



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
January 2012**

**Drama and Theatre Studies**

**DRAM3**

**(Specification 2240)**

**Unit 3: Further Prescribed Plays including  
Pre-Twentieth Century**

***Report on the Examination***

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### Unit 3 – Further Prescribed Plays including Pre-Twentieth Century

#### **General comments**

Many candidates were well-prepared for the precise demands of the questions on their set plays on this January's DRAM3 paper. Unfortunately, there were also several instances seen where candidates seemed to be unready to answer questions either on the play studied for Section A or Section B. Occasionally, candidates seemed ill-prepared for both of their set texts. Some candidates appeared unaware of the specific requirements of the Section B task.

Both sections of the paper require candidates to reveal an overview of their chosen plays; the main tasks in the Section B question are to give evidence of a secure theoretical understanding of the extract, underpinning a clear practical interpretation of the printed extract. The best candidates met the requirements of the paper with some assurance, while the weaker ones appeared oblivious to these aspects of the set tasks.

Candidates for the January series of DRAM3 have only one term to master their chosen set texts, and it was clear that while some were thoroughly immersed in the world of their chosen play in each section, others were less secure.

Some very good scripts were seen which demonstrated secure knowledge of each of the set plays selected, as well as clear understanding of the potential of each text to create specific effects for an audience. As always, the best candidates addressed the precise demands of their chosen questions immediately, and then maintained a tight focus upon these throughout their answers.

Weaker scripts often contain under-developed and/or very brief responses, which were often very superficial in content or approach.

Examiners reported seeing a number of scripts that lacked the necessary support of reference to specific moments from the set text in action in both parts of the paper. In Section B, too many candidates referred exclusively to line numbers rather than to lines of speech, robbing their answers of the immediacy that comes from brief quotation in support of practical ideas.

Candidates may need to be reminded that they must justify their practical suggestions as well as illustrate their ideas with close reference to the text in action. Examiners reported seeing some answers where candidates offered inappropriate ideas with no attempt made to justify their application. This was very noticeable in some Section B responses, where the complete cohort of candidates from the same centre interpreted the given section in identical (yet unconventional) ways.

Candidates need to be reminded that, in the examination, they should not abbreviate the names of characters in their chosen set play; this is a practice which is not acceptable in a formal examination, and may be construed as offering responses in note-form rather than continuous prose.

Another more dangerous practice seen this series is where candidates have adopted, and replicated **verbatim**, passages from exemplar candidate work issued in the feedback meetings on the Summer 2011 paper. This is totally unacceptable and constitutes plagiarism. Candidates sign the front of their answer books to declare that their answers are all their own work, and it is therefore a significant breach of trust to offer as their 'own work', work that is patently **not** their own.

## **Section A – Pre-Twentieth Century Plays**

### ***The Revenger's Tragedy***

#### **Question 01**

Examiners saw several very successful responses to this question, although there were also many disappointing answers in evidence.

The most common failing noted was the absence of a clearly identified preferred response to the Duchess, without which all performance ideas were rendered purposeless.

Where candidates did identify their preferred response, examiners saw a range of ideas; some candidates viewed the Duchess as wholly sympathetic which was often not well justified given her adulterous pursuit of her step-son. Others attempted to do rather too much in any one scene; for example, in the Duchess's appearance at the trial of Junior, some candidates offered different (contradictory) potential responses for almost every line considered.

Better scripts contained useful delivery ideas for a wide range of lines drawn from different sections of the play to support their interpretation of the Duchess, while weaker ones contained scant quotation.

Examiners reported seeing evidence of complete misunderstanding of the Jacobean language in a large number of candidates' scripts where the text was either used inaccurately, or used in such a way as to suggest muddle. Several candidates saw innuendo in every line spoken by the Duchess as a consequence of taking the quotation out of context.

Better candidates chose their sections wisely in order to reveal more of an overview of the Duchess, who they identified as being part of the theme of corruption at court. These candidates were generally sensitive to the original context of the play and to the features of the genre of Jacobean revenge plays.

Weaker candidates sometimes chose their two 'sections' from different parts of the same scene, thus depriving themselves of the opportunity to show the Duchess' 'journey' in the play. Where both 'sections' were chosen from the early scenes of the play, no 'overview' was achieved.

Weaker candidates made little or no reference to the play's period or genre. Some very weak answers were seen which dwelt almost exclusively with the minutiae of the Duchess' seduction of Spurio. Text was dispensed with in favour of explicit descriptions of the gratification of the Duchess's sexual appetite. These answers revealed little knowledge of the play, and made unedifying reading.

As always, the best answers focused on specific sections which were used to illustrate moments of performance calculated exactly to achieve clearly stated and appropriate responses from the audience.

### **Question 02**

Although not selected by many candidates, this question produced some imaginative direction for the play with the potential to create 'black comedy'.

There were some inventive suggestions for presenting the plotting of the Duke's sons and stepsons, but also a surprising number of answers that revealed candidates' confusion over who was actually a member of the Duke's family.

Examiners were surprised to find answers that dealt with the plotting of Vindice and Hippolito, for example.

The most frequently selected scenes involved *Ambizioso* and *Supervacuo*, and this pair of plotters were often dealt with quite well, although the same problem arose here as in Question 01, with candidates revealing only a slender grasp of the meaning of some of the brothers' lines. It is hard to create comedy when you do not understand what the characters are saying.

Some candidates wasted valuable time by setting out their detailed ideas for transposing the play to another time period and/or setting. Few of these suggestions were plausible or helpful, and often they were somewhat counter-productive. In most cases, after a page or so of irrelevant detail about the new 'setting', be it 'gangster-land' New York, or some futuristic prison, the candidate simply never referred to the transposition again and certainly did not utilise it to create black comedy.

Some candidates revealed insecurity in their knowledge of the twists and turns of the plot of this complex play.

### **Tartuffe**

#### **Question 03**

This was by far the more popular question with candidates.

Many candidates approaching this question on *Tartuffe* devoted too much time and space to peripheral matters, rather than tackling the interaction between Orgon and Mariane, and Orgon and Damis, directly. Thus, examiners reported seeing lengthy introductions about the nature of Moliere's comic style and its origins in commedia dell'arte. This material often detracted from, rather than enhancing, their work.

While better answers focused directly upon their preferred effects for an audience, others ignored this crucial part of the question, and wrote generally about their selected sections with no clear object in view.

Many candidates opted to create comedy for their audience, and the more inventive ones achieved their aims. Some were less successful; relying more on a narrative approach and on Moliere's skills as a writer than on their abilities as a director to extract comedy from the situations.

Others concentrated on presenting both Mariane and Damis as sympathetic characters, and then explored the ways that this could be achieved through practical performance detail linked closely to the delivery of the text.

Weaker answers merely described the action of their chosen scenes with negligible invention, or they focused on Orgon's interaction with Dorine or Tartuffe.

#### **Question 04**

This was not a popular question, and it attracted few effective responses.

Better candidates showed some apt understanding of the period setting of the play as well as its comic style, and both were reflected in the offered designs.

Some candidates acknowledged the original period of the play but chose to transpose the action to modern day. This was occasionally effective, but also occasionally very poorly supported. Some candidates offered no justification at all for their transposition, and their ideas lacked coherence of approach.

A surprising number of candidates offered no sketches to illustrate their ideas; some failed to identify specific moments from the play where their designs might be exploited by the cast.

There were some suitable ideas for the use of individual pieces of furniture or costume for comic effect, although these answers rarely included an overview of the intended designs.

Costume designs for both Elmire's gowns and Dorine's bodices were frequently 'designed' around the need to reveal the characters' bosoms, while Tartuffe was regularly seen in boxer shorts with a variety of motifs – hearts, crosses, etc.

Examiners reported seeing a number of answers where candidates focused on Orgon's use of the table as a hiding place, but this did not offer the scope for a whole answer.

Although there was a handful of very well-researched costume and set ideas evident, examiners also reported seeing answers from candidates who lacked the necessary terminology to attempt a design question, and where references to both set and costume suggested a lack of theatrical experience.

#### ***The Recruiting Officer***

##### **Question 05**

In common with *The Revenger's Tragedy*, *The Recruiting Officer* contains many challenges as well as many opportunities for candidates.

Examiners were struck by the rarity of answers that revealed a secure grasp of the plot of this play. Additionally, many candidates appeared not to understand Farquhar's language. Where candidates had mastered the plot and the language, some good answers were seen.

Melinda was much misunderstood, and many candidates depicted her in a wholly negative light. Some preferred to write about Silvia and did so.

Many candidates concentrated their attention on Melinda's first scene with Silvia, and they presented Melinda as haughty and unpleasant. They then moved on to her first scene of interaction with Worthy where she was, once again, featured as haughty and unpleasant. Even her interaction with Lucy was reduced to being haughty and unpleasant.

This resulted in a restricted overview of the character. The better ‘overviews’ always recognised the importance of the reckoning scene with Worthy.

Some candidates had learned labels for Melinda such as “female fop” or “prudish coquette”, but were not always able to explain, justify or exemplify them.

There were cases where candidates seemed overly concerned with showing their knowledge of period and style at the expense of the question. Thus, candidates wrote at length about the use of a fan without necessarily revealing how its use could affect an audience’s response to Melinda.

Being able to show knowledge of period and style, and of the use of props, costume and accessories is very desirable, but not as an end in its own right.

Better answers referred to sections where Farquhar showed various sides of Melinda’s character, including her vulnerability and/or wit, and where the reasons for her behaviour were explored.

### ***Question 06***

This was the less popular option although there were some successful answers seen.

Some careless candidates failed to read the question closely, and examiners reported seeing some answers where the chosen scenes featured one or other of the characters, but not both.

Candidates who wrote about Melinda’s initial exchanges with Silvia or Worthy’s private conversations with Plume, for example, failed to meet the demands of the question, and these sections were disregarded by the examiners.

There were also instances of candidates providing quite detailed ideas for the casting of the roles, but, unless the casting was linked to the focus of the question – the creation of comedy – time might have been more productively spent in developing directorial ideas for the interaction of Silvia and Plume.

Similarly, many candidates included suggestions for costume; once again, these suggestions were useful where they supported specific directorial ideas; they were less helpful when they were offered as a substitute for purposeful direction of the pair.

Better answers referred closely to the text, in order to illustrate precise directorial ideas. Some very effective answers were seen that focused on Plume’s initial interview with Silvia, although the broadest comedy was created in scenes where Silvia was dressed as Jack Wilful.

The best answers recognised that the richest comedy, in this case, grew out of their relationship between these principal characters and its development. These candidates were able to offer the kind of overview that this paper requires.

## ***The Servant of Two Masters***

### **Question 07**

As in previous series, a recurrent mistake reported by examiners was candidates' apparent inability to distinguish between what might be useful reference to the commedia tradition, either offered in a brief introduction to the answer or as part of the developing response, and what was simply irrelevant background material that served only to distract the candidate from the focus of the question.

The history of commedia and discussion of contemporary attitudes to Goldoni's introduction of script was rarely a positive addition to a candidate's answer.

Nor, in the instance of the character of Pantalone in this particular play, was it very useful to try to apply the stock qualities of the original 'model', since Goldoni's character deviates so much from the 'norm'.

For example, many candidates discussed the quality of 'lust' seen in original commedia scenarios, and they equipped Pantalone with a costume that exaggerated his groin area. But in Goldoni's play, no such quality is evident, either in his words or deeds; rather, Pantalone's main interest is in honouring a previous marriage contract and persuading his daughter to accept his decision.

Although Goldoni does suggest that Pantalone is a bit of a miser in terms of not wanting to waste money entertaining relatives, his attitude towards, first, Silvio and, secondly, Beatrice is not a mercenary one, other than in terms of getting his daughter 'off-hand'.

The dowry is paid by Pantalone and not to him, and this fact had eluded the vast majority of candidates who selected this option. Thus, much inappropriate behaviour was suggested for the character, and the whole basis of the plot of this play – Beatrice's disguise in order to acquire the dowry owing to her (dead) brother – was evidently not understood.

Putting this fundamental error to one side, examiners reported seeing answers about Pantalone and Clarice that failed to include either any reference to the father/daughter relationship, or any reference to preferred effects for the audience. These were answers that simply directed a couple of scenes that happened to include both characters.

In better answers, there were some wonderful images created of Clarice's manipulation of her father, and of Pantalone's increasing frustration at being unable to manage a situation that rapidly spirals out of control.

Better answers also tended to include scenes from the middle and/or end of the play, rather than sticking stubbornly to the first handful of very brief 'scenes'.



### **Question 08**

This option was the more popular choice of the two, and examiners reported seeing many very amusing responses, as well as plenty of uninventive attempts at creating a strong relationship between Truffaldino with the audience.

As reported above, some candidates spent several paragraphs describing the commedia 'roots' of the roles of Arlecchino and the Zanni before finding their focus and writing about **this** character, Truffaldino.

Many candidates had evidently pre-prepared answers on Truffaldino (a sensible strategy); however, they had clearly expected the question to focus either on the creation of comedy, or on the eliciting of a preferred audience response. These were then the areas that the majority of candidates focused upon, to the detriment of their achievement.

It is vitally important that candidates are prepared to adapt their knowledge and understanding to the precise demand of the question set, to expect to be surprised by the question wording, and to find full focus on what the question requires.

Those who failed to see that "developing a strong relationship" between Truffaldino and the audience requires a particular set of skills and techniques on the part of the actor, tended to write quite generally about some of the comic moments that involved Truffaldino.

A strong relationship with the audience is not automatically created through the creation of comedy; if this were so, the audience would have as strong a relationship with Pantalone and with Dr Lombardi as it has with Truffaldino. The question certainly discriminated between candidates who appreciated the demands of the question and those who did not.

Those candidates who took their time to reflect on the demands of the question, and to shape their answer to meet this demands, always selected the most appropriate moments from the text for creating a strong relationship. They chose, for example, Truffaldino's lengthy sections of 'direct address' to the audience; his frequent use of asides throughout the play and his 'virtuoso' lazzi of sticking the envelope with soggy bread, often creating terrific moments of theatre.

### ***Lady Windermere's Fan***

#### **Question 09**

This was an extremely popular play and the option on Mrs Erlynne received the majority of answers.

Some candidates had pre-prepared an answer on Mrs Erlynne (a useful strategy), but they were expecting a question where they were invited to nominate their preferred responses to Mrs Erlynne, and then to explain how they would perform the role in order to achieve their preferred responses. This was not the question that appeared on the paper. Instead, the question required that candidates offered performance strategies calculated to change the audience's initial response of mistrust towards Mrs Erlynne to one of respect at the end of the play.

Hundreds of candidates ignored the precise requirement of the question, and blithely persisted in describing moments where the audience would feel amusement, distaste, revulsion or sympathy towards Mrs Erlynne.

Many more ignored the clue in the question to consider the beginning and end of the play, and there were many answers that focused exclusively on Act Two, where Mrs Erlynne begins the Act 'mistrusted' for flirting with men, and ends it being 'respected' for opening Lady Windermere's note to her husband, and rushing off on a mercy mission to save her daughter.

Where candidates did focus on the terms of the question, most found it relatively easy to show how we might be led to mistrust Mrs Erlynne. However, they found it more difficult to explain how we could be made to respect her.

The fact that the audience respect her for 'not giving Lady Windermere away', and for 'sacrificing' her own reputation for that of her daughter, is a 'given' that we have in the text. What the actress needs to do is show the audience Mrs Erlynne's internal struggle through her **performance**, so that we understand how hard it is for her to make that sacrifice. Too often, candidates were unable to do this, so that performance ideas remained tamely uninventive.

Candidates who were able to discuss period costume, accessories and the appearance of Mrs Erlynne in a purposeful way (i.e. linked to the responses of mistrust and respect) were likely to be more successful than those who devoted two or more pages to detailed descriptions of what Mrs Erlynne wore to the ball/to visit Lady Windermere in Act Four, with no reference at all to the effect created by her appearance.

As always, the best answers focused on sections which were used to illustrate moments of performance calculated exactly to achieve the specified responses from the audience.

Unfortunately, there were many candidates who revealed a lack of understanding of the role, and more than a few who asserted that Mrs Erlynne was a prostitute – somewhat missing the point.

### **Question 10**

This was the less popular option, although it elicited significant numbers of responses, covering a wide range of achievement.

This question demanded casting decisions for Lady Windermere and Lord Darlington, and it was thus often obvious from the very beginning of a candidate's answer how well they knew the play.

Lady Windermere was cast as anything between 16 and 28, and Lord Darlington between 20 and 60.

Lady Windermere's announcement that she is 'of age, today' was taken by some bewildered candidates to be an explicit invitation to Lord Darlington to consummate their relationship, and many missed the clue to her being 21.

The evidence of this kind of muddle is difficult to recover from.

Many candidates persist in confusing casting with costume, and it was often not until the second or third page that a candidate left the appearance of the actors behind and moved on to direction.

Lady Windermere and Lord Darlington have two significant sections of interaction in the play, in Acts One and Two. It was particularly disappointing to read answers where both 'sections' were taken from the same Act.

Much misinterpretation of the relationship was seen; however, the question did ask for 'your interpretation' and, where candidates justified their ideas convincingly, their interpretations – if a little off-beam – were credited. Where candidates showed an almost wilful misinterpretation, however, it was difficult for candidates to achieve high marks.

It goes completely against the text, for example, to present Lady Windermere as a voracious man-eater, flirting over her fan with Lord Darlington in Act One; it is similarly unconvincing to represent Lord Darlington as suicidal after his rejection in Act Two.

It would be useful for candidates to realise that despite the various film versions of the story that they might have seen, Oscar Wilde does not place the exchange between the pair in Act Two *on the terrace*, but in the busy ballroom where their actions will be noted by others. It is unlikely that Lord Darlington would prostrate himself at Lady Windermere's feet in such a setting.

A more frequent error was to write about how the characters behave in each other's company without defining the nature of the relationship, and how it is modified in the course of the play. Many candidates failed to offer the required interpretation.

## ***The Seagull***

### ***Question 11***

This was a not a popular question and it was only rarely handled reasonably well.

The question required candidates to discuss how their design ideas could be used to show the passage of time in a production of *The Seagull*. Five design elements were listed, and candidates had to refer to at least one of these. A further requirement was that candidates refer to specific moments from each of the four Acts of the play.

There were not many answers seen that fulfilled each of these requirements satisfactorily.

Very few candidates who attempted the question actually referred to the passage of time at all.

Most candidates were able to outline a setting design; many revealed some knowledge of the style of furnishings in the late nineteenth century, but few candidates showed any awareness of how set design could convey the passage of time.

Indeed, it was to be expected that candidates who read and thought about the demands of the question carefully would refer briefly to a number of the elements, rather than putting all their eggs in one design element basket.

The ageing process would seem to have been quite easily achieved through make-up, for example, but of the few candidates who attempted this question, only one or two considered this element.

Reference to the seasons and to different times of day represented by the different Acts was also the province of a very few candidates.

Better answers included a sketch to support ideas, while weaker responses failed to supply a sketch and, not infrequently, they ignored the demand of the question to refer to particular moments.

Some candidates who opted for this question appeared not to have given much thought to the design requirements of the play prior to entering the exam.

### **Question 12**

This was the more popular option; there were some very successful answers seen, and some very sensitive examinations of how to present the complexity of Arkadina in practical, performance details.

Some careless candidates failed to read the question sufficiently closely, and did not notice that the question demanded an exploration of Arkadina's 'complexity' rather than a focus on audience response; others failed to note that three sections from the play were required.

There were some quite detailed ideas for the casting and costume of Arkadina – this was not a part of the question demand, so that, where such details were included, unless Arkadina's appearance was presented as being a part of her **complexity**, time spent describing her outfits and accessories was time wasted.

Better candidates referred closely to the text in order to illustrate their answer, and they gave appropriate and sensitive attention to the delivery of specific lines calculated exactly to reveal complexity.

Many candidates looked at a sensible range of moments, including Arkadina's mockery of Konstantin in the opening Act; her conceited display of vanity at the beginning of Act Two where she patronises both Masha and Nina; her tenderness with her son in Act Three; her insecurity and manipulation of Trigorin in Act Three; her alternating complacency and fear in Act Four. Some very good work was seen.

Some candidates under-achieved by confining themselves to examples of Arkadina's selfishness and vanity which, however well exemplified through performance ideas, was impossible to interpret as complexity.

Weaker answers often began with a brief history of Chekhov's career and his relationship with Stanislavski, all of which was completely irrelevant.

### **Section B – The Twentieth Century and Contemporary Drama**

This is now the fifth report on DRAM3, and in each successive report we have reiterated the precise nature of the question's demand for a detailed interpretation of the printed extract in its entirety.

We have explained that 'Interpretation' implies that candidates will state what the substance of the extract signifies, and that all their directorial ideas will be focused on bringing out the meaning of the scene for the audience.

More candidates in this series appear to have been better prepared to meet that demand than those in previous series.

Nevertheless, there were still examples of candidates offering up to three quarters of their answers based on pre-prepared material about research, setting, costume and casting, which attracted very little credit unless it was shaped to the precise demands of the **extract** and added to the meaning of the section.

Biographical information about the individual playwrights attracts no marks whatsoever.

As the question set in Section B is the same for all set texts, it is worth reiterating the following general points, all of which have been made in previous reports, about the way in which candidates approached the extract-based question, as this has not changed in essence since January 2010.

Better answers:

- offered a **personal** – yet entirely appropriate and justified – interpretation of the printed extract that revealed their understanding of the extract, of its context within the wider play and of the play as a whole
- attempted, through their directorial ideas, to communicate meaning to the audience
- supported ideas by using quotation from the extract
- considered the audience experience that they were aiming to achieve, and offered suggestions that were likely to achieve these
- provided sketches that were of adequate size – about a third of a page – that were clearly labelled, which related to the necessary traffic of the printed extract, and were compatible with the play as a whole
- included evidence of **relevant** research discernible in the appropriateness of their practical suggestions, as well as through explicit reference to it at particularly pertinent moments.

Weaker answers

- failed to locate the correct extract in their exam booklets, but answered instead on the corresponding pages from the texts they had with them in the exam room – this is **still** happening in the fifth series of this exam
- failed to confine their interpretation to the material in the printed extract, and wasted precious time directing moments before or after the material in the printed extract
- wrote **exclusively** about production elements – choice of stage configuration, set and costume design, lighting and sound effects, and failed to offer a single idea about how they might direct their cast
- spent almost all of their answers writing casting and costume suggestions for every single character on stage, often betraying a restricted understanding of how casting and costume convey meaning to an audience

- referred irrelevantly to the biographies of the respective playwrights, which had no bearing whatsoever on the interpretation of the extract
- wrote at length about their intentions for the audience, without offering the concrete suggestions for achieving these intentions
- wrote about one or two lines of text in great detail but did not give a sense of understanding, either of the rest of the extract, or of the play from which it was taken
- failed to quote from the text in front of them
- ignored the context of the extract, and made suggestions that ran counter to events that have just taken place in the section before the printed extract
- many weaker answers were swamped with references to research that was:
  - purely biographical
  - purely literary
  - gratuitous and/or clearly irrelevant to their interpretation of the piece
- sketches
  - many weaker answers did not contain a useful sketch
  - some sketches were crammed into three lines of the answer books with little or no labelling
  - some sketches contained so much labelling that it was impossible to see the sketch beneath it
  - some candidates repeated all of the information that they had supplied in the sketch in an unnecessary page or two of continuous prose
  - some candidates betrayed a lack of understanding by, for example, nominating a traverse stage setting but drawing a proscenium arch, or nominating theatre – in-the-round but depended upon back projection for their ideas
- many weaker answers contained a narrative account of the action contained in the extract, and offered neither interpretation nor meaning to the reader/audience.

These strengths and weaknesses were seen in relation to each of the texts. The following additional points are worth making in relation to specific texts.

### **Question 13: *Blood Wedding***

Strengths and weaknesses as pages 13 and 14.

This scene from the play, showing the critical moments after the wedding but before the elopement, offered a great opportunity to well-prepared candidates who had understood Lorca's intentions; a scene of comparative naturalistic calm before the disturbing surrealism to come.

Good answers revealed a clear awareness of the importance of the scene and its impact within the context of the whole play.

Better candidates worked closely on the text and noted, for example, the significance of Leonardo's movements in the scene, although he says very little.

Weaker answers omitted the opening and closing sections of the extract altogether; the Father, Wife and First Girl were also regularly omitted.

Costume and set designs occasionally dominated, and also revealed insecurity in candidates' understanding of the period and context. Some candidates revealed a complete lack of understanding of the social milieu of the Bride's family, for example, and set the scene for the 'reception' in a palatial hall with marbled staircases and chandeliers.

In better work, there were some useful and imaginative ideas for the blocking of this busy scene, ensuring that the audience focus was always drawn to the most important action/text while retaining an eye for detail in the groupings and movements of the wedding guests.

Many of these took account of Lorca's own reference to use of colour in this scene.

However, some sketches were not very clearly executed, and some consisted of theatrical contradictions.

Good answers put the piece in context, and revealed a secure understanding of Lorca's purpose. Good answers showed a secure understanding of the style of this particular extract from the play and its potential in performance.

A few weaker candidates were prone to assertion, not developing performance ideas likely to achieve their aims. Other candidates seemed to forget that the notes of suspicion and foreboding that Lorca creates here only work against a background of celebration.

#### **Question 14: *The Good Person of Szechwan***

Strengths and weaknesses as pages 13 and 14.

As in previous series, many candidates wrote at great length about Brechtian techniques, some devoting about two thirds of their answer to asserting the value of distancing the audience, of making them laugh and/or think, and of ensuring that they knew that they were watching a play.

This only occasionally helped better candidates to interpret the extract and to clarify the political thrust of the play.

Many candidates failed to address the substance of the extract at all.

Better candidates appreciated that this extract explores Shen Teh's hardening of attitude as she sees herself being exploited by the old couple, and she fears for her unborn child.

Surprisingly, many candidates omitted:

- the presence of the child
- the delivery of Shen Teh's monologue
- the stage direction that tells us she is going off to 'change into her cousin'.

Others set the extract in the tobacco shop, although it is very clearly set in the yard.

As in previous series, there was also far too much 'borrowing' wholesale from the exemplar essay on *The Good Person of Szechwan* that is part of the Teacher Resource Bank (as mentioned in the introduction to this report, this is plagiarism as candidates sign the front cover of their answer books to declare that the work is their own).

Better answers, as always, responded to the precise demands of this extract, which they read carefully before embarking on their answer, and they resisted the temptation to indulge in a pre-prepared 'Brecht-fest'; nevertheless, they were sensitive to the political message that Shen Teh articulates at the end of the section.

**Question 15: A View from the Bridge**

Good answers made an immediate start on the substance of the printed extract, having offered a clearly labelled sketch giving relevant information to the examiner about the lay-out of the Carbone apartment.

These answers covered the complete extract, and gave as much attention to the six lines involving Alfieri and Eddie as they had accorded any other set of six lines in the extract.

As in previous series, examiners reported seeing very many answers where candidates prefaced their focus on the content of the extract with several pages of unhelpful casting and costume details that contributed virtually nothing to the interpretation of the scene. Time spent on describing hair-styles and shoes would almost always have been better spent uncovering the sub-text to the dialogue and/or on dealing with the whole extract.

As reported previously, some candidates wasted a great deal of time providing biographical information about Miller and/or background information about the genesis of the play which attracted **no credit whatsoever**.

Nevertheless, as reported previously, this play is one of the more accessible texts in this section, with a strong story for candidates to get hold of. As a result, this question generated some very strong responses and relatively few very weak ones.

Miller's stage directions guide candidates to see the subtext beneath the dialogue and action, and better answers then bring that subtext to the surface for the examiner/audience through subtle directions.

Examiners saw some very sensitive answers, where the relationship between Catherine and Beatrice was traced and evoked meticulously. The candidates who produced the best answers were aware of the immediate context of the conversation between the women; they knew that it was night-time and that Catherine was upset before the conversation begins.

Weaker work suggested the scene should take place in the day-time, in Catherine's bedroom or in the kitchen; there were ideas for Beatrice completing household chores as she chatted with her niece; other suggestions included having Catherine reading a magazine and listening to a record.

In the work of some less thoughtful candidates, Catherine had blonde hair and/or dressed like Marilyn Monroe.

Nevertheless, these were not in the majority, and examiners reported seeing good work from candidates who recognised that Catherine's dawning realisation that Eddie's love for her is not entirely avuncular is one of the most significant moments in the play.



**Question 16: *The Trial***

Strengths and weaknesses as pages 13 and 14.

This play attracts a lot of answers. Unfortunately, not all candidates appear to understand what Berkoff's intentions are, or what the whole thing means. This is a tricky text which should be embarked on with care.

Some evidently muddled candidates adopted a very generalised approach to the substance of the extract, with a significant number omitting the section with the Manager altogether and focusing exclusively on the section with Titorelli.

Examiners also saw far too many answers that did not include a single line of text in support of vague aims to create 'a nightmare world'.

Good answers set out precise intentions for this scene, referring to its context within the action of the play as a whole; they took the examiner step-by-step through the extract, explaining and, more importantly, justifying their use of different production elements to bringing out meaning for the audience.

Many of these better answers offered really useful diagrams which tried to illustrate some of the more complex movement sequences.

On occasions, candidates would state their intention to use a total theatre approach, but then failed to do so. Equally unhelpful was the approach whereby candidates opted for a 'Berkovian' approach/technique, but then failed to explain its potential effect or justify its inclusion. The frames were a good example of this. Many would state that they would use frames, simply assuming that their purpose is apparent. It isn't.

Many candidates contented themselves with repeating Berkoff's stage directions with no significant additions or explanations.

Some candidates showed a better understanding of Berkoff's style, and developed appropriate ideas for the appearance and movement of the Chorus, as well as for the three 'principal' actors in the extract. Better answers contained precise details for how Titorelli's 'paintings' would be created on stage, while others just referred to 'the next painting' or 'the dirty picture'.

Many candidates failed to offer an interpretation of any kind.

**Question 17: *Our Country's Good***

Strengths and weaknesses as pages 13 and 14.

This was a very popular question, and generally it was quite successfully attempted.

Examiners reported seeing some very good answers which dealt imaginatively with the delivery of text and the creation of rounded characters.

Most candidates were able to identify the scene's significance in relation both to the 'redemptive power of theatre' and to the journey that the convicts and Ralph had travelled together.

Some candidates insist on trotting out all the themes of the play, whichever extract is set.

Good answers dealt with the whole extract, but the majority of answers omitted one or two of the key aspects, such as Sideway's giving out of the salt, Wisehammer's controversial Prologue or Ralph's pep talk.

Often, there would have been time to deal with all of the extract had the candidate not already spent too long on irrelevant matters, such as the characters' biographical parallels from *The Fatal Shore* or Timberlake Wertenbaker's preference for intimate settings.

Weaker answers gave only very general ideas for the realisation of the extract, and spent too long discussing set and technical aspects and drawing union jacks. A significant number of candidates mistook the setting of the play, setting it on the ship or in Ralph's tent; one candidate believed that Dabby was a man. These are very basic errors.

Time and again, candidates wrote about the presence of the Aborigine, who the writer has told us 'drifts' off in this section.

A few answers, very unfortunately, answered on the wrong section, having failed to read the question carefully. Similarly, some answers did not fully understand the context of the section, and they described the convicts in their rags, irrespective of their imminent performance of the Recruiting Officer. Only the very best answers revealed which parts each convict was playing in Ralph's production, and how that role would determine what they were wearing 'back-stage'.

Weaker answers offered discussion of Brechtian theory at the expense of exploring the play, and some discussed the political and historical context of the play (frequently inaccurately) with insufficient application to the question.

### **Question 18: *Coram Boy***

Strengths and weaknesses as pages 13 and 14.

A few sound responses were seen on this text showing a good knowledge of the text and of Edmundson's style.

In addition to some extremely narrative approaches to the extract that did little more than repeat what was happening in the scenes, there were some inventive approaches for achieving the fluidity required between the scenes, and for achieving such effects as the "dead state".

Far too many candidates omitted Mrs Lynch, Thomas, Miss Price and Mr Claymore. If they did include them, they didn't explain where they entered from. Or they appeared at a loss to their significance.

Many candidates revealed very restricted understanding of staging in general, and of the use of a revolve, in particular.

In some cases there had evidently been some impressive and useful research, but this was not always the case. Too many candidates identified pieces of music that would come from the ballroom, without giving thought to the occasion – or the time in which the play is set.

Music is so important to this play that it is important that candidates have an understanding of the sort of pieces that might be used and their potential effectiveness. There were also some quite inappropriate ideas for how Alexander and Melissa might dance.

The majority of candidates showed a good sense of the context of the action, and identified the importance of showing two wretched examples of the father/son relationship almost side-by-side – parental responsibility being a key theme of the play. Other candidates completely missed the note of triumph in Sir Williams's congratulation, and saw it as a move towards reconciliation.

Use of costume was generally well-considered and was more successful than set design, showing an apt awareness of period setting, and establishing characters and their position in society reasonably well, although Melissa's status was not always understood.

Many candidates focused on the technical demands of the section, such as achieving the transitions and providing recognisable locations. These answers adopted a somewhat mechanical approach to the play as a whole, ignoring the minutiae of the action in this scene in order to concentrate on a whole play view.

Some candidates wrote about the beginning of Scene Twenty, and their work attracted very little credit.

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

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

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