



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
June 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**

DRAM 3 is now a firmly established paper; this June 2012 paper is its sixth series and students' papers are beginning to reflect a more wide-spread sense of confidence about the precise demands of each section.

Inevitably, examiners saw a range of responses but they saw fewer papers bearing the hallmark of incomprehension about the requirements of the individual sections. Thus, in Section A they saw less gratuitous historical and/or biographical material. In Section B they saw fewer answers that failed to focus on the printed extract. Unfortunately, there were still too many students who answered on an extract from the corresponding page numbers in their own texts; this significant error resulted in very low achievement.

Both sections of the paper require students to reveal a coherent creative overview of their chosen plays; Section B requires an interpretation of the extract set. The best students met the requirements of the paper with some assurance.

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 students were able to shape their knowledge and understanding to address the precise demands of their chosen questions and to maintain a tight focus upon these throughout their answers.

Weaker scripts were often imbalanced and also more likely to contain under-developed and/or very brief responses which were often very superficial in content or approach.

Successive reports have highlighted the need for students to support their answers with integrated quotation from the text to support the interpretation or argument of the answer. Quotations should be brief but complete (rather than truncated to the opening and closing word of a line of text which invariably adds little to the sense of immediacy required.)

Examiners reported seeing a number of scripts that failed to provide the necessary support of reference to specific moments from the set text in action in both parts of the paper.

In Section B, some students referred exclusively to line numbers rather than to lines of speech, this is unhelpful and does not bring the text to life. A director would never tell an actor to smile 'on line 41', for example.

Students 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. There has been an increase in assertion this year which often betrays a lack of understanding on the part of the student.

Examiners reported seeing some answers where students offered inappropriate ideas with no attempt made to justify them or, if there was an attempt made it was largely unconvincing. This was very noticeable in some Section B responses where the complete cohort of students interpreted the given section in similar but inappropriate ways.

Nevertheless, examiners reported seeing many very good answers containing sensitive responses to the studied texts supported by intelligent discussion and effective textual references.

While there was clear evidence that some students were quite unfamiliar with the intricacies of the chosen plays, where students had engaged fully with their Section B texts, their directorial approaches were often very impressive.

There were also significant numbers of fairly narrative answers which did little more than relay the events of the printed extract scene lacking both justification and invention.

As in previous series, some students under-achieved because they appeared not to have a sound understanding of the original context of their selected plays.

The demand in Section B that students should include a sketch was often not met and there were quite a number of students who penalised themselves by the omission of a sketch/diagram to support their design ideas.

As has been reported on many occasions, some weaker students revealed an inadequate understanding of design fundamentals.

Examiners also reported seeing some sketches, plans and diagrams which were not labelled usefully or were very small indeed and were therefore of little help in supporting the answers offered. Others were clearly not appropriate for the section of the text printed on the paper.

Students need to be reminded that both the clarity of their expression and their accuracy in the use of specialist theatre terminology is taken into account in the assessment of their responses. Examiners noted a continuing decline in the accurate use of terminology as students struggle to use the most basic of theatre terminology accurately.

## **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 any clearly identified preferred effects to be created through the direction of Vindice and Lussorioso.

Another disappointing feature of many students' work was their reluctance or inability to quote from the play to support their ideas.

Better answers were clear in their purpose and nominated several effects which were appropriate and, equally importantly, achievable within the two scenes that the student had chosen to direct.

Some students read the question carelessly and wrote about a single scene or about too many separate scenes. Other careless students wrote about the opening scene where Vindice and Lussorioso do not interact and then focussed on each of the characters' asides.

Very good answers were seen where students explored Lussorioso's sexual ambivalence and his ignorance of whom he was really addressing/engaging when he hired Vindice to do his bidding.

Some illogical answers affirmed Lussorioso's homosexuality without recognising the fact that he was employing Vindice to procure Castiza for his sexual pleasure.

Students sometimes chose their two 'sections' from different parts of the same scene, thus depriving themselves of the opportunity to show an 'overview'.

Weaker answers also made little or no reference to the play's period or genre.

There were some unjustified transpositions to a contemporary or alternative setting. These transpositions, which were rarely convincingly justified in the answers, often revealed a complete lack of understanding of the play and its milieu.

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 effects for the audience.

#### **Question 02**

Although not selected by many students, this question produced some imaginative designs for the play with the potential to provide appropriate setting and costume designs.

The first hurdle to be cleared was reading the question closely enough to understand that it demanded an identification of the play's design challenges. These challenges then needed to be met and exemplified in relation to two contrasting scenes.

A number of students offered designs without having identified the challenges of, for example, the multiple settings required, the need for both interior and exterior settings and

the need for quick transitions. Other challenges included differentiation of characters through costume, especially the need to distinguish between the three 'sets' of 'sons' – legitimate, illegitimate and step.

As mentioned above, students often attempted to modernise the set and costume and where this was integrated into meeting a challenge – for example, of making the play accessible to a modern audience, or highlighting a particularly universal theme – this was an acceptable approach. Too often students simply got down a pre-conceived design concept with little attention paid to the word 'challenges' in the question.

Nevertheless, there was evidence of some careful thought about the overall design for this play with careful attention accorded to use of space, to scale, colour and texture in the ideas for setting. Costume ideas were occasionally very well-conceived and detailed.

Better students who introduced anachronistic costumes or accessories into an otherwise mainly Jacobean setting always remembered to justify their additions.

## ***Tartuffe***

### ***Question 03***

This was the more popular question with students showing a good degree of comic invention in some instances.

The scenes where Elmire and Tartuffe interact are full of comic potential but these were not always fully exploited. Some students were able to identify comic potential with ease but were less well equipped to create comedy through their specific directions for the chosen scenes.

Some students' insistence on making links with Commedia more often than not leads to problems. Usually they cannot make these associations relevant to the question. At their worst they lead to inappropriate performance ideas, especially when there is simply a vague notion that Commedia means exaggeration. This was frequently the case here, especially with Tartuffe.

Good answers identified and took the opportunity to make satirical points through the use of the rosary beads, cross, prayer or religious gesture in the course of Tartuffe's attempts at seduction.

The funniest answers recognised the farcical nature of the two scenes and were able to steadily build the comic tension. Weaker answers had bizarre and outrageous performance ideas (especially for Tartuffe) from the outset, which left them nowhere to go. Sometimes this arose from misunderstanding, such as believing that in Act Four Scene Five Tartuffe enters with the immediate expectation of a sexual adventure.

As has been remarked upon in previous reports on this play, some students made some outrageous suggestions for Tartuffe's physical assaults upon Elmire which would be unlikely to be tolerated by that good lady at any point in the text and which would hardly be considered appropriate for an audience of this classical text, however liberal in their thinking. Full frontal nudity and attempted rape are not universally recognised as comical devices and students needed to be a little more circumspect in the acts that they foisted on their unsuspecting 'audiences'.

However, there were some ingenious suggestions for displaying Tartuffe's inability to recognise Elmire's aversion to him and the scene played out in Act Four with Orgon concealed under the table was occasionally treated very effectively with due attention given to the words spoken as well as to the physical possibilities of a comical treatment.

#### **Question 04**

As in previous series, many students who had studied *Tartuffe* devoted too much time and space to peripheral matters rather than tackling the role of Mariane directly.

Thus examiners reported seeing lengthy introductions about Mariane's role as an example of the *Inamorata* of commedia tradition at the expense of exploring potential audience responses to the role at different points in the play. Better answers revealed their knowledge and understanding of the origins of the role concisely and only if they intended to play the role in a way that emphasised their debt to commedia.

As always, better students focused immediately on identifying plausible audience responses to the role and then explored the ways that these could be achieved in practical performance detail linked closely to the delivery of the text.

Most students wrote about Mariane's exchanges with Orgon and Dorine in Act Two; some also included Mariane's comic scene with Valere and good students also considered Mariane's performance in Act Four as she pleads with her father to reconsider the match with Tartuffe.

Good students had considered a range of responses and a range of performance methods, while others stuck doggedly to describing generic aspects such as pace, pitch and volume of delivery which rarely succeeded in creating the sense of a rounded character.

Weaker students merely described the action of the scenes with negligible invention.

#### **The Recruiting Officer**

##### **Question 05**

There were quite a few answers to this question and examiners reported seeing some quite interesting renderings of Worthy. In particular, examiners noted that a number of students explored the implicit irony of his name.

However, there were also numerous answers that betrayed a lack of understanding of the character, especially in terms of his relationships with Plume and with Melinda.

As always, better students focused immediately on identifying appropriate audience responses to the role - which were often quite different at different parts of the play- and then they explored the ways that these could be achieved in practical performance detail linked closely to the delivery of the text, paying equal attention to vocal, physical and facial expression.

Weaker answers failed to provide adequate textual illustration to support their interpretation of the role.

Good answers selected their moments of text judiciously and paid attention to the realisation of these scenes through detailed practical examples. The best examples showed the breadth of the character and of his importance in the development of the play.

Many students concentrated their attention on Worthy's first appearance with Plume and then turned their attention to his brief quarrel with Melinda, followed by the reconciliation scene.

Examiners reported that some students did not seem to understand Worthy's role in the play and a few careless students wrote about Plume throughout.

### **Question 06**

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

Some careless students 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.

Students who wrote about Kite's address to the mob or his dealings with Pearmain and Appletree **before** the arrival of Plume wasted valuable time and space; as did students who wrote about Plume and Jack Wilful. These answers failed to meet the demands of the question and irrelevant sections such as these were disregarded by the examiners.

There were some quite detailed ideas for the casting of the roles which was better when clearly linked to the students' intention to create comedy. Less successful were answers that spent up to half their answers on casting suggestions, none of which appeared to contribute to the comedy inherent in their collusion.

Many students included detailed suggestions for costume; once again, these suggestions were useful where they supported specific directorial ideas; they were less helpful when they were offered, as they most frequently were, as a substitute for purposeful direction of the pair.

Better students referred closely to the text in order to illustrate their answer and they gave appropriate attention to the delivery of specific lines. The question focus on 'collusion' also invited reference to nods, winks, shrugs, muffled laughter and other signs that might pass between the pair but which were not intended to be seen by the gullible folk being colluded upon. Better students made much of these aspects in an effective and comical way.

The text offers a range of opportunities but some students appeared not to know the play well enough to locate appropriate examples.

Weaker answers did not use the text appropriately to lend immediacy to their suggestions which were not always entirely appropriate. Better students always considered the style of the play and reflected it in their directorial ideas.



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

### **Question 07**

This play was one of the most popular choices in Section A and examiners reported seeing many comical suggestions in responses as well as plenty of less inventive attempts.

Examiners continue to report students' apparent inability to distinguish between purposeful reference to the commedia tradition, either offered in a brief introduction to the answer or as part of the developing response, and superfluous background material that served only to distract the student from the focus of the question.

The history of commedia and contemporary attitudes to Goldoni's introduction of script often fell into the second category. In some cases, students spent up to 3 pages of their answer books rambling on the innamorati and only found their focus on Silvio and Clarice at the end of their answers. This work was invariably under-developed.

As with the question on *The Recruiting Officer*, some careless students 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.

There were some quite detailed ideas for the casting of the roles; often these were linked to commedia conventions. They were occasionally linked to the purpose of the question; to create comedy. Less successful were answers that spent up to half their answers on casting and costume suggestions, none of which appeared to contribute to the creation comedy or to presenting the relationship between the young lovers.

Many students focused on the opening scene which was perhaps a logical starting point but more shrewd responses explored the scenes with more comic potential, for example, where Clarice offers to kill herself in Act Two and the scene of reconciliation in Act Three. The selection of examples often revealed the more and less discriminating students. Where comedy is the focus, the more opportunities for comedy the better.

Some students seemed to have difficulty keeping focused on both relationship and comedy, often discussing one without (adequately) the other.

Some made the characters more like Zanni in their mad antics, which is to misunderstand their role. Silvio and Clarice can be funny without being clowns. We need them to retain their identity as innamorati if Truffaldino and Smeraldina are going to work as a comic parallel.

Students need to take care to use standard English precisely. References to Clarice as "ditzzy" or to a "Disney princess" effect were not helpful.

Transposing the action might work well, but care should be taken not to stray from the play in order to explain and justify what often turned out to be a pointless transposition.

### **Question 08**

Examiners saw several very successful, and some very comical, responses to this question although there were also many disappointing answers offered that revealed a lack of understanding of the character of Smeraldina.

Many answers on Smeraldina also suffered from over-long preambles about which commedia character she was derived from; often, to the detriment of the answer.

In casting the role, while students' ideas for her height and overall build tended to vary, there was almost universal agreement over the size of her chest, though the suggestion that she had had silicone implants betrayed a lack of understanding of the period in which the play is set. Similarly, the idea that she would wear a purple dress or have high heels seemed inappropriate for a woman of her position.

There was some good comedy and it was pleasing to see that many more students had a genuine feeling for the style. While it is expected that students will acknowledge the influence and possibly use commedia technique, it should be remembered that Goldoni wrote the script so that the players wouldn't be able to indulge in improvisation and excess. Sometimes improvisation was being suggested to a degree that would subvert the script.

Undoubtedly, Smeraldina is the mouthpiece for some anti-chauvinistic political statements; but students who referred to this aspect of her character at the expense of comedy tended to miss their way.

Good answers recognised Smeraldina's 'common sense' rather than depicting her 'intelligence' and they recognised her function in moving the plot to its final conclusion.

These answers developed her role with Truffaldino effectively and showed the importance of this relationship to the success of performance.

Better answers used Smeraldina's feisty stand against male domination as part of their comic interpretation of the role.

Some students failed to write about three separate scenes.

## **Lady Windermere's Fan**

### ***Question 09***

This was the less popular option on this play although it elicited a fair number of responses, covering a wide range of achievement.

The question required students to discuss how their setting design ideas would meet Wilde's requirements as well as suggesting an appropriate period and style for the play. Two designs, for different locations, were asked for. There were not many answers seen that fulfilled each of the requirements in equal measure.

Most students were able to outline a setting design for two separate locations. The most popular choices were designs for Acts Two and Three.

Many students revealed some knowledge of the style of high quality furnishings in the late nineteenth century but few students went beyond listing the items of furniture that Lord Windermere might have in his drawing room/ballroom or which Lord Darlington might have in his more bachelor-styled apartments. Limited stage sense was in evidence in the majority of answers.

Good students began by referring to the style and period of the play, they outlined some design fundamentals, including entrances and exits and they considered transitions. Better students thought about the practicality of the ballroom and referred to access to the off-stage terrace area and they supplied an appropriate hiding place for Lady Windermere and Mrs Erlynne in Lord Darlington's rooms.

Good students always provided a sketch to support their ideas.

Weaker answers often failed to supply a sketch and, not infrequently, they ignored the demand of the question to meet Wilde's requirements. Some students who opted for this question appeared not to have given much thought to the design requirements of the play prior to the examination but this did not deter them from attempting the challenge.

### **Question 10**

This was the more popular question and a considerable range of responses was seen. Some students dealt in vague terms with casting although the majority offered useful and clear ideas.

Better answers didn't just justify their casting decisions in terms of individual character traits, but in terms of how the Windermers might look together, seem outwardly a perfect couple etc. Knowledge of the social context would be used to explain how a husband and wife relationship might be expected to function in their kind of society. Knowledge of their circumstances, their wealth, their social position, the fact that they haven't been married for very long and that they have a child might all have been put to good use.

The overwhelming choice of scenes was the Act One bank book scene and the Act Four reconciliation. This was fine, but what students tended to do was describe an argument and a making up without actually discussing the nature of the relationship. Accordingly there were a lot of very simplistic answers.

In talking about the temporary breakdown, we might have expected reference to trust, honour, dignity, betrayal for instance.

Better responses paid attention to the significance of Lady Windermere's coming of age, the degree to which she grows up and in turn the possibly less paternalistic attitude of Windermere.

In Act Four, the better students didn't just describe how they were nice to each other but explained how the Windermers now had a new, possibly stronger relationship, borne out of the individuals' improved self-knowledge.

Many students failed to provide a context for the reconciliation. Many failed to acknowledge that the 'new', improved relationship was founded upon secrets.

A few answers showed significant misreading of the text and interpreted Windermere as a bully, particularly with reference to his addressing Lady Windermere as "child". Good answers showed a clear understanding of the moral attitudes of the time and put the Windermers' initial relationship into context.

Several answers indicated Windermere's sincerity in his interaction with Lady Windermere in Act One, and her initial and unreasonable suspicion. A few dealt too long on her actions with the bank book, and placed this out of context.

Another difficulty with some of the answers seen was that students selected very brief moments of text, sometimes only one line, which did not allow them to develop their responses in appropriate depth and detail.

Good answers showed a secure understanding of the lightness of touch needed in performance. Weaker answers tended to melodrama, often citing this as an aspect of Wilde's style, but applying this inappropriately to performance.

### ***The Seagull***

#### **Question 11**

This was a popular question and, as with previous questions, demanded focus on interaction. It also required students to explain what effects they wished to achieve for the audience through their presentation of the interaction between mother and son.

This posed problems for some students who tended to write quite generally about the relationship between Arkadina and Konstantin, but focused almost exclusively on eliciting different audience responses to the individual characters. Sometimes this implied that certain effects were being created, but not always. In any event, it mostly betrayed a lack of strategic directorial thinking, even though there might be some good moments of invention.

Ideas about period and style were sometimes introduced clumsily. Casting a man of twenty-five to play Konstantin is not in itself evidence of a naturalistic approach, and information about men's fashions in Russia at the time is probably only of use if the character in question is going to wear them as part of a strategy for creating an effect for the audience during the interaction of Arkadina and Konstantin.

Good answers were very aware of the subtlety of the relationship between Konstantin and Arkadina and often referred to non-verbal interaction, which was entirely appropriate.

However, weaker answers did not make the characters response to each other sufficiently specific, but tended to rely on focusing upon one character or the other at a time. In particular, weaker answers lacked understanding of and sympathy for Arkadina, and her characterisation often ignored the subtlety of the text.

Several students did not develop the directorial focus demanded by the question.

Students need to be reminded that references to the application of Stanislavski's ideas attract no credit.

Selection of scenes was generally useful and demonstrated an appropriate over-view of the relationship. Very good answers often explored the similarities between the characters, developing their jealousies and squabbles in useful context.

#### **Question 12**

This was a very popular question which was frequently successfully answered. The interpretation of Nina was generally very secure although a number of answers gave rather one dimensional interpretations of the role which failed to realise her growth and development through the play.

The majority of students directed her differing behaviour in three sections but some failed to establish a clear overview of the character and her motivation.

There was some useful work on Nina's early appearance and some subtle interpretation of her relationship with Konstantin. Interaction with Trigorin was generally successful, although

weaker answers offered an unlikely development in her character and portrayed her as something of a coquette or, more inappropriately, a tease.

Good answers focussed on the growth of Nina's character from a young girl who is star-struck by the celebrities who live on the lake and childish in her quest for 'fame' to a broken but more mature woman who has learned the value of endurance.

Many good students attempted to reveal this through both her appearance but more importantly her behaviour and interactions with others. Weaker answers tended to generalisation and many suggested a total lack of control at the end of the play; some seemed not to understand Chekhov's intentions to show Nina as a survivor.

Better answers offered appropriate ideas for casting, vocal quality and changes in appearance and costume. The best answers revealed a complete command of the text and the text was used throughout to support ideas.

In good answers these suggestions also showed understanding of period. Weaker answers tended to generalisation and melodrama.

Most answers understandably dealt with Nina's first and last scenes. Her scene with Konstantin and the dead seagull in Act Two was the most popular "middle" scene; occasionally, students went on to include Nina's contrasting behaviour with Trigorin.

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

The question set in Section B is the same for all set texts and for the past 5 series this report has attempted to clarify the importance of students focussing on the extract and not on importing pages of pre-prepared material into their answers.

This message is finally getting through but not universally.

Examiners still reported on students who:

- failed to open their exam booklets to find the set extract but answered instead on the corresponding pages from the texts they had with them in the exam room. This anomaly was actually more widespread than ever in this series
- wrote **exclusively** about staging issues :– 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, often betraying a very limited understanding of how casting and costume convey meaning to an audience
- included reference 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, but not about how to achieve that in practical directorial terms
- 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
- over-loaded their answers with references to research that was not applied
- failed to include a useful sketch.

Better answers:

- offered an interpretation of the printed extract that revealed their understanding of the extract and of the play from which it was taken
- covered the entire extract
- considered the audience experience that they were aiming to achieve through their direction
- attempted to communicate meaning to the audience through each of the directorial decisions they made
- included clear evidence of **relevant** research embedded in their answers, where appropriate, informing their practical, directorial ideas
- provided sketches that were of adequate size – about a third of a page- they were clearly labelled, and that related to the necessary traffic of the scene while being compatible with the play as a whole.

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

Good answers considered showed a clear awareness of the importance of the specified section and its impact within the context of the whole play. Weaker answers did not cover the whole section, thereby missing several important exchanges and failing to realise, in particular, the interaction between the Bride and the Bridegroom.

Some sketches were not very clearly realised and were difficult to follow. This was also true for the other questions in this section. Only a few students considered the fact that the Bride's home is in a "cave" or offered ideas that reflected the poverty of the Andalusian

setting. As noted in the general comments, several weaker students devoted too much time to setting, design and technical support, and gave too little attention to the direction of the actors.

Good answers showed a secure understanding of the style of the piece and its potential in performance. A few weaker students were prone to assertion, not developing performance ideas likely to achieve their aims. Some answers commented usefully on Lorca's use of symbol and integrated this helpfully in direction and design, commenting on the use of colour and the sound of hooves to underpin the action on stage.

In this, more than in other questions in section B, students often selected from the extract rather than attempting an over-view. The relationship with the Bride and the Mother was usually covered, but the latter part of the section was often missing.

Good answers created a sense of the formality of the meeting of the two families and they also created a sense of foreboding, taking into account each character's contribution.

Some were impressive in the way that they picked up on fine detail and translated it into meaningful action. It helped that these students often possessed a good performance vocabulary in order to describe the Bride's subtle shifts in mood. Those who hadn't fell back on references to the Bride's pursed lips (commonly writing 'pierced lips') and twitchy fingers, which are fine indicators of mood in themselves, but not helpful as suggestions for every other line of text.

Not everyone had a firm knowledge of the play, including students who had the Mother and Father going home together.

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

As in previous series, many students wrote at excessive length about Brechtian theory, about *Verfremdung* and *späss* and gestic acting. This occasionally helped better students to interpret the extract and to clarify the political thrust of the play as a whole. More frequently, the references to Brechtian theory were based on a superficial understanding of Brecht's practice and purpose and there were many inaccurate statements made about his theatrical aims.

Some students, for example, appeared to believe that Brecht wanted his audiences to be physically uncomfortable when watching his plays and these poor audiences were placed on bamboo mats and forced to follow the action taking place **behind** them; the twisting of their necks adding, naturally, to the *verfremdungseffekt*.

As with Question 13, some students failed to cover the whole section, often missing key aspects such as Mrs Yang's lines or the song. Weaker answers often neglect the direction of the songs.

Some students offered very simplistic interpretations of the play that were not infrequently based on manifest political naivety.

Good answers offered detailed performance ideas clearly linked to text and developed, particularly, the roles and the relationship between Sun and Shui-Ta with some detail and insight. Casting and reference to appearance in these answers was made precisely relevant to the printed extract rather than being seen as a rather easy way to fill three pages.

Stronger answers made useful reference to the dual role of Shen-Teh and Shui-Ta and its relevance to this extract.

Weaker answers offered generalised direction with limited direct reference to the text, often not linking performance ideas to specific intentions, but offering assertions instead. These answers did not consider the effect on the audience in sufficient detail. Some students did not seem to have a clear idea of the importance either of the substance or of the significance of the section to the play as a whole.

Students need to justify all their directorial decisions and ideas for setting clearly rather than assuming that a generalised “oriental” or urban culture will be seen as appropriate.

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

Examiners continue to see some exceptionally sensitive answers on this text.

However, it is also a text that attracts some of the most superficial responses in Section B where students indulge themselves in fanciful casting, costume and setting ideas.

The majority of answers started with a sketch of the stage plan and some reference to Miller’s style. However, the quality of sketches for this question was very variable and often sight lines and scale were insufficiently considered.

For reasons best known to themselves, many students do not feel ready to address the specific extract’s demands until they have cast and costumed every member of the cast down to hair colour and pattern of dress/skirt/shirt.

Invariably this is a complete waste of time and often betrays more uncertainty than knowledge and understanding of the period and of the milieu of the Carbone family.

Good answers offered very clear understanding of the relationships between the characters and there was some extremely subtle and detailed work outlining the interactions during the extract.

In the main, examiners reported seeing some very useful work on the early part and the closing section of the extract. Some answers lacked subtlety, particularly in the realisation of Eddie.

Good answers established the context of the extract and revealed their understanding of how as a director they could signal the beginnings of the relationship between Rodolpho and Catherine. Weaker answers failed to recognise this as a “beginning”; they thought that the couple were getting ready for their first ‘date’ – hence the high heels. There were also some unusual interpretations of liking sugar, which were inappropriate.

Weaker answers did not address the appearance of Alfieri, or did so in a very restricted way. Students should be aware that the whole of the chosen section is significant and should attempt to address it.

Weaker answers were also often prefaced by ‘research’ into McCarthy and/or the ‘American Dream’ which was then not utilised in the envisaged performance. Many students misunderstood the familial relationships in the play, surprisingly believing that Eddie and Beatrice are Catherine’s mother and father.



**Question 16: *The Trial***

Although examiners saw some excellent answers on this text, there were also a large number of very disappointing answers to this question, showing only a tenuous understanding of Berkoff's style and some considerable muddle in terms of direction.

Most students showed some understanding of Berkoff's style and developed appropriate ideas for the appearance and movement of the characters. However, several answers assumed an awareness of the original production or its revival, to the detriment of direction and setting.

In particular, weak answers commented on the use of frames for the chorus, without describing what these frames consisted of and how they could be utilised. Few commented on what they might represent.

Some answers were supported with sketches which showed blocking and movement. Some of these sketches were detailed and useful, being well developed in the body of the answers, but these responses were in a minority.

Generally there was appropriate interpretation of K and some understanding of the significance of the extract in his journey through the play. Less well developed was the interpretation of Huld, which was frequently given as melodramatic and physically disgusting.

Good answers did not simply fall back unthinkingly on the original production, but responded creatively to this challenging text. They placed the scene in context and took us through each stage of it.

These explained who Leni was, who Huld was, why K was there and what the chorus members were doing at every turn. Weaker students took a great deal for granted, or simply didn't understand the play.

Good answers brought out the voyeuristic aspects of the chorus and the increasingly claustrophobic atmosphere and the chorus members' movements were clearly described and sometimes vividly realised.

Answers to this question were not, generally, the most successful in this section of the paper, largely because students did not justify their interpretations sufficiently but tended to rely on the examiners' knowledge of the original production and Berkoff's style.

Students sometimes merely repeated Berkoff's stage directions without any further explanation; some students referred to Kafka as the playwright throughout.

A tiny minority of students who attempted this question reached the end of the extract and considered the significance of Huld's speech. Even in good answers, the focus tended to be on K and Leni and on the relationship between Huld and Leni. Better answers showed understanding of that relationship.

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

This was by far the most popular Section B text and drew a wide range of responses.

Many answers offered very general realisation of the printed extract and spent too long discussing set and technical aspects.

The reliance upon background information about the 'real life' people that Wertebaker based her characters upon was a significant factor in the under-achievement of many students who simply wasted time by telling us that Dabby was really from Cornwall or that Sideway really did start his own theatre company.

Too many students still devote too much of their responses to background research and general setting. A disappointingly significant number of students set the play on the ship, despite its appearing only in the first scene of the play.

There was generally a good understanding of the playwright's intentions in this extract and good answers gave useful direction to realise this. However, many answers gave an uneven treatment of the extract, suggesting a lack of exam practice in timing and question interpretation. In particular, the Aborigine was rarely well directed and many students used this section to make assertions about colonisation which were not supported with practical detail.

There were some good answers on the latter part of the text, but several students failed to fully realise the interaction between Mary, Ralph and Wisehammer, putting a rather blunt and unsubtle interpretation to it. The character of Dabby generally deserved more attention.

Many students included a gallows on their sketches of the stage, even though Ketch complains, earlier in Scene 6, that he doesn't have one.

There was, also, alarmingly, much confusion about identity. Ketch, in some answers, was Harry's superior officer. In others, Harry was a convict. Quite often, Harry had the same uniform as Ralph.

Many answers focused on Liz or Harry in the first part and Ketch was overlooked. The Aborigine also received scant treatment at times, with possibly some attention to how the transition would be achieved, but little consideration of what he said or what it signified. On the other hand, it was a mark of the very good answers that this could be dealt with sensitively and creatively.

Successful Interpretations of the final section got to grips with the detail and subtlety of the relationships and notions of love.

Some looked no further than the idea that the extract showed how the play had developed the convicts and officers.

A small minority of students explored the transformation of the convicts in terms of their ability to communicate with one another through language rather than violence. Some recognised their interrogation of the play's meaning to be a sign of their growth towards equality with Ralph.

Surprisingly, although many students spent a good deal of precious time discussing the 'Brechtian' features of the play, few discussed the significance of the scene titles for Scenes 6 and 7 that they had chosen to be presented to the audience on 'placard' or screen.

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

This was not a very popular choice but some good answers were seen that were often very sympathetic to the content of the extract, showing a good knowledge of the text and of Edmundson's style.

Good answers showed a particularly useful understanding of the pace of the text and the demands of integrating action and technical effects. However, in a disappointing number of answers there was more focus on set changes and technical effects, and direction of the actors received too little attention. Unfortunately several students misinterpreted demands of setting and the style of the piece, suggesting naturalistic and unwieldy interpretations.

The majority of students showed a good sense of context and identified the importance of the extract in their direction. In particular these answers identified the relationships between the characters and the importance of the subtext. There was some very good work on the middle section of the extract, showing some delicacy in direction of Toby.

Many students gave a sympathetic and quite detailed realisation of this role, and many also showed a good understanding of the interaction between the boys and the complications of their circumstances. Some did not appear to understand the implications of the fact that Toby does not have a room of his own.

Several answers made useful reference to the use of sound and lighting, usefully linking technical effects to the direction of the actors. Some very weak answers showed only a limited understanding of the style of music or the historical context. Several answers did not take the stage directions into full account, particularly of Alexander's playing, which restricted their effectiveness.

Better answers expanded on the stage directions and indicated a clear interpretation of them with appropriate audience response. These answers were generally very practical, taking audience experience into full account and considering the pace and impact of the play's narrative.

Final sections of Section B texts always tend to suffer from lack of time, and Gaddarn's scene was no exception.

There was some excellent creativity in the ideas for set and lighting and it was very pleasing to see schools/colleges moving away from uniform approaches and allowing students to offer their individual ideas. This led to some nice touches, sometimes inventively changing where Toby hid, for instance.

Then again, some approaches were less useful. Some students suggested using multiple levels, but offered no indication of how they would work practically. Another idea seen this series was to base the setting on a Hogarth painting, which might sound like a good idea, but its appropriateness was not evident and no justification was offered beyond the fact that Hogarth was a benefactor of The Coram Hospital.

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

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

UMS conversion calculator [www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion](http://www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion)