importance of hearing Amanda’s laugh. These answers showed a good understanding of the extract but did not develop the analysis into performance ideas.

#### Q16.3

- There were some good design ideas and some detailed sketches which were clearly labelled, often providing additional information to the answers.
- Good answers focused on the creation of atmosphere, stating the effects that they wished to create, and offering appropriate design fundamentals such as colour and texture.
- There were some excellent set design ideas, referencing the financial straits of the Wingfield family but offering suggestions as to how Amanda would have tried to compensate for any shabbiness by adding pictures and covering the sofa in a colourful throw.
- Some students highlighted the father’s picture showing his continued influence through the size of the portrait and the lighting of it, although there were a few suggestions for his costume, for example in royal regalia, which were not fully justified.

- The colour palettes suggested for the set and furnishings often reflected the historical period with then fashionable browns, creams and greens.
- Costume ideas were sometimes less successful as they were often linked to the situation of the characters, rather than the atmosphere created.
- A few students commented successfully on how Laura's dress, as altered by Amanda, adds to an awkward atmosphere as she tries to manipulate the unfamiliar skirt and is self-conscious about her bosom. There was some commentary on colour and how white or pastel colours would create a sense of innocence in Laura, adding to the atmosphere of sadness at the end of the extract.
- Lighting and sound were well considered, with reference to period jazz from the dance hall and the warm glow created by the candlelight. A few lighting suggestions offered frequently changing states and strong colours for romance/awkwardness/sadness, but some of these intense changes could detract from the delicacy of the dialogue and were not always convincingly justified.

### Metamorphosis

#### Q 17.1

- The chief problem with the responses to this question was the highly selective use of text.
- The majority of students recognised the family's fear of the Chief Clerk but failed to do more than direct one or two lines of the specified section resulting in answers that lacked coverage.
- The best responses dealt with the entrance of the Chief Clerk and provided an immediate response to this by the whole family with some precise explanations of images of the family reacting together.
- They then went on to consider each family member in turn, selecting appropriate moments and providing examples as to what the actors were doing on stage. However, very few students moved beyond exploring the physical aspects of the character, there was little consideration as to how voice could be used to portray fear.
- Mr Samsa was often largely omitted in students' response, the most attention being paid to Greta.
- Some students spent so long describing the sound of the Chief Clerk's shoes tapping across the floor that they lost sight of the focus of the question.
- Many students failed to offer any sense of the configuration of the stage space, specifically in relation to where Gregor's room was situated, which made it very difficult to visualise the section of the extract and it appeared as though the actors spent much of time facing upstage and therefore the audience would find it difficult to see many of the facial expressions that were being described.
- Given the fact that the text contains so many precise directorial details, it was surprising how few of Berkoff's stage directions were considered in many answers. SCH was often restricted to a brief mention of a Berkovian aesthetic or conversely a lengthy description of Kafka's life.

#### Q17.2



- Most answers were able to provide some clear performance ideas for Gregor and, where a Berkovian approach was adopted, were able to provide details of an appropriate use of exaggeration and stylised physicality.
- As many students found it difficult to cover performing Gregor for the whole extract, the key to success was the careful selection of key moments that best showed his confusion, rather than moments of surprise or shock.
- The extract lends itself to a discussion of performance for his early attempts to get out of bed, his reactions to the arrival of the Chief Clerk to his responses to his family's attempts to help.
- Weaker answers could provide some performance detail but didn't manage to focus on Gregor's confusion or only provided one or two isolated moments from the extract.

## 17.3

- There were some good answers to this question, particularly those which had given some attention to both make-up and costume.
- There were also some useful sketches demonstrating some understanding of period detail and giving the impression that these sketches had been practiced in advance of the examination.
- Costume ideas for Greta were generally quite detailed and tended to focus on her innocence/youth. Some students were more economical with their detail and simply referred the examiner to a 'Berkovian' monochrome palette, which was hardly in the spirit of the exam.
- The Chief Clerk was sometimes treated quite imaginatively with something of the 'bogeyman' about him, wearing a long dark overcoat and with a hat concealing part of his face. This was finished off with the very noisy but also very shiny pair of shoes.
- Most students had prepared costume ideas to show the Chief Clerk's pomposity and sense of self-importance, and some considered his wealth, reflected in a gold pocket watch on a chain, although there is no suggestion in Berkoff's text that he is anything higher than a 'Chief Clerk' and a functionary within the 'machine' that has drained Gregor of his humanity.

*Our Country's Good*

## Q18.1

- Several responses to this question spent a great deal of time giving the background to the text in terms of the historical voyage of the First Fleet to Botany Bay; they referenced *The Fatal Shore* and *The Playmaker* as sources of the story, but often these references did nothing to illuminate the focus of the question.
- Mrs Thatcher made an appearance in many students' answers and while some of these references were made relevant by more sophisticated students, much of the 'contextual material' was not made relevant at all.
- Some students focused on the acting of Meg and/or Mary rather than on directing Ralph's exchanges with them, but most of what they had to say was of some tangential relevance.
- A surprising number of answers had Meg being very 'physical' with Ralph, stroking his leg, ruffling his hair and whispering in his ear (sometimes going far beyond what was

acceptable on an exam paper) which showed a lack of awareness of the hierarchical situation that she is in as a female convict also of the power dynamic in this scene.

- Better answers saw Ralph's inability to assert himself and recognised his feelings of not knowing how to handle the convicts that he had elected to try to lead and motivate.
- Students described Ralph wrinkling his nose because of Meg's smell – a couple of answers had him retching at the sight of her, which would seem to be too extreme.
- When it came to discussing Ralph's attitudes towards Mary, while there were some successful answers, other students misunderstood the fact that this is Ralph's first sighting of Mary and that he is not already infatuated with Mary or, indeed, lusting after her.
- Some students described Mary as a genteel and educated woman, which showed a misreading of the play.
- Ralph's contrasting attitudes were generally accurately presented.

#### Q18.2

- Most answers showed a good understanding of Robert Sideway and the purpose of this role in Wertenbaker's message about the importance of theatre.
- This was often referenced in SCH comments, with a few students giving too much detail of Margaret Thatcher's policies, Wertenbaker's visit to Wormwood Scrubs and political unrest. SCH should be linked to the question focus and the miners' strikes of the 1980s did not fit comfortably with the performance of Sideway.
- Good answers considered both aspects of the question, Sideway's love of theatre and his pride in his skill as a pickpocket.
- Some very good answers demonstrated both in Sideway's 'performance' of 'plucking' the rich woman in Drury Lane, indicating his flamboyant re-telling of this story and his use of theatre conventions of the time.
- There was some very good detail of his theft of Ralph's handkerchief and his dramatic return of the item. There was some sensitive realisation of his nostalgia for London in his use of tone and gaze and his excitement about the named actors of the period.
- Less successful were answers which suggested physical contact with Ralph, which is dubious in context. Sideway would be unlikely to shake hands with Ralph at this point in the play, much less throw his arm over his shoulder to invite him to share in his nostalgia for London.
- Some less successful answers did not consider both parts of the question, with some mistakenly suggesting that Sideway's profession was acting. A few other answers spent too much time analysing Sideway's function within the play, without developing performance ideas, or with referencing only a narrow range of the prescribed text.

#### Q18.3

- There were some good answers to this question, particularly those which had given some attention to all three demands, make-up, costume and accessories.
- There were some useful sketches demonstrating some understanding of period detail and giving clear labels.
- Costume ideas for Ralph were generally detailed with some reference to his need to be properly presented because of his desire for promotion but also his lack of confidence with the convicts.

- There were details about the effect of the harsh sun on the colour of Ralph's uniform and the dust of the landscape on his boots and britches. There were make-up ideas for sunburn, and some accessories, such as a pocket watch. Some answers needed to consider the theatricality of the piece, as some ideas such as a picture of Betsy-Alicia in a top pocket would not be clear to an audience.
- Costume ideas for Mary were similarly period appropriate, although some suggestions to show her "innocence", for example a perfectly white petticoat or a "Madonna blue" dress were unlikely in the context of the penal colony, despite her being portrayed as reserved and more refined.
- Less successful were suggestions for Meg Long, which often reflected her interpretation in question 18.1. As a very old and "very smelly" convict, it is unlikely that Meg would be engaged in the frequent sexual activity suggested in some of the costume designs, some of which suggested exposed bosoms and ripped skirts, exposing her flesh. Her age and function as a procuress were not often noted so her costume was interpreted as an active (and successful) prostitute.
- Ideas for Sideway were appropriate in the main, referencing the canvas "slops" that were issued to the convicts and giving a touch of colour with a scarf or waistcoat to reflect his flamboyant nature. Less convincing were pockets full of stolen goods, as he would find poor pickings among the convicts and would be fearful of reprisals from the officers.
- In terms of the designs, the ideas for make-up showed the least security, with several students suggesting the use of cosmetics as opposed to stage make-up and giving a few unlikely suggestions such as using felt pens to apply scars.

### *Cloud Nine*

#### Q19.1

This is not a text that is tackled by many students and there were too few responses to the question to make a detailed report upon.

- Those that attempted Q 19.1 had a reasonable idea of Clive's attitudes towards others, particularly toward Edward but, surprisingly, few deemed his parenting-style to be inappropriate.
- Exposing Clive's pomposity was an acceptable preferred effect for some students, and this was brought out in the directions. His insensitivity to his family was shown through his abrupt manner and terse comments to Edward.
- Some commented on Clive's complete lack of empathy for the characters around him, including his wife, and his dubious attitude towards Joshua and innate sense of superiority were also listed as preferred effects.

#### Q19.2

- Once again, many students took a very selective approach in their response to this question, selecting lines of text with very little sense of how they would contribute to an overall interpretation of Edward.
- Some students started at the beginning of the extract and worked methodically through to Edward's exit discussing how the actor would create the sense of a, most commonly, spoilt child. In the best answers this was accompanied by some clear vocal and physical performance details that went beyond the generic.

- Good answers conveyed Edward's attention seeking behaviour by referring to the action of the other characters and describing clearly how the actor playing Edward would relate to them on stage.
- There were some quite vivid descriptions of the ball game although sometimes students fell into directing Clive and Harry, rather than focussing on Edward's performance.
- Some students recognised the inherent humour in the extract, but few were able to explore this practically through Edward's performance. Nor did many comment on the use of stereotypes to enhance the humour. Timing of delivery was rarely considered, and SCH was either largely ignored or the essay was preceded by a lengthy and often simplistic explanation of gender politics.

### Q19.3

- Although a compulsory part of the Question 19, a number of students failed to include an answer to Question 3.
- Those who did were not particularly well focused on the issue of atmosphere and/or did not fully appreciate the meaning of 'festive'.
- It is to be expected that students will have undertaken some research into the historical context of the play and while streamers, paper chains, bunting and or festive colours, such as red and green, seen on a picnic tablecloth might have been appropriate to this 'Christmas picnic' party-poppers were less likely to have been available in Africa in the Victorian era.
- The handful of answers seen tended to focus on set and costume; sketches were not very clearly labelled or especially festive in appearance.

### *Bronte*

#### Q20.1

- The strongest answers provided some context for the section and showed an understanding of Charlotte's relationship with her father and her previous feelings about Bell Nicholls.
- Students were then able to consider Charlotte's responses to Patrick's formal announcement of the proposal and his confidence that Charlotte would not like to be married to Bell Nichols.
- Bertha's function in the section was often not considered except in better responses. Stronger answers noted that time had passed (and they suggested how this might be indicated). Charlotte's and Bell Nicholls' exchange was sometimes dealt with sensitively.
- Weaker answers adopted a more formulaic approach or sometimes ignored Charlotte's input into the first part of the section. They seemed unaware of the fact that three months had passed before Bell Nicholls' entrance and omitted Bertha in the section entirely.

## Q20.2

- This question generated some very successful and sensitive responses, showing an understanding of the role and giving a sympathetic interpretation.
- Most students recognised the question perspective and indicated in their interpretations the strength of Charlotte's character and her innate honesty in her initial interaction with Bell Nicholls.
- There was some excellent detail of her hesitancy in her self-deprecation and her declaration that she does not love him, but her honesty was well expressed through her vocal qualities and focused gaze.
- There was some subtle detail in Charlotte's delivery of 'Your letters. They moved me.' Which several students suggested should hint at a beginning of her changing regard for this man, expressed through sincere delivery.
- The second section of the extract often demonstrated similar sophisticated performance ideas, with the interpretation showing a comfortable and familiar relationship, for example Charlotte adopting a teasing tone when Bell Nicholls glances over her shoulder. Her affection was also expressed in her response to Arthur, for example with her putting her hand over his as he touches her shoulder and her smile on 'I am happy'.
- Only a very few students engaged with her final lines, but her description of his kindness was poignantly described and her final 'My heart is knit to him entirely' delivered with passion.
- Many of these answers were a pleasure to mark.

## 20.3

- Many students appeared to find this question surprisingly difficult.
- Although in introductions to the responses there was an awareness of the different time periods contained in the extract, these often weren't adequately translated into practical ideas.
- At their best, students had carefully considered how various design elements might work together to not just contribute to the emotional intensity but to actually enhance the audience's experience of it.
- Some students recognized the significance of Shared Experience's methods of manipulating time and emotion through the use of atmospheric lighting and sound. There were some good explanations of subtle slow fades, combined with use of colour, and background sounds that either increased or decreased in intensity.
- Similarly, where students had considered the use of projections, there were some interesting examples of symbolism being used to help convey the emotional intensity, there were a couple of responses that used live feed which was potentially a very effective way of giving emphasis to the significance of the feathers.
- Answers that focused more on set, props and costume were generally less effective, most of the set designs were very generic, empty spaces, with little thought as to how this may help to support the focus of the question.
- Some responses aimed to repeat the costume ideas from the start of the play at the end, but all too frequently without enough reference to costume design fundamentals. Few students gave any consideration to Bertha's function within the extract and the sense of finality was sometimes no more than a blackout at the end.

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## Section C

### Q 21

So few students selected Q 21 that it is not possible to offer a report on this option.

### Q22

- Although not a particularly popular choice of question, a range of responses was seen.
- As with all questions in this section it is very helpful when students provide a brief context for the production they are writing about. This should not simply be a lengthy description of the plot but is helpful when it relates to the focus of the question.
- In this case the best answers provided the examiner with an overview of not only the style of the production but an indication as to the staging configuration and how the set design related to this. Many answers failed to include any kind of overall description of the set design, meaning that when the student started describing moments, the examiner had very little sense of the experience that they had had.
- The best responses provided as much contextual information as possible from the outset. This was then followed up with a clear identification of the moment and the particular features of the set that created an appropriate setting.
- In the discussion of, for example, a production of *True West*, the explanation of the fight between the brothers was rooted in the way in which they climbed on and over features of the set.
- In more representational or abstract sets, for example, the scene in *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* where Christopher visits his neighbours, students were able to describe in some detail the use of the lit up, Perspex blocks to represent the various houses and by analysing the way he moved from one to another they fulfilled the requirement to discuss appropriateness.
- However, this was not always the case. Many students selected productions where the set design was either not sufficiently significant to the action or not described in enough detail for it to be appropriate for the question. For example, the almost ubiquitous *Things I know to be True* was tackled with varying degrees of success.
- Several students explored the scene between Pip and her mother that takes place on either end of a table, once they had described the table, frequently not mentioning much in the way of design fundamentals, they had little to say other than to focus on the performances.
- However, Bob ripping up the rose bushes and flinging them about the stage was sometimes handled better. In a couple of good answers, the students managed to link this moment very effectively to an explanation of the total dramatic effectiveness, analysing the way that the rose bushes were so clearly representative of the family and that considering the play was in part about family break-up, this very visual representation of destruction resulted in the audience gaining a full understanding of the play and therefore its total dramatic effectiveness.
- Sadly, all too often, references to TDE were either an afterthought in the final paragraph or relied entirely on assertion as the end of the description of a moment.

### Q 23

- This was by far the most popular choice for Section C and many answers were completed successfully.

- As with all Section C answers, the choice of production was extremely important, the most popular of which were *Small Island*, *Love Song*, *Things I Know to Be True*, *Jane Eyre*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and “Frankenstein” almost all of which were watched via digital theatre.
- Most answers were able to provide some detail on the style of the production, its form and some production aims, even if these were then largely ignored. The most successful provided clear detail of the selected performers’ use of skills and how that enabled a sympathetic response to be achieved, providing more than just isolated moments. They were then able to widen their discussions into how these moments contributed to the total dramatic effectiveness of the piece, showing an understanding of how they fitted in to wider production aims.
- The biggest issue with answers to this question was where students had outlined a scenario in detail without discussing the precise way in which performance skills were used, meaning any sympathetic response was derived largely from the situation the characters were in and not explicitly through the actors’ use of skills.
- Less successful answers gave quite generalised details, for example, ‘the play was naturalistic with some non-naturalistic moments’. Whereas this is true of *Things I Know to be True*, it offers little sense of the production.
- Good answers gave a context to their illustrative examples, allowing the examiner to understand the significance of the moments and how the performers used their skills in this context. For example, several students cited *Jane Eyre* being shut in the ‘Red Room’, but only a few explained why this was traumatic for her. Students must not assume that the examiner knows the production but must make their answers easy to visualise.
- Some answers had a broad understanding of ‘sympathetic response’ which, when explained, was appropriate. For example, Pip’s criticism of her mother in *Things I Know to be True* may not present the role in a favourable light, but her anger and hurt may provoke a sympathetic recognition.
- Less successful were answers which focused solely on the characters’ situation to generate sympathy but did not engage the performers’ skills in creating this reaction.
- Most answers gave evidence of total dramatic effectiveness, and this was usually clearly realised and appropriate. Less successful were some references to audience and personal response. Some of the latter suggested an insecure understanding of the nature of theatre, for example, ‘I wanted to get on stage and give the character a hug’.
- Better responses were more reflective and analytical, commenting on the way in which the performers had used their skills to generate a reaction, and how this reaction linked to the production aims.

## Q24

- This was the less popular performance question with most students choosing to tackle Q 23.
- Students seemed not to realise that performers ‘working together’ means more than two performers being on stage at the same time which was the approach adopted by most of the responses. The phrase was intended to suggest a particular stage ‘partnership’ or ‘ensemble work’ and not just a couple of characters on stage in conversation.

- The 'surprising dramatic effects' were also not clearly identified by the majority of students who chose this option with most of the 'surprising' elements discussed stemming from the text of the play, from the characters' surprising actions or opinions and not from any performances seen or clearly identified dramatic effects created.
- Perhaps, very few students understood the demand of the question, probably because of their limited theatrical experience due to the pandemic; subsequently, responses to this question were not consistently successful.



### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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