

DRAMA

Paper 0994/12
Written Examination

Key messages

- Many candidates write too much for questions in **Section A**. This means that they have less time to respond to the longer, essay style questions in **Section B** and **C**. Candidates should use the number of marks available as a guide when managing their time.
- Candidates should avoid long, narrative responses which rarely access the full range of marks available, and instead make sure they focus on the specifics of the question. Extended introductions which bear little relevance to the question waste valuable time for candidates.
- Responses to questions about the devised work are often superficial. Candidates need to show their understanding of the devising process, rather than rush to the scripting stage of the work.
- Candidates need to demonstrate evaluative skills in their responses to **Section C**, and should not be too reliant on comments from the audience. Candidates need to be able to demonstrate their intention and reflect on the techniques that were used to achieve it.

General comments

The extract from *Hedda Gabler* proved accessible for most candidates. Many candidates showed an excellent understanding of its historical context, as well as its style, themes and the subtleties of its characterisation and interaction. Most candidates understood that they must adopt a practical approach to the piece, rather than a literary appreciation. They considered, in detail and with close attention to the text, how the extract could be taken from page to stage to produce a final performance for a live audience. There were more candidates in this session who did not restrict their answers to the extract, but made references to other parts of the play, without acknowledging that they were doing so. While it is useful for candidates to be able to view the extract within the context of the whole play, they are expected to support their answers by reference to the extract set in the pre-release material. This point also applies to questions which specify reference to line numbers. Candidates should be able to use context to demonstrate understanding but must select their specific references from within the section indicated in the question.

Many candidates ignore the maximum number of marks available for each question by writing at great length in **Section A**, leaving themselves insufficient time to construct a strong response to **Sections B** and **C**. Candidates need to be precise and concise in order to write successful answers. Those who talked around the subject and gave long introductions to the extract or wrote narrative accounts of their devised work, including descriptions of the plot and characters, did not usually score in the higher bands as they did not offer detailed examples to illustrate their points. Some did not make relevant points and skirted around the question. The best answers kept their focus and made sure that they addressed the key parts of the questions. This is also true for **Questions 6, 7 and 8**, which require a detailed explanation and, in **7 and 8**, evaluation for the higher bands.

Many candidates referenced Brecht, Stanislavski, Artaud, Boal and British theatre companies like Frantic Assembly, but there were occasional responses where a disproportionate amount of time was spent citing practitioners without really focusing on the question. The strongest responses focused on the text or devised piece and the question, giving a personal response that demonstrated their practical knowledge and understanding of the process of preparing a piece for performance for an audience, rather than attempting to showcase their theatre studies knowledge.

The approach to the devised piece was mixed. Some candidates clearly worked in their groups to take their initial response to the stimulus through the research, decision-making and rehearsal process, reviewing, evaluating and improving it as they went along, before making a final performance for an audience. Some candidates do not appear to have completed their devised work and gave responses to an imagined scenario. The more imaginative the devising work, with a clear focus on putting on a polished performance

that will meet their dramatic intentions and have an impact on a real audience, the more likely the candidates are to be able to make responses that are relevant, detailed, evaluative and supported by specific references to their work, both in process and in performance.

Evaluation is a critical skill in the paper, but many candidates did not demonstrate a confident grasp of either the skill or the ability to frame it in their writing. All too often, simple, unsupported assertions of effectiveness were offered. Audience feedback can contribute to proper evaluation, but only when it is sufficiently detailed in terms of both elements of performance and its impact on the audience. Candidates aspiring to the higher mark bands need to produce a detailed explanation of intention, with a description of the techniques employed and a clear evaluation of the impact achieved.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates were able to make and justify appropriate suggestions. Some candidates cited evidence about George Tesman's personality in the text but did not give a practical suggestion as to how it could be shown by the actor. Some responses were detailed and long, easily scoring the marks in the first few sentences but then providing excessive material that was unnecessary. Such responses waste valuable time.

Question 2

Candidates responded well to this question, although there were some who did not understand the term 'physicality'. A broad interpretation was allowed, including facial expression and even eye-rolling if tied appropriately and specifically to a section of text. Explanations of effectiveness were generally good, although there were a few candidates who did not understand Juliana's character and made suggestions for her physicality that were not appropriate.

Question 3

The question asked candidates to state where in the specified section the physical distance could be changed, not how. Candidates needed to select two characters out of three and give two reasons. Most understood the importance of proxemics in drama, but some struggled to express their understanding in terms that were both practical and specific.

Question 4

Generally, candidates who picked out the key words of the question (i.e. power relationship) were able to give a greater focus to their response; several responses simply described actions and interactions within the relationship, which made it difficult to access the mark scheme. The section specified in the question was long enough for candidates to pick out two separate examples to show how the actors could communicate the power relationship between the characters. Again, some responses simply explained where in the text the power relationship was demonstrated, without any reference to what the actors needed to do to communicate it to the audience.

Question 5

This question evoked a wide range of responses. Some candidates were able to locate points in the specified section where the actor would demonstrate Thea's anxieties through the use of specific acting techniques. Some candidates were able to justify this in terms of the requirements of the text and the character and/or their impact on the audience, while others offered vague generalisations, such as 'have a sad facial expression' or 'sound scared'. A few candidates simply narrated aspects of Thea's story, without a focus on her anxieties.

Question 6

Many candidates were able to demonstrate a good understanding of the drama involved in the passage. However, only a few were able to offer the detailed explanation required for full marks. Understanding of the varied aspects of the relationship may be explained in the wider context of the play, but clear examples of how this could be shown need to be located in the section specified. Candidates who scored 1 or 2 marks usually did so because they explained the relationship without making any suggestions about how the director could ensure that aspects of the relationship could be brought out in performance.

Question 7

Many candidates confused 'tone' with volume or pitch. Lack of precision and grasp of technical terms hindered some candidates' responses. There were many vague comments, and evaluations of effectiveness were frequently superficial. Several candidates offered lengthy, narrative descriptions of their devised pieces.

Question 8

Some candidates did not understand pacing, simply identifying fast and slow moments. Stronger responses identified moments where they rehearsed at one pace and changed it purposefully for effect. Very few appreciated the impact of pace on dynamics. Some candidates interpreted pacing as structure, in which case marks could only be awarded where there were tangential references to pace. Only a minority were able to reflect upon changes in pacing in the preparation period and their impact on the final performance. Indeed, most reflective comments were quite simplistic. A minority of candidates wrote in the conditional tense; they spoke of what they 'would have' done, as if the piece had never been performed and remained a theoretical possibility.

Section B

Question 9

This question was very popular. Many candidates showed very good knowledge and understanding of the character of Judge Brack and produced some developed responses, although some only referred to the text and did not explain how the role would be performed from an actor's perspective. A few candidates focused on costume and appearance with a few vague references to demeanour and style of speech without tying their suggestions to any specific sections of the extract. Even when making such specific references, many candidates employed general comments in relation to application, which lacked understanding of how ideas are actually realised in performance.

Question 10

This question was another popular choice. Many candidates demonstrated secure knowledge of the themes of *Hedda Gabler* but quite a few veered towards more English Literature-based responses with analysis as opposed to application. Other candidates did not really understand what themes were, offering instead characterisations or events. Very few candidates were able to see themes as related to the given text as a whole, instead looking at themes through the lens of only one character, which made the theme itself appear somewhat shallow. As in other questions, candidates sometimes made generalised points or relied on retelling the *Hedda Gabler* story, without engaging with the need to show how a director could bring out the chosen themes.

Question 11

This was the least popular question in **Section B** and many candidates who attempted it found it challenging. Candidates struggled to address the present-day demand of the question, either ignoring it and describing their own stage design, irrespective of period demand, or simply describing a more modern setting with little

reference either to stage directions or the requirements of the text. Of course, a present-day production does not necessarily imply that the piece be updated to the present day. It simply means that it must take account of the needs and opportunities arising from producing the play in a modern theatre for a modern audience. A few candidates grasped this and came up with some highly imaginative and potentially effective ideas for set design.

Section C

Question 12

This was a popular question, but candidates found it quite difficult to reflect on their experience of preparing their devised piece in order to identify and explain what aspects could be improved and how an additional rehearsal period would help them to improve their performance. Many resorted to improving technical aspects, rather than evaluating the strength and weaknesses of the whole piece and coming up with a detailed and specific strategy for improvement. Somewhat indiscriminate suggestions about improvements were commonplace and some candidates simply produced pages of description, narrative and generic comment with no clear reference to performance and no clear focus on the question. Brief summaries of devised work are necessary but not at the expense of explicitly answering the question actually asked. This was equally true of other questions in **Section C**.

Question 13

Candidates generally made a good job of answering this question, but that was only the case if they had followed through a devising process that culminated in the staging of the piece for an audience. Acceptable ideas about staging included choosing a performance space, designing a set, using props, costumes, sound and lighting, as well as the movement of performers in the space, entrances, exits and transitions. To achieve higher marks candidates needed to evaluate how these aspects of staging suited and served their dramatic intentions and how they impacted on the audience.

Question 14

Candidates needed to focus on the two key requirements of the question – shortening the piece and making it more powerful. This was misinterpreted by many candidates. Although the scenario suggests that the devised piece would be shortened, the question only asked the candidate to justify how they would make their piece more powerful. Therefore, many responses did not mention cutting, selecting or rejecting ideas and, if they did, it was only in a reductive, generic way. Most made suggestions about how they would improve their work, with varying degrees of emphasis on making it more powerful.

DRAMA

Paper 0994/02
Coursework

General comments

Administration

The administration for Paper 2 was generally well-handled by centres and the moderating panel reported relatively few errors in the completion of paperwork. The overwhelming majority of centres produced well-organised and complete packages of candidates' work for moderation, which enabled the process to run smoothly and without hindrance.

There were a few centres where Moderators reported administrative errors. The most common of these errors were:

- including only the ICMS forms for the candidates in the moderation sample whereas the forms are required for **all** candidates who are entered;
- not including a running order for the pieces on the DVD;
- not selecting a sample of six candidates but leaving the moderator to make the selection;
- selecting a sample that did not cover the mark range evenly;
- writing the same, or similar comments, on all of the ICMS forms **or** writing comments that simply reproduced the assessment criteria in the syllabus;
- inaccurate addition of marks on the ICMS forms **or** wrong transcription of marks from the ICMS forms onto form MS1.

Recordings

Most centres presented their candidates in a line up before the start of the piece, with each performer dressed in costume, and announcing clearly their name and candidate number. Moderators were appreciative of those centres who supplemented this by including photographs of candidates in costume and in some cases descriptions of clothes and other appropriate features on the ICMS sheets.

There were several instances where candidates did not introduce themselves in costume to camera, or where names were mumbled as the camera moved at high-speed along the line-up. This made it difficult for moderators to hear what had been said and required considerable additional time to work out the identity of each candidate. The situation was exacerbated in cases where the Centre had also omitted to include a running order for the DVD.

The quality of the video recordings was variable. A number of centres submitted material that was unfit for purpose, either because the format was not playable or because the sound or image quality was poor. Some centres produced recordings shot at unusual angles, or which contained camerawork that frequently zoomed in and out, thus producing an unrepresentative record of the performances. Some pieces were performed in low lighting conditions, which might have been effective in live performance but which did not translate well when filmed.

The most common issues with recordings of performances were as follows:

- files saved in a format not commonly used in the UK;
- recordings that contained image but no sound;
- poor audio quality, including background noise or just 'distant' voices;
- odd positioning of camera so that the viewer was left looking up or down on the performance;
- zooming in and out or panning, which gave a filmic quality to the recording and also made it difficult to get a sense of how the piece was staged;

- recordings that had been edited and which gave an unrepresentative picture of the original stage performance.

Assessment of practical work

The majority of assessments completed by teachers were accurate and consistent and therefore required no adjustment to marks. Where this was not the case, the following were the most frequent causes of scaling adjustments to centres' marks.

Assessment Objective 1

The most common reason for moderation adjustments was a misunderstanding of the nature of the role, as evidenced by the approach taken to the performance itself. This was often apparent where candidates had taken a one-dimensional approach to a role, or where defining features such as the age or accent or a character had proven to be an insuperable hurdle.

Assessment Objective 2

The most common reason for moderation adjustments was where a candidate's commitment to the process had been confused with the quality of their dramatic contribution. This assessment objective applies only to the original devised piece and there were many candidates who produced undeveloped roles that had been credited with high marks.

Assessment Objective 3

This assessment objective was the most frequently over-marked. The most common reason for this was where unrefined performance skills had been overlooked because of the candidate's emotional commitment to the performance. Whilst this sometimes produced emotionally truthful performances, it was more often the case that volume, physical presence, or loud speaking were being used to cover up a lack in performance technique.

Extracts from plays

Moderators reported that the choice of text was the single most important decision in helping candidates achieve an effective performance to showcase their performance skills. Centres are therefore reminded of the need to guide their candidates' choice so as to avoid them struggling needlessly with the social, historical or cultural contexts of the play's original settings, or even its characters, language or values. While the internet is a rich source of no-cost scripts, these may or may not be appropriate for the given candidates and their environment.

Moderators were pleased to report an eclectic mix of play texts as source material from which extracts had been taken. Characters were regularly developed from text and there were many effective interactions that made for compelling watching. It was gratifying to see candidates tackling roles effectively that stemmed from another time, place or culture: it was indeed a joy to see a challenge well met. It was almost always the case that 'the better the writing, the better the performance'. Similarly, age appropriateness gave candidates material that they could engage with.

Monologues varied considerably in length and the best ones were well within the length allowed; longer monologues often resulted in a weaker performance. Equally, some monologues were very short indeed and allowed little scope to demonstrate a range of skills. Static monologues performed whilst seated tended to limit a candidate's opportunity of displaying a range of skills.

There were cases where the vocal and physical skills evidenced did not bear out the mark awarded. Confidence in their own ability was often rewarded rather than ability, as were loud, excitable performances that tended not to develop. That said, there were few examples of candidates who were totally unprepared for the assessment process. Comedy was difficult for most candidates to handle on stage and only a few managed the challenging art of balancing verbal and physical, situational and observational humour in an effective way.

While elaborate costume and set are not essential, those candidates who went to the effort of creating an appropriate background and dressed themselves in relevant costumes tended to increase their sense of ownership of the text.

Devised pieces

Notwithstanding some very notable exceptions, devised work was often weaker with some candidates clearly uncomfortable without the safety of a script. Several groups had clearly struggled to create believable naturalistic dialogue and produced work that looked and sounded similar to a poorly-written screenplay, with thinly drawn characters and little sense of either story or direction.

Where devising was successfully accomplished, there was some strong work that included the use of physicality, movement, credible mime, choral speech, a variety of levels, purposeful use of proxemics, sometimes multi-rolling, more abstract approaches and all done with minimal entrances and exits.

It was pleasing to see that many candidates were prepared to explore difficult topics through their work, which showed a real maturity in performance.

Occasionally dramatic lighting and/or music was an effective support of the creativity onstage; sometimes it was a hindrance. Too many blackouts or almost completely dark scenes in a piece were invariably counter-productive and did not make for ease of moderation. The use of multi-media was sometimes effective in supporting a social or political message.

Whatever the style, the ingredients that went into the creation of a successful piece invariably consisted of a sense of camaraderie, mutual support and respect within the ensemble, which was in due course conveyed to the audience, and which enabled more effective, flowing performances to emerge.

Examples of Repertoire – 2019

Edward Albee	<i>Three Tall Women</i>
	<i>Zoo Story</i>
	<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i>
Davey Anderson	<i>Blackout</i>
Jean Anouih	<i>Antigone</i>
Alan Ayckbourn	<i>Between Mouthfuls</i>
	<i>Confusions</i>
	<i>Invisible Friends</i>
	<i>Snakes in the Grass</i>
Patrick Barlow	<i>The 39 Steps</i>
Richard Bean	<i>One Man, Two Guvnors</i>
Steven Berkoff	<i>Metamorphosis</i>
	<i>The Trial</i>
Edward Bond	<i>The Sea</i>
Andrew Bovell	<i>Things I Know to be True</i>
Bertolt Brecht	<i>Happy End</i>
	<i>The Life of Galileo</i>
Richard Cameron	<i>Can't Stand up for Falling Down</i>

David Campton	<i>The Cagebirds</i>
Pamela Carter	<i>What we Know</i>
Jim Cartwright	<i>Road</i>
	<i>The Mobile Phone Show</i>
	<i>Two</i>
Anton Chekhov	<i>The Cherry Orchard</i>
Caryl Churchill	<i>Top Girls</i>
	<i>Ding Dong the Wicked</i>
Noel Coward	<i>Blithe Spirit</i>
Sarah Daniels	<i>Taking Breath</i>
	<i>The Gut Girls</i>
Shelagh Delaney	<i>A Taste of Honey</i>
Richard Dresser	<i>Bed and Breakfast</i>
Carol Ann Duffy	<i>Grimm Tales</i>
Christopher Durang	<i>Baby with the Bathwater</i>
Lisa Evans	<i>Once we were Mothers</i>
Euripides	<i>Medea</i>
Tim Firth	<i>Neville's Island</i>
Dario Fo	<i>Accidental Death of an Anarchist</i>
	<i>The Virtuous Burglar</i>
David Foley	<i>Cressida Among Greeks</i>
Athol Fugard	<i>My Children, My Africa</i>
John Godber	<i>Bouncers</i>
	<i>Shakers</i>
	<i>Teechers</i>
Nikolai Gogol	<i>The Marriage</i>
D W Gregory	<i>Radium Girls</i>
David Greig	<i>Yellow Moon</i>
Tanika Gupta	<i>Inside Out</i>
Albert Hackett	<i>The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank</i>
Willis Hall	<i>The Long and the Short and the Tall</i>

James Hanson	<i>A Castle Broken Apart</i>
David Hare	<i>Skylight</i>
Henrik Ibsen	<i>A Doll's House</i>
	<i>Hedda Gabler</i>
Charlotte Keatley	<i>My Mother Said I Never Should</i>
Dennis Kelly	<i>DNA</i>
Paul King	<i>The Disappeared</i>
Tony Kushner	<i>Angels in America</i>
Bryony Lavery	<i>The Believers</i>
	<i>More Light</i>
	<i>Stockholm</i>
Federico Garcia Lorca	<i>Blood Wedding</i>
Sharman MacDonald	<i>After Juliet</i>
David Mamet	<i>Oleanna</i>
Lisa McGee	<i>Girls and Dolls</i>
Frank McGuinness	<i>Someone who'll watch over me</i>
Arthur Miller	<i>Death of a Salesman</i>
	<i>The Crucible</i>
Abi Morgan	<i>Love song</i>
Chris O'Connell	<i>Car</i>
Joe Penhall	<i>Love and Understanding</i>
John Pielmeier	<i>Agnes of God</i>
Harold Pinter	<i>A Slight Ache</i>
	<i>The Caretaker</i>
	<i>The Lover</i>
	<i>Mountain Language</i>
Evan Placey	<i>Girls Like That</i>
J B Priestly	<i>An Inspector Calls</i>
Yasmina Reza	<i>Art</i>
Alan Rickman	<i>My Name is Rachel Corrie</i>

Willy Russell	<i>Blood Brothers</i>
	<i>Educating Rita</i>
	<i>Our Day Out</i>
Diane Samuels	<i>Kinder Transport</i>
William Shakespeare	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
	<i>Hamlet</i>
	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
	<i>Macbeth</i>
	<i>Richard III</i>
	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
	<i>The Tempest</i>
Peter Shaffer	<i>Amadeus</i>
Neil Simon	<i>Barefoot in the park</i>
	<i>The Dinner Party</i>
	<i>The Odd Couple</i>
	<i>Plaza Suite</i>
Sophocles	<i>Electra</i>
Wole Soyinka	<i>The Lion and the Jewel</i>
Simon Stephens	<i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time</i>
Shelagh Stephenson	<i>Five Kinds of Silence</i>
	<i>The Memory of Water</i>
Sophie Treadwell	<i>Machinal</i>
Sandy Toksvig	<i>Bully Boy</i>
Laura Wade	<i>Breathing Corpses</i>
	<i>Colder than Here</i>
Enda Walsh	<i>Chatroom</i>
Timberlake Wertenbaker	<i>Our Country's Good</i>
	<i>The Ash Girl</i>
Mark Wheeler	<i>Missing Dan Nolan</i>
Oscar Wilde	<i>An Ideal Husband</i>
	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>

Thornton Wilder	<i>Our Town</i>
Tennessee Williams	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i>
August Wilson	<i>Fences</i>
Brian Woolland	<i>The Flesh is mine</i>
Olwen Wymark	<i>Find Me</i>