



GCSE

DRAMA

8261/X NEA: Texts in practice
Report on the Examination

8261
June 2022

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2022 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.
AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Introduction

After a break in exams, it was a pleasure this series to see students' performance work. The work seen this series covered a wide range of performance repertoire and a wide range of aptitude. Examiners saw some confident, skilled and engaging performance work and some less successful performances. Overall, centres have shown a very good understanding of the requirements of this component.

In this component students have the opportunity to explore texts and to perform repertoire that suits both their skills and their interests. The specification gives students the opportunity to perform monologues as individuals or to work in pairs to perform duologues, or to work as part of a group and perform a group piece.

It was thought that examiners may see mostly monologues due to the logistical challenges some centres were facing this series, however examiners reported that whilst there were more monologues performed than in previous series, there were still a lot of students performing duologues and group pieces.

Examiners have reported that a full range of texts have been used for the examination and they have seen some very engaging performance work.

Administration: Paperwork and Submission of Work

Most centres this series completed administrative tasks as required.

It was supportive of the examination process when centres provided clear programme notes so an examiner could identify students as part of their preparation for watching the recordings of the performance work.

It was helpful when programme notes clearly identified the play and extract for each student and included the student number and name. When students were photographed in costume it was very helpful, as opposed to using school photographs from several years ago. Some centres used alternative or abbreviated names different to those used for student registration purposes and in these and other instances centres are asked to check they have used the correct student numbers.

Where work was sent with all the required paperwork in an organised and clear to follow way, it was supportive of the examination process. For most centres the Play Approval Forms were completed, either by using the standard form or in a few exceptional cases by an authorised email from their NEA Adviser or AQA.

Most centres included clearly completed Student Record Forms. Arranging documents in the same order they appeared in recordings was appreciated.

Examiners reported that most centres sent the work promptly after the scheduled examination date, however several centres rescheduled their examination and did not always communicate this in a timely manner to their examiner.

The quality of the recordings, in terms of being able to clearly see the work was something most centres considered, however in some cases student identification was not clear and meant examiners had to ask for clarification from centres in order to accurately identify students.

In some cases, examiners reported problems with recordings which included poor quality sound and problems accessing the work due to the use of non-approved encryption passwords. It is very important for centres to check that the recordings of their students' performances are complete and error free before being sent to the examiner.

It is suggested that if a centre is unsure of any of the administrative procedures, they should check with their NEA Adviser.

Examiners valued the preparation centres had undertaken in order to present work for the examination in a fit for purpose way.

Statements of Dramatic Intention

The purpose of the statement of dramatic intention is to provide students with the opportunity to communicate their creative ideas and for examiners to be able to watch the performance in the context a student intends.

Examiners reported seeing a range of statements this series, from very brief and non-specific intentions, to clear, relevant and detailed dramatic intentions. It is important that students have studied their chosen play text as a whole, and then selected appropriate extracts for performance and where this is, or is not, the case it is often clear in the statement the student writes.

More successful statements of dramatic intention demonstrated an embedded appreciation of the text. They included appropriate intentions and stated how they would be realised in performance, for example stating how specific performance or design skills would be used in order to achieve their intentions.

Less successful statements were often very brief or only gave very general intentions, for example 'to be my character'. Such responses were often not able to demonstrate an understanding of the text.

Where students had undertaken a genuine exploration of their chosen text and could appreciate the wider context of the repertoire in terms of content and style, they were better prepared to identify clear, focused and relevant statements of dramatic intentions.

Filming Performances

This series all work was marked from recordings, and it was the case for most centres that the recordings provided supported the examination. The points mentioned above covering recordings should be considered and centres should be reminded of the requirements for recordings published by AQA, on the GCSE Drama section of the website.

It is worth reminding centres that before the piece is filmed, students are required to identify themselves by name and student number, stating their chosen specialism, the title of the extract chosen and the role(s) they are playing.

Centres also need to ensure close-ups of students' design skills are recorded as part of this identification process, in addition to being captured during the performance itself. This is something several examiners reported was not adequately done this series.

The performances should be filmed by one camera ideally from a single position. The camera should, as closely as possible, provide the same perspective as the audience. Stage lighting often affects the focus of the camera being used for filming, so the use of special effects needs to be carefully considered. The recording must capture everything on the stage that a student would want an examiner to give credit for. Any evidence that is not captured on the recording itself is not eligible for consideration.

Performance Extracts

Choice of Text

Examiners reported seeing a wide range of texts being performed. Most examiners reported the choice of both text and extract played a significant role in the achievement of students. Some texts were seen a lot, and some were less well-known, again it was how much students could understand the text, rather than how popular it was, that was associated with the level of success. In the most successful performances students were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the texts in their performance work. Where students had a limited understanding of the wider context of the play, they were less able to communicate themes, ideas and stylistic qualities in performance.

It is evident that the choice of text could support students, or hinder them, depending on how much they understood the style, genre, themes and overall creative intentions of the work. It is also important to consider the role/s a student will play within each extract. Students need to understand the character/s they are playing and be able to use a range of performance skills in order to portray the character/s effectively. Examiners also reported that students should consider their skills in terms of their potential to communicate comedy or tragedy effectively. In some cases examiners reported that serious or challenging themes were not being considered with sensitivity to the context of the play as a whole.

Examiners reported that successful performances were seen across monologues, duologues and group performances.

Examiners reported the most popular texts again included *Bouncers*, *Teechers*, *Girls Like That*, *Blood Brothers*, *DNA*, *Five Kinds of Silence*, *Be My Baby* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. This series also saw several performances from *A Taste of Honey* and *Educating Rita*.

Some students performed monologues that appeared to have been taken from a collection of monologues resource, rather than performing the actual extract directly from the play, in some cases this resulted in a piece being performed without sufficient consideration of the context of the play as a whole.

Where students are performing from texts and do not appear to understand the historical or cultural references adequately they are less likely to be able to communicate the text effectively in performance.

Choice of Extract

The majority of students performed only one extract, as was permissible this series. In some centres all students performed monologues, some centres organised all students into groups and in other centres there was a mix of monologues, duologues and group work. Again, examiners reported that the organisation in terms of group size did not impact on the achievement and that all approaches are acceptable. It was however noted that when a centre selected the same extract for all students, it was often the case that it was more accessible to some students than others.

Centres should be reminded that the use of non-assessed students is prohibited, unless pre-approved by AQA.

The timing requirements were mostly met this series. There were however several instances when the extract was too long and, in several cases, this was self-limiting for the students. Examiners reported the length of performance was self-penalising when centres decided to perform lengthy group extracts that resulted in some students being unable to sustain the role throughout.

Centres should check the relevant section of the specification if they are unsure of group size and timing requirements. Extracts generally supported all students to have significant moments within them.

Facilitating the Exam

No centre visits took place this series. Examiners reported that in most centres the examination had been supported with an appropriate sense of occasion, however where this was not the case it often led to students performing in non-performance spaces, or without sufficient preparation time.

Examiners reported that in the majority of cases the examination had been organised effectively in order to support students and to facilitate the requirements of the examination.

Examiners reported centres took a range of approaches to the role of the audience this series. Most centres had an audience of the students' peers. It was noted that having a supportive audience added to the sense of occasion and gave students the responses their performance work merited.

Performance Skill - Performer

Examiners reported that the role of performer was chosen by most students again this series. Overall work was well rehearsed, performed with confidence and was engaging to watch.

Physical, vocal and interpretative skills ranged from limited to excellent, and examiners reported seeing some very confident and inspiring work in some centres. In most cases, students were sufficiently prepared and the work was adequately rehearsed. In some cases students required prompts and some students used their script in performance.

In some cases, lines were simply learnt and repeated without any real effort or ability to realise the character or communicate the creative intentions of the text. Where this was the case it was self-limiting.

Most performances demonstrated a good understanding of the text and students were familiar and confident with their lines.

Several examiners reported seeing students perform who looked less comfortable in a performance space, possibly due to fewer opportunities during the course for practical performance work.

Performance Skill – Costume Design

This series examiners reported a range of responses from students presenting costume design.

When the statement of dramatic intentions was clear and detailed it was helpful in appreciating the design ideas. When design ideas were informed by relevant research it often fully justified the design ideas, even when the idea was a more straightforward one. This also helped demonstrate an appreciation and understanding of the text.

Examiners again this series reported seeing some designs that were appropriate costumes for the chosen character.

Successful designs took the wider context of the play including the period, the style and the setting into account as well as the extract the costume directly related to.

Less successful examples of costume design were too simplistic, and had not been informed, nor had the student considered alternatives as part of the development of their ideas. These designs were limited and basic.

Performance Skill – Lighting Design

Where lighting design was offered as a skill, it was usually where the student had an interest and experience in lighting. Examiners reported some excellent demonstrations of this skill, where students had fully realised a sense of atmosphere appropriate to the text. It was again very helpful when the statement of dramatic intentions was clear and detailed.

In more successful responses there was a sense of the designer considering how lighting could enhance the performance for the audience and also for the performers.

Less successful responses demonstrated basic lighting ideas. In some cases these included very basic lighting changes, for example black outs between sections.

Design ideas involving colour, gobos, special effects and side lighting were all reported as being used effectively.

It is fully appreciated that the ability for a centre to accommodate and support technical skills such as lighting will depend on the availability of appropriate resources.

Performance Skill – Sound Design

Again this series examiners reported on the importance of the chosen extract to provide the opportunity for sound.

In the most successful responses students had undertaken relevant research and fully considered their sound design ideas in collaboration with the performers/other design roles. This led to coherent designs enhancing the performance overall. In some cases sound designers worked with

lighting design students successfully, again it was crucial the chosen extract could support this approach.

The most successful designs included design ideas and choices that created a sense of time and place as appropriate to the text.

Less successful responses were basic in their ideas, for example examiners reported some cases of the design simply being to play music or a sound effect in one or two sections of the extract.

Performance Skill – Set Design

We saw less set design this series with only a small number of students undertaking this role.

Where examiners reported seeing set design, it was usually from a student who had a particular interest in production arts and the response therefore met the requirements of the text and showed a good level of skill.

In less successful responses it was basic and included rearranging readily available furniture and objects that had a feel of last-minute design, rather than fully thought through and prepared design ideas.

Performance Skill – Puppet Design

Again this series, examiners reported very few instances of puppet design, where it was seen there was a clear interest in puppetry and the use of puppets and an overall good appreciation of how they could be used in performance.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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