

DRAMA

Paper 0411/11
Written Examination

Key messages

The Written examination seeks, through discussion, to isolate and identify *practical* application in drama. Literary approaches should be avoided and responses which focus on narrative or character *per se* without exploring the practical application of dramatic skills and techniques cannot access the higher mark bands.

In **Section A**, candidates should pay close attention to the number of marks available for each question. Lengthy responses for a two- or three-mark question are unnecessary and will inevitably result in less time to respond to the longer-answer essay questions in **Sections B** and **C**.

In **Sections B** and **C** technical and design questions demand an approach which is both informed and able to discuss the application of technical method to the dramatic intention. Centres are advised to work on improving candidates' understanding of design elements, as associated questions continue to be challenging to many. Candidates who do not have basic understanding of any given technical or design skill should steer clear of essay questions which require knowledge of these areas.

Questions requiring simple and straightforward answers were generally done well, while the answers to more stretching questions such as those in **Sections B** and **C** often needed to contain more explanation and/or discussion relating particularly to creative, practical solutions. Explicit reference to the use of dramatic techniques is needed to achieve higher marks.

The most successful answers in **Section C** were those where candidates had explored the stimuli practically and therefore had developed an understanding of a range of design elements and performance considerations.

General comments

Many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the pre-release play extract and effective engagement with the devised work although the key messages above still apply in a number of cases.

There is still evidence of many candidates engaging in overly narrative responses to many of the questions which, without exception, require the discussion to focus on application of knowledge, skills and the performance process. Even the more astute responses included a detailed retelling of plot with the result that short-answer questions were given unnecessarily long answers and essay questions were diluted when concentration on application was key. There was still evidence that some candidates simply lacked an understanding of how their performance process addressed key dramatic terms and ideas.

Where factors such as a lack of resources or budget precludes complex or lavish production values Centres should not feel prevented from encouraging candidates to consider the potential of their productions or from projecting their work into an environment wherein these restraints do not apply. This is particularly relevant to design questions. It is understood that 'minimalism' may be the only practicable approach in some Centres but teachers are encouraged to provide opportunities for candidates to 'imagine' their performance beyond the bounds imposed by material restrictions. In doing so candidates will (hopefully) find themselves better able to discuss a wider range of production outcomes based on an extension beyond their actual experience.

Candidates found the question on sound design challenging; understanding of sound design remains relatively undeveloped with many candidates choosing to discuss music at the expense of other opportunities. Another area which continues to challenge is the notion of structure. Those candidates who had been taught structure as a formal concept did far better than those for whom structure equals narrative.

There is still some progress to be made in enabling candidates to engage effectively with questions which deal with technical aspects of production. Answers on set design show promise although there is perhaps a need for Centres to challenge candidates in the area where design is put into practical application. This was highlighted by the question which asked for an effective transition between two scenes, and though a number of candidates produced imaginative answers, the practicality of their suggestions was not always obvious.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Questions 1 – 5 *Mrs. Bob Cratchit's Wild Christmas Binge*

Question 1

Many candidates were able to engage with the question and gave good responses. There was a tendency, however, for a significant number of candidates to focus on the prop itself rather than on the moment at which it would be used effectively, and why. The 'why?' element caused the most common difficulty but overall this question was well answered by the majority.

Question 2

This question was well handled by the majority of candidates with most being able to render a fair discussion of the speech with practical suggestions of how it could be delivered. Many candidates identified a range of dramatic skills involving voice and physicality and the most capable answers linked this closely to the text.

Question 3

Nearly all candidates were able to cite two moments in the text. The second pair of marks available proved a little more challenging with some candidates perhaps not quite grasping the notion of 'impact' in terms of dramatic effect. Answers needed to distinguish clearly between the two moments and the second moment could only be credited if it was sufficiently differentiated from the first.

Question 4

Again, the vast majority of candidates responded effectively to the requirement to give two significant pieces of advice to each of the actors. The advice correctly focused on practical, skills-related approaches to characterisation in relation to specified moments in the text.

Question 5

This caused a little difficulty for a number of candidates and the responses highlight the point made above under General comments. It is possible that many candidates had not considered the practical challenge of making the transition between scenes because of the limitations imposed by their own performance environment but, notwithstanding, there needs to be some level of appreciation of how scene changes are effected when they are central to the audience's appreciation of the text and narrative. That being said, a significant number of candidates, whether from actual practical experience or as a result of considering possible approaches, managed to produce good answers. These tended to include physical elements of set and manual handling combined with imaginative audience distractions and alternative points of focus such as lighting effects, fog, projections and music as well as specific actions carried out by the characters on stage.

Questions 6 – 8 *Devised work*

Question 6

The vast majority of candidates were able to identify two key dramatic moments and most were able to say why the moments were effective. As in the case of **Question 3**, answers needed to include two sufficiently different moments otherwise only one of them could be credited.

Question 7

Candidates continue to find the concept of structure challenging, often reverting to a narrative step-by-step version of what happened or a simple re-telling of the story rather than an explanation of how elements were constructed to achieve a performance intention. A few candidates managed to refer to the overall structure of their piece in terms of its being linear or cyclical and a few were able to identify how structural elements such as 'flashbacks' were used to convey aspects of structure but overall knowledge of this area continues to be poorly evidenced.

Question 8

All candidates were able to identify some elements of costume design but fewer were able to explain in any detail how costume could be used to enhance the audience's appreciation and understanding of the performance intention. Simple descriptions of costume could only score a single mark and to score more highly it was essential for candidates to reflect on function and influence.

Section B

Questions 9 – 11 *Mrs. Bob Cratchit's Wild Christmas Binge*

Question 9

This proved a popular question. Candidates for the most part handled it fairly well and were able to identify a range of dramatic functions. Weaker responses tended to focus exclusively on the comedic functions, without realising that the Ghost also fulfilled a number of strategic plot-related and structural functions. The more developed responses discussed these more fundamental mechanisms with some insight. A few candidates did not entirely appreciate the significance or indeed meaning of the term 'dramatic function' and concentrated their efforts on describing the Ghost's vocal and physical attributes.

Question 10

Relatively few candidates attempted this question. Those who did were able to identify key comedic elements within the piece and recognise the opportunity for 'sight gags'. Much of the discussion centred on the Ghost's incompetence but there were one or two astute responses which, though they seemed to struggle on an inner personal level with the irreverence and rampant lack of 'political correctness' inherent in the text, nonetheless recognised that humour may be drawn in an otherwise acceptable manner from elements that are habitually frowned upon by society as a whole. They correctly understood that the key to this lies in the level of approach, wherein exaggeration and caricature enables boundaries to be pushed without offence. Further developed responses were able to identify the notion of anachronism and were rewarded for recognising the devices used by the playwright to achieve this.

Question 11

This question proved to be the most challenging to candidates. The majority demonstrated only a partial understanding of what is meant by the term 'sound design' and consequently focused on the use of mood music to create an ongoing atmosphere of festivity. Though this is perfectly acceptable it is only one aspect of the potential for sound use and overlooks the many real opportunities available to the sound designer. A few candidates recognised what was required and were able to make useful and practical recommendations involving textual elements and relating these to the use of special effects. Candidates should become conversant with this area that calls for a basic grasp of how technology is used in theatre to achieve specific sound effects and create diegetic soundscape. Centres are advised to familiarise their candidates with the three categories of sound design, namely: *Functional* (e.g. the Ghost's 'Zapper'); *Atmospheric* (i.e. the possibility of using underscoring that may include music but which may also be in the form of a soundscape), and *Incidental* where sound can be used to cover moments of transition (e.g. between scenes or to cover the gathering of the Townspeople).

Section C

Questions 12 – 14 *Devised work*

Question 12

Candidates approached this with some confidence and demonstrated a good understanding of a range of acting skills including use of space, proxemics, vocal and physical method, pacing, dynamics and characterisation.

Question 13

Many candidates were clear about their performance intention but this is not necessarily the same as the directorial concept which calls for more than simply an outline of what the audience is expected to get from the piece. Developed responses took a broader view considering the way in which the piece was shaped or crafted. This implies some understanding of structure and the way that elements of rising action or tension may be created. Those who scored highly on this question included a good response to the second part of the question which asked candidates to evaluate the success of their piece. Many candidates who did this demonstrated an ability to be critical of their own work and were able to suggest possible alternative strategies.

Question 14

This proved a popular and successful question. Some candidates clearly understood set design either as a result of practical experience or because they had considered the potential of a 'virtual' set. The purpose of the question was less about design features per se and more about how those features, when put into action, could enhance or augment the dramatic intention. This does not preclude candidates using their imagination to surmise how imagined or projected ideas might contribute to the process. Some candidates adopted this approach and typically made it clear that though their budget had not enabled them to do much by way of set in actuality, had they the means they would have taken an entirely different approach. The success of this approach is determined, however, by how effectively the design features are integrated into the practical aspects demanded by the action.

DRAMA

<p>Paper 0411/12 Written Examination</p>
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Key messages

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In **Section A**, candidates should pay close attention to the number of marks available for each question. Lengthy responses for a two- or three-mark question are unnecessary and will inevitably result in less time to respond to the longer-answer essay questions in **Sections B** and **C**.

In **Sections B** and **C** technical and design questions demand an approach which is both informed and able to discuss the application of technical method to the dramatic intention. Centres are advised to work on improving candidates' understanding of design elements, as associated questions continue to be challenging to many. Candidates who do not have basic understanding of any given technical or design skill should steer clear of essay questions which require knowledge of these areas.

Questions requiring simple and straightforward answers were generally done well, while the answers to more stretching questions such as those in **Sections B** and **C** often needed to contain more explanation and/or discussion relating particularly to creative, practical solutions. Explicit reference to the use of dramatic techniques is needed to achieve higher marks.

The most successful answers in **Section C** were those where candidates had explored the stimuli practically and therefore had developed an understanding of a range of design elements and performance considerations.

General comments

Whilst many Centres had clearly considered the historic context of the play extract, especially its scientific, political and socio-economic background, fewer had engaged with its style, particularly the elements of Absurdism. There was a greater understanding shown in the use of technical language this session.

Some candidates referred to the audience as 'readers' indicating a lack of consideration of the extract as a performance piece; this was also seen in answers on the devised pieces. In some cases, it was evident that candidates had not performed their devised pieces which often made it very difficult for them to answer **Questions 6 – 8** and **Section C** with any assurance.

There was greater variety in the pieces devised from the stimuli this year, although *A matter of judgement* most often produced responses exploring issues of racism, gender and class. Many groups still disadvantage themselves by producing pieces that are unimaginative in terms of content and approach. It is recognised that many Centres lack access to technical facilities but this should not deter them from considering how technical elements might be used to enhance the production of the devised pieces. Most candidates gave a considerable amount of detail in their answers, sometimes paying too little attention to the allocation of marks; in some cases candidates wrote more for a 3- or 4-mark question than for the essay questions worth 25 marks. There is also a tendency to supply far more than the number of points specified in the question; this was particularly true of **Question 4**.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Questions 1 – 5 *The Physicists*

Question 1

Some candidates misread the question and gave a suggestion for what prop might be used rather than a point in the extract where a prop might be used effectively. Typically, candidates wrote lengthy responses to this question despite it being worth only 2 marks.

Question 2

Many excellent responses contained good practical suggestions. Credit was given for vocal and physical suggestions. Some candidates referred to the emotions of pride and/or sadness but showed little understanding of the complex character and missed the point of the speech.

Question 3

The best answers focused on identifying the two moments and giving some indication of dramatic techniques that could be adopted to make impact. The most common mistake was where candidates explained why their chosen moments should make an impact rather than *how* the impact was achieved, focusing on plot rather than performance.

Question 4

Many candidates gave excellent targeted advice on how aspects of this passage could be performed, with astute references to vocal and physical elements including tone, pitch, pace, emphasis, facial expression, gesture and movement. A number of candidates misread the question and gave advice for Möbius rather than Einstein.

Question 5

Weaker answers were characterised by a tendency to describe the layout of the villa and its furnishings rather than producing a design for a stage set. Sometimes the question itself was not adequately addressed with candidates giving considerable detail about the physicists' rooms even though none of the action actually takes place there. Furthermore, the relationship between the two areas was generally ignored thereby missing the central point of the question.

Questions 6 – 8 *Devised work*

Question 6

Many candidates were able to justify a suggestion ascribing significance to colour, wealth, character or setting the piece in its historical context. Candidates needed to show a greater understanding of the ways in which costume can make a positive contribution to performance.

Question 7

Candidates must remember to consider the point of the question rather than simply provide a narrative of the plot. Most candidates were able to identify particular points in their pieces where the idea of 'judgement' was addressed. Credit was given for any reasonable explanation as to why that moment was effective, either as an example of 'judgement' or as a dramatic moment.

Question 8

There were responses that showed some understanding of structure, identifying subject-specific terminology such as flashback, tension, climax, exposition, resolution, linear/non-linear, episodic and cyclical structures. However, many candidates continue to find questions on structure challenging and responses often just told the story of the piece.

Section B

Questions 9 – 11 *The Physicists*

Question 9

This was a popular choice. There were many opportunities for the use of music as specified in the text and candidates showed good understanding of this. Candidates were also able to explore when and how music could be used to create atmosphere. Most made specific references to the extract and showed an awareness of the need to consider the audience in their decision-making. A few had a more sophisticated approach and explored a range of further opportunities for the use of sound effects, and indeed silence, which they applied with assurance and creativity. Some candidates provided a filmic or tele-visual response rather than theatrical, endeavouring to provide a sound-track throughout with little consideration of its impact on dialogue.

Question 10

This question proved challenging to those candidates who opted to answer it. Some understood the director's role and, having suggested an overall concept for the piece, adopted a systematic approach and considered how a range of aspects, including dramatic techniques and technical decisions, could contribute to their overall vision. Again, nearly all made some specific references to the extract but there was a less convincing response to opportunities for exploring the absurdity of the piece.

Question 11

Many candidates were able to offer some valid observations about the role of the Inspector. Fewer were able to offer suggestions as to how he moved the drama along. Some identified him as the voice of the audience, expressing confusion and asking the questions they wanted to ask. Others made a link between his insistence on replacing female with male nurses and Monika's ultimate fate. Other common responses recognised the part he played in raising the questions of sanity/insanity or looked at his contribution to the humour of the piece. The most common problem was where candidates took the opportunity to display their knowledge of the rest of the play, which often led them into writing about things which did not address the question asked.

Section C

Questions 12 – 14 *Devised work*

Question 12

This question elicited a wide range of responses although splitting the stage into two was a popular idea. Some candidates described spaces that could only be described as locations, with the emphasis on furniture and props creating a suitable setting for the characters in the devised pieces. Others suggested a different and often complex setting for each of the many scenes in their piece, without any practical consideration of how the transitions might be managed. Most, however, did specify a type of staging and acknowledged the presence of an audience. The best answers explored how the set was used in the course of the action to help convey the message of the piece.

Question 13

Many candidates were able to identify relevant skills such as vocal skills, facial expression and the use of gesture and movement. Weaker responses simply listed the skills used. It was pleasing to see candidates explore a wide range of approaches and assess their effectiveness with detailed and specific reference to how they were applied in performance. Better-quality devised pieces tended to produce more sophisticated responses.

Question 14

Generally speaking, candidates showed a lack of confidence in the role of the director. Weaker responses provided a narrative of the piece and few candidates were able to discuss their directorial concept with any authority and/or to effectively evaluate their success in realising the concept.

DRAMA

<p>Paper 0411/13 Written Examination</p>
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Questions requiring simple and straightforward answers were generally done well, while the answers to more stretching questions such as those in **Sections B** and **C** often needed to contain more explanation and/or discussion relating particularly to creative, practical solutions. Explicit reference to the use of dramatic techniques is needed to achieve higher marks.

The most successful answers in **Section C** were those where candidates had explored the stimuli practically and therefore had developed an understanding of a range of design elements and performance considerations.

General comments

Generally speaking, candidates showed good understanding of some of the technical aspects of performance, though some were limited by a lack of subject-specific knowledge. The appropriate use of performing arts vocabulary is essential if candidates are to score highly. As mentioned above, it is the application of key dramatic ideas and performance concepts that enable the highest marks to be achieved.

The way candidates approached the discussion of technical issues such as props, costume, set design and lighting again showed improvement and there were many competent responses indicating how costume choices contributed to character realisation, in particular. There was a tendency for candidates to suggest that lighting contributed more to the action than was appropriate for the genre, without justifying the choice of an alternative style.

The responses to the questions about the devised work displayed a wide range of ability. While many candidates demonstrated the ability to link theory to practice and to evaluate the success of outcomes, there were many who gave narrative accounts of the content of the drama with little critical reflection.

Where candidates had adopted a considered and strategic approach to the questions, the responses were assured and confidently handled and in contrast, where there was no systematic method, candidates digressed aimlessly often repeating the same points.

There were still many candidates who did not read the question sufficiently well. In some cases this was a clear indication of a lack of understanding of dramatic concepts. Candidates must attempt to answer the question set rather than one they wish to answer. There were fewer instances this session of candidates attempting to answer all the questions in **Sections B** and **C**.

In some cases the quality of candidates' handwriting gave cause for concern and Centres are requested to encourage their candidates to write legibly since credit cannot be awarded for ideas that are incomprehensible.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Questions 1 – 5 *Absent Friends*

Question 1

This question was generally well answered with most candidates appreciating the requirement to give one instance of a prop being used effectively and to provide a cogent reason for their choice. Some candidates suggested props that were not specified within the extract and this was entirely acceptable where appropriate justification was given. A few candidates mistakenly suggested an item of furniture as a prop.

Question 2

There were 3 marks for this question and candidates needed to give a detailed though concise response in order to achieve full marks. Such responses correctly identified that the speech establishes a number of points about Diana's character and that these are made evident through the delivery. Few candidates discussed how the tone of the delivery might change over the two stages of the speech with Diana's contradictory comments, first praising and then condemning her husband.

Question 3

The question asked for specific consideration of how the role of John might be played at two points in the extract and thus answers that referred to costume or even lighting could not be credited. There are frequent references in the text to the character's awkward physicality and most candidates identified that particular feature with the majority choosing to focus upon his first appearance on stage. The best answers gave precise details on how his 'jiggling' might be achieved. The second favoured point in the extract was where Evelyn's infidelity was discussed with Paul, with a small number of candidates making reference to the likelihood that John would be unhappily cuckolded and how to make that subtext evident to the audience as John repeats to Paul that he is not bitter.

Question 4

The majority of candidates recognised the complexity of the situation in dramatic terms and sought to achieve effectiveness through consideration of the positioning of the characters upon the stage, with a few even suggesting spotlighting the characters in turn. Whilst the stage picture is an important consideration, the best answers identified the need for precise timing of vocal delivery as the drama builds in pace with increased emotional intensity and the comic effect that is achieved through the contrasting dialogues at the moments of overlap.

Question 5

The majority of candidates made reference to the precise details given by the playwright at the start of the play with most of these providing further period detail. The best answers saw the set as a means of contributing to the overall dramatic effect, such as a physical expression of the nature of the Paul and Diana's relationship and their status. Other strong answers considered how the set could accommodate the ensuing drama in terms of movement on the stage, how entrances and exits could be managed effectively and how the set would work in conjunction with other design elements. A few candidates presented a discussion of favoured staging configurations without adequately considering the design itself.

Questions 6 – 8 *Devised work*

Question 6

Responses indicated that there had been a good exploration of the theme with several instances of a metaphorical interpretation. Most candidates were able to identify a range of emotions with the best answers making clear the relationship between these and the means of communication to the audience. Less accomplished answers were narrative accounts with little consideration of how the intended effects were achieved.

Question 7

Most candidates were able to give a satisfactory account of how the ideas were interpreted within the structure of the piece. Again the best answers avoided a simple narrative response and focused on how the ideas of 'rat' and 'lion' were represented in performance with consideration of vocal effect and physicality.

Question 8

As in previous sessions, the notion of structure continues to be challenging for many candidates. The best answers made use of appropriate terminology in order to describe both the structure and how those choices enabled the message of the drama to be shaped, with detailed consideration of the time frame of the piece. It was clear from the question that the expectation was that the form of the drama rather than its content should be the subject of discussion. Whilst many were able to identify a clear message this was often within a narrative account with little discussion of the chosen structure.

Section B

Questions 9 – 11 *Absent Friends*

Question 9

It was clear that most Centres had given much attention to this important design element and in general the question was well answered. The better responses considered the importance, or otherwise, of period authenticity in costume and demonstrated knowledge of style and fashion either from the 1970s, or from a contemporary perspective, with assurance. The best of these not only saw the costume choices as being an effective means of portraying the individual personality and status of the characters but as a way of providing contrasts for dramatic effect. Those who showed sophistication in their understanding of design with creative yet practical suggestions for the realisation of the characters matched with detailed reference to the text were well rewarded. At the other end of the scale, candidates needed to give closer consideration of the requirements of the text; it is clear, for example that John has a change of costume having arrived at home after playing squash and that given his reaction to the situation he would be unlikely to change into a suit.

Question 10

This question was by far the least popular option and generally speaking it was not one that was well answered. Candidates were able to appreciate the dark humour of the extract and the fact that much of the humour comes through dramatic irony. They were able to identify particular moments where there were pauses of embarrassment, such as the awkward pauses where John, Paul and Colin are first together or when Marge makes an inadvertent reference to drowning. Some candidates dwelt upon the deliberate pauses created by Diana early on, where she awaits a reply from Evelyn, although these moments are not likely to be of the type to which Ayckbourn is referring.

Very few candidates were able to recognise the directorial vision that would be required to successfully realise the text and give clear indications of how to achieve the pacing of commotion in contrast with the silences. Similarly, few gave specific advice on how the dialogue would be delivered in order to maximise the effect of the pauses. Most missed the significant places in the text where the silences are accompanied by specific stage direction and the embarrassments would be particularly acute, such as the time when Colin and John are left alone on stage. There is no indication in the text to suggest how the pair are reacting towards one another at this time apart from their exclaimed 'GREAT!' and 'TERRIFIC!' and a director would need to explore a number of creative possibilities in order to make the section work effectively.

Question 11

This was a popular choice and most candidates were able to show good understanding of the role and identify the fact that despite his appearance late on in the act, Colin has had impact on all the other characters as they prepare to welcome him. Most candidates were able to describe Colin's character through contrast with the other characters' dysfunctional relationships and the paradoxical fact that despite his loss, he is the most adjusted of the characters with his sense of personal well-being. There was a clear recognition from some that much of the humour derived from dramatic irony, and that Colin had inadvertently brought some of the personal crises to the surface. In one case, the character was described as 'the catalyst to the problems without knowing'. Candidates who achieved lower marks needed to focus more on how the role helps to move the drama along and explore instances such as the effect of Colin's presence on the pacing of the dialogue and the atmosphere and tone of the drama. There was, in a few instances, a misinterpretation of the question where candidates suggested Colin had helped to 'move the characters along' by enabling them to appreciate and recognise inadequacies within their relationships.

Questions 12 –14 *Devised work*

Question 12

Most candidates were able to give a description of the nature of their directorial vision, whether a simple idea or a more specific intention. The best answers were those where this translated into a clear understanding of the purpose of the piece and where detailed examples were given on how the work was crafted and built to effectively communicate the intention in performance. There was much relevant discussion of not only characterisation, dialogue and plot but of how technical elements were also employed purposefully. A crucial part of the answer, that was missed by several, was the requirement to give an evaluation of the success of the group in achieving their aims. Some credit was given where the evaluation was clearly implied but answers needed to move beyond brief statements at the end of the discussion such as 'the audience liked/understood our piece'.

Question 13

The majority of candidates were able to produce responses that provided workable solutions to set design. In some instances, the solutions were imagined but these were worthy of merit (as the question asked 'what set design would be best . . .') provided that the ideas demonstrated candidates' understanding of how the drama could be supported and complemented by the design. Candidates who gave detailed analysis of how the performance space was utilised with consideration of dimensions and layout and described how scene changes, where necessary, were achieved with effective transitions were likely to achieve higher marks. Some candidates also considered utilisation of other technical elements, such as lighting, as part of the overall design and were given particular credit when they demonstrated how these were integrated to complete the intended visual effect. Diagrams were credited where they were used to illustrate points made in the answer.

Question 14

Most candidates appreciated that a discussion of how their individual role was realised needed detailed consideration of the range of acting skills necessary to communicate the role to an audience and that an evaluation of the effectiveness of that portrayal was also requisite. High-scoring candidates were able to give clear descriptions of their intentions and how their characterisation was achieved through use of the body, from the communication of subtle messages via eye contact and gesture to more pronounced effects created through proxemics and the use of space. These candidates' use of voice in performance was similarly analysed in detail through specific alterations of tone, volume, pitch and pace for desired effect at particular moments in the drama in order, for example, to communicate motivation, establish relationships or reveal subtext.

Answers which scored less well needed to demonstrate a clearer understanding of the nature of the role within the piece as a whole and provide detailed examples from the drama created. Where responses made reference to costume and props, credit was given if there was consideration of the acting skills necessary to utilise these adornments. There were several candidates who did not answer the question fully. Such candidates often made reference to how the group used dramatic techniques and conventions, such as 'magic if' and 'flashback', though these are not *skills* as such and the question specifically asks for a discussion of the individual candidate's skills. Credit could only be given for discussion of techniques and conventions where these informed upon or were used in conjunction with described skills – such as the acting skills required for character improvisation in 'hot seating' as part of the development process.

DRAMA

Paper 0411/02
Coursework

General comments

Generally speaking, the session ran very smoothly in terms of administration, although four factors hindered the moderation process in some cases, and the attention of staff at Centres is drawn to these:

- late arrival of the moderation sample in Cambridge
- DVD recordings that arrived broken or that did not play on a DVD player
- missing documentation
- arithmetical errors on the Individual Candidate Mark Sheets

Centres are reminded of the importance of the timely arrival of the moderation package in Cambridge (by **30 April** for the June examination series), and the need for the Moderator to be able to begin work without having to wait for missing documentation or a new recording to arrive.

Sample of work

A significant number of Centres did not select a moderation sample, but left this to the Moderator. It is a requirement that the Centre selects its own sample of **six** candidates and that this includes the candidate with the highest mark awarded, the candidate with the lowest mark awarded and four candidates spread evenly between these two marks. Please try to avoid sending more than one candidate in the sample on the same mark point.

Completion of mark sheets

Please note that the Individual Candidate Mark Sheets for **all** candidates (not just those in the sample) must be sent to Cambridge with the recordings. There is also a requirement to submit the Moderator's copy of the MS1 computer-generated mark sheet (or a signed printout of the marks file if marks were submitted to Cambridge electronically) as the transfer of marks needs to be checked as part of the moderation process.

The majority of Centres completed the Individual Candidate Mark Sheets thoroughly and accurately, with teachers' comments serving to draw attention to reasons why a particular mark had been awarded, and linking the performance to the assessment criteria in the syllabus. In a few instances, it was puzzling as to how the same candidate could receive a very high mark for Assessment Objective C and a low one for Assessment Objective A or B. Centres are encouraged on such occasions to offer specific comments as to why this was so. Comments in support of the candidates' work were variable. Some simply repeated the assessment criteria in the syllabus and these were of very limited use. The most useful, especially in the case of devised work, were those that commented on specific details of the performance work and pointed to aspects of the role that had been credited.

There were a significant number of candidates whose marks had to be amended as a result of incorrect arithmetical calculations. Centres are reminded that the process depends on **not** rounding up or down any of the marks for the separate assessment objectives. Marks for each of the three assessment objectives should be left as decimal fractions. Only when the total mark has been arrived at should the total mark for the candidate be rounded up or down to a whole number. Fractions of 0.5 or more should be rounded up; fractions of less than 0.5 should be rounded down.

Setting

Consideration should be given to creating the best environment for candidates to be able to perform at their very best, without the distraction of noises from outside the building, school bells or the noisy circulation of candidates moving between classes. Where candidates had an appropriate setting – and particularly where they performed to a live audience – it lifted the performance and motivated the candidates to give of their

best.

Recordings of performances

The quality of recordings was generally improved this session, mainly because the overwhelming majority of Centres presented their work in digital format on DVD. Moderators were especially grateful for the work put in by those Centres who chaptered their DVDs, which enabled performances to be identified quickly and easily.

Several recordings could not be played on a DVD player, which was a cause of considerable frustration for Moderators. In some cases the DVDs showed as 'blank' when inserted to a player and it is important that the DVDs are 'finalised' so that they will play on devices other than the one on which they were burned. In other cases the format of the files meant that they were not playable at all on a DVD player. Centres are advised to record work in PAL or NTSC format and are reminded that they should check their DVDs in a stand-alone player to ensure that they work before posting the material to Cambridge.

The overall quality of the video material was very high. There were some areas for further improvement, however. The sound quality of some recordings proved problematic, especially those that had been recorded outside where wind noise was intrusive. The camera work was not always helpful for indoor performances. In some instances the camera was on the floor in the main body of the theatre looking up to the stage, so that candidates were filmed at a very unusual angle. In other instances, the cameraman had tried to follow the action on the stage by frequently panning across the stage or zooming in and out, which made it difficult to see the performance from the perspective of a theatre audience. The reaction of a performer to other characters needs to be seen by Moderators, as well as how they react to other actors when they themselves are silent on stage.

Identification of candidates

Candidates should announce themselves to camera before each performance, stating their name and (if known at the time of the recording) candidate number and the role they are playing; this was done very well in most Centres. Some candidates used boards showing their name and candidate number as well as verbally giving this information. A few were overcome by the moment and dissolved into embarrassed giggling, which did not set an appropriate tone for the performance that was to follow. Most Centres provided a description of the candidates on the Individual Candidate Mark Sheets and many also provided photographs. Some provided neither description nor photographs, which made identification difficult.

Text-based performances

The text-based performances tended to be most candidates' strongest work. There were many moving performances and some very interesting interpretations, which showed an excellent understanding of how to move from page to stage. The strongest performances were based on an in-depth understanding of the cultural, historical and social context of the play, often reflected in a real sense of ownership in performances.

As in previous sessions, there was a very wide range of plays chosen, and these covered many different styles and periods. A representative selection is reproduced in the table at the end of this section as a resource to enable future planning for Centres. It was pleasing to see candidates being challenged and simultaneously extending their knowledge and understanding of theatre across historical periods and genres. Whilst the majority of plays were from the canon of twentieth century British and American drama, there was also a good selection of lesser-known plays from a wide variety of cultures and settings. In some cases, Centres seemed to have directed less able candidates to challenging texts from Shakespeare, Dickens or Oscar Wilde only for these candidates to struggle to perform them as they had little understanding of what they were being asked to do. The crucial factor is the extent to which the candidate can bring to life on stage a piece of text that holds a sense of dramatic fascination for them, and this is irrespective of its period, playwright or genre. Centres are particularly reminded that film screenplays are not appropriate to the requirements of this syllabus and neither are poems or novels unless they exist as professional, published stage versions.

The vast majority of the monologues were realisations of extracts from repertoire, and many of the following points about performance are based on practice seen in monologues. The best of these performances showed real depth of understanding of characterisation, and candidates had clearly made great efforts to understand what they were saying and its underlying motivation. Weaker performances generally displayed

little understanding of the character the candidate was attempting to realise, as revealed through poor diction, awkward physicality, stilted mannerisms and uncontrolled gestures.

The use of space and understanding of proxemics proved another clear differentiator of ability in performance of text-based work. Many candidates performed with an imaginary character on stage beside them or used the audience (or camera) as the protagonist; others simply laboured their way through without reference to what the character was meant to be doing. Candidates achieved higher marks when they used fluent movement for variety, emphasis and to help their dramatic pacing. Static pieces, usually with the candidate sitting behind a table, were seldom conducive to effective performance since the table inevitably acted as a barrier.

In some Centres, all candidates were allowed to use the same chair in the same place for every single monologue, even though the monologues were all from different plays. There were a number of instances – especially where the number of candidates was large – of candidates all attempting exactly the same monologue. Whilst Moderators were sympathetic to the logic and rationale underlying this, it was never likely that the same monologue would suit all candidates equally. A better strategy would be to select monologues most appropriate to each candidate's ability in a style most likely to help him/her demonstrate his/her skills. Moderators also reported occasional concerns with cross-gender casting, which is allowed by the syllabus but needs to be undertaken carefully since it provides challenges even for seasoned and skilled actors. Yet it was often the less able candidates who were given this task, which did not seem fair to them and did not give them the opportunity to be shown in the best possible light for their ability level.

Although not specifically required by the syllabus, in many group pieces there were examples of effective uses of costume and set, with candidates often taking considerable trouble to create a sense of the social, cultural and historical setting of the extract. Yet excessive props contributed little, and Moderators felt that in some cases this focus might have been developed as a means of hiding weaker performance skills. Moderators were concerned that a minority of candidates had become over focused on their props and costumes to the detriment of their characterisation.

The greatest differentiator for group text-based performances was the ability of the candidates to handle dialogue to create authentic conversational interaction. Moderators made no judgements as to the accent or stress of the spoken word, but were clear in the expectation that the dialogue should be made to sound like genuine verbal communication expressing meaning, depth and authenticity. That expectation was often fulfilled, although in a great number of instances the dialogue between characters had no more expression than the simple recitation of a text, with the result that it would have been extremely difficult for an audience to have gained much understanding of what was supposed to be happening in the play.

The table below gives a representative sample of works from which extracts were taken in June 2012. Some have appeared in lists in previous years and are included to indicate their enduring popularity; others are less well known but worthy of consideration.

Edward Albee	<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i>
Aristophanes	<i>The Clouds</i>
Alan Ayckbourn	<i>A Small Family Business</i> <i>Comic Potential</i> <i>Invisible Friends</i> <i>Man of the Moment</i>
Bertolt Brecht	<i>The Good Person of Szechwan</i> <i>Mother Courage</i>
Richard Cameron	<i>The Moon's the Madonna</i>
Jim Cartwright	<i>Road</i> <i>Two</i>
Anton Chekhov	<i>A Marriage Proposal</i> <i>The Cherry Orchard</i> <i>The Seagull</i> <i>Uncle Vanya</i>
Noel Coward	<i>Blithe Spirit</i>
Martin Crimp	<i>The Misanthrope</i> <i>The Treatment</i>
Jules Feiffer	<i>Little Murders</i>
Horton Foote	<i>A Young Lady of Property</i>
Anatole France	<i>The Man Who Married A Dumb Wife</i>

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Alice Gerstenberg	<i>Fourteen</i>
John Godber	<i>Bouncers</i> <i>Shakers</i> <i>Teechers</i>
Nikolai Gogol	<i>The Government Inspector</i>
Ronald Gow	<i>Love on the Dole</i>
Tanika Gupta	<i>Inside out</i>
Lorraine Hansberry	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>
David Hare	<i>Murmuring Judges</i>
Henrik Ibsen	<i>A Doll's House</i>
Barbara Kahn	<i>Summer in the City</i>
Charlotte Keatley	<i>My Mother Said I Never Should</i>
Wendy Kesselman	<i>My Sister in this House</i>
Hanif Kureishi	<i>Borderline</i>
Maureen Lawrence	<i>Tokens of Affection</i>
Sharman Macdonald	<i>After Juliet</i>
Patrick Marber	<i>Closer</i>
Chiori Miyagawa	<i>Yesterday's window</i>
Arthur Miller	<i>All My Sons</i> <i>The Crucible</i> <i>Death of a Salesman</i> <i>A View from the Bridge</i>
Rona Munro	<i>Bold Girls</i>
Josephina Niggli	<i>Sunday Costs Five Pesos</i>
Mary O'Malley	<i>Once a Catholic</i>
Joe Orton	<i>Ruffian on the Stair</i>
Harold Pinter	<i>The Dumb Waiter</i> <i>Betrayal</i>
Dennis Potter	<i>Blue Remembered Hills</i>
Kellie Powell	<i>Thanksgiving in the Wilderness</i>
J B Priestley	<i>An Inspector Calls</i>
Terence Rattigan	<i>The Winslow boy</i>
Willy Russell	<i>Educating Rita</i> <i>Our Day Out</i>
James Saunders	<i>The Old Man Who Liked Cats</i>
Peter Shaffer	<i>Amadeus</i> <i>Black Comedy</i> <i>Equus</i>
William Shakespeare	<i>Hamlet</i> <i>Henry V</i> <i>King Lear</i> <i>Macbeth</i> <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> <i>Twelfth Night</i>
R C Sherriff	<i>Journey's End</i>
Neil Simon	<i>Lost in Yonkers</i> <i>The Odd Couple</i> <i>Prisoner of Second Avenue</i>
Githa Sowerby	<i>Rutherford and Son</i>
Shelagh Stephenson	<i>Five Kinds of Silence</i>
Timberlake Wertenbaker	<i>Our Country's Good</i>
Mark Wheeler	<i>Too Much Punch for Judy</i>
Oscar Wilde	<i>A Woman of No Importance</i> <i>Lady Windermere's Fan</i> <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>
Thornton Wilder	<i>The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden</i>
Emlyn Williams	<i>The Corn Is Green</i>
Tennessee Williams	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>
Paul Zindel	<i>Amulets Against the Dragon Forces</i>

Devised performances

As in previous sessions, Centres are reminded that they should indicate on the Individual Candidate Mark Sheets which of the devising options has been chosen from the list in the syllabus. Moderators reported that in the absence of this information, performances could have belonged to more than one category and had to be given the benefit of the doubt as to which was intended.

Whilst there was a sense that some Centres had encouraged their candidates to experiment and push the boundaries of their creativity, devised work was often much weaker than text-based work. The exception to this was where candidates had embraced the spirit of creating devised coursework, experimented with ideas and style and had created effective and sensitive drama, often deliberately involving styles such as physical theatre or Commedia dell'Arte. Physical theatre, in particular, was generally employed to great advantage and led to less reliance on traditional staging techniques. The influence of practitioners such as Brecht, Artaud or Boal was often evident in the best work, and helped to give both context and form to the drama.

Thematic material abounded, some of which worked well. Although there was a tendency for pieces to slide into the predictable areas of teenage issues such as drugs, unwanted pregnancies, schizophrenia, bullying, marital infidelity, cultural expectations and challenges, and madness, these issues gave rise on occasion to well-crafted, powerful work. Murder or ghost stories were popular as sources for devising original material, and the impending Olympics no doubt inspired the increase in number of sport-related pieces. Some pieces were based on real-life events such as the story of Anne Frank and the Nazis, historical characters such as Idi Amin, General Pinochet or Hitler, or well-known figures from the world of film and television such as Marilyn Monroe and Charlie Chaplin. Music was also used to good effect in some pieces with some candidates devising their own musical, complete with songs. Centres are reminded that although this can demonstrate breadth of skills, the focus of the assessment is on drama and weak singing can undermine the impact of the drama.

Moderators reported that much devised work was clichéd and at worst bordered on crass, although there were notable exceptions where the devising work was a real strength. This work was thoughtful and powerful and showed a clear understanding of genre and drama techniques. But in so many cases the devised work was poor in its genesis and application, the creation of the work weak, and its performance tepid. Such half-hearted performances frequently adopted a pseudo-naturalistic style reminiscent of a TV soap opera: predictable and not at all engaging or stimulating for an audience. In many such cases, there was little sign of the presence of an audience at all and a number of monologues appeared to have been filmed in the candidates' living rooms or even bedrooms, which inevitably resulted in filmic recordings completely unsuited to performance on stage. There were extreme examples of candidates forgetting their part and swearing to camera, which was especially unhelpful in demonstrating their skills in performance discipline.

The superficiality of the devised material frequently generated uninspiring levels of performance and the level of technique in devised work was almost invariably lower than seen in text-based performances. In many cases, there was a need for candidates to understand voice production and undertake skills work on projection and diction. Yet this was as much a product of poorly constructed dialogue and candidates often attempted to cover this deficiency through clichéd devices or poor techniques such as excessive screaming as a substitute for terror, knocking on a door with a stamped foot or excessive shouting down a mobile phone or even miming the phone with a thumb and little finger.