



Teacher Resource Bank

A-level Drama and Theatre Studies

DRAM1B Additional Exemplar Answers:

A Doll's House



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SAMPLE CANDIDATE ANSWERS DRAM1B

INTRODUCTION

The sample answers and commentaries which follow are provided to illustrate the application of the DRAM1B mark scheme.

Unit 1, Section B - Candidate 1

The answer of Candidate 1 is to a question from the January 2012 DRAM1B question paper.

CANDIDATE 1

Explain how you would perform the role of Dr Rank in his first and final appearances in order to highlight how the character develops over the course of the play.

(Dr Rank's first appearance is in Act One and his final appearance is in Act Three.)

'A Doll's House' is a naturalistic play, written by Henrik Ibsen in 1879, that depicts the life of Nora, a 19th Century housewife, and how she went behind her husband's back and borrowed money - introducing the theme of deception into the play. Ibsen intended for his audience to connect with characters and be convinced by their performance, in keeping with the naturalistic style, whilst reflecting on the themes of marriage, deception and treatment of women within marriage. It is these intentions I will be considering when I explore the role of Dr Rank in Act 1 and Act 3 in order to highlight his development. I will be staying true to the 19th Century context and the naturalistic style.

Comment [JE1]: Relevant context.

Dr Rank's initial line in the play is 'Oh, I beg your pardon. I seem to be de trop here too'. I would say this line in a well educated tone, but a loud volume so as to announce my presence. I would stay standing in the doorway so as to suggest I am waiting to be invited in and therefore aware of social expectations. Moreover, upon entering the room I would walk with my hands behind my back and in an even-rhythmed gait so as to show I am quite controlled and reserved, typical of a 19th Century gentleman. However, I would slightly hunch my shoulders forward and speak in a

slower pace compared with the other characters, suggesting I am older and therefore creating greater believability when Mrs Linde thinks Dr Rank is Nora's secret 'older gentleman' lover who dotes upon her in Act 2.

Comment [JE2]: Understanding is well demonstrated through appropriate performance detail.

Upon saying the line 'Howeverretched I feel, I still want to go on being tortured for as long as possible' I would talk in an amused tone, with loud volume, and nudging Nora whilst beaming a wide smile at her with raised eyebrows - indicating I am telling a joke. The audience would warm to the character of Dr Rank, becoming engaged by his joyous personality and smiling along with him. This is as naturalism intends but also increases the tragedy of his death in Act 3. I would try to really emphasise my amused tones and loud volumes in this moment so as to highlight the contrast between this and his sombre dying self in Act 3, depicting his characters development throughout the play.

Comment [JE3]: Apt.

Comment [JE4]: Understanding.

Comment [JE5]: Point needs a little development but is focused on the demands of the question.

Later in this Act, Nora states that she would love to say 'Bloody Hell!' to Torvald. I would say my line 'Are you mad?' in a raised volume, fast pace and shocked tone - suggesting my disbelief. I would take a step back, raise my eyebrows, open my mouth, and shake my head, further depicting my shock and therefore suggesting my understanding of social expectations at the time and how this would be against the 19th Century rules of marriage. In doing this, I would also be creating a contrast between myself and Nora, showing that Nora is not as socially aware as Dr Rank and therefore highlighting her naeivity and childlike nature. This increases the believability that she would borrow money in the first place and sets the audience up to be shocked when she leaves so maturely at the end of the play, allowing her performance to be more convincing, as naturalism intends.

Comment [JE6]: Knowledge.

Comment [JE7]: This needs more close focus on the question but reveals understanding.

Comment [JE8]: Focus on question?

Rank then says 'say it. Here he is.' As I say this I would use a loud volume and suggestive tone, pinching Nora's arm to indicate I am teasing her. Moreover, I would lock eyes with her and the audience would recognise the intensity with which I looked at her, holding the eye contact for a prolonged time. This, plus the affectionate tones I would employ when talking to her, indicate Dr Rank's care for Nora and so increases the believability in Act 2 when he

admits his love for her, in keeping with naturalism. Moreover, the audience would be warmed by the moment, it appealing to their romantic side, and so would increase the tragedy of Rank's death. A 19th Century audience would be particularly affected as Romantasm was at large at the time and so they would have been expecting a saviour figure for Nora, assuming it was Dr Rank, therefore again increasing the tragedy of his death. The contrast between this moment and his sad sombre persona in Act 3 shows his development of character.

Comment [JE9]: Clear understanding of character and of his function.

Comment [JE10]: Clear.

Dr Rank should be far more crippled in Act 3, I would hunch my shoulders and walk with a limp, taking in a croaked tone, with quiet volume and frequent pauses, showing my development from Act 1 and that my disease is taking hold of me. Moreover, I would have a furrowed brow, depicting the pain my illness is causing me and therefore creating greater believability when Dr Rank announces his death, allowing for the audience to be better convinced as naturalism intends. This new image of Dr Rank would provoke great empathy within the audience for him, increasing the tragedy of the play. Before Dr Rank leaves in Act Three, Nora asks what they should dress as for the next party. Dr Rank replies: 'At the next masquerade, I shall be invisible'. This is dramatic irony as Nora does not understand - highlighting her naivety and child-like nature. I would say the line in a slow pace, exhaling a large sigh when finished and looking down at the ground refusing to make eye contact with Nora and maintaining wide proxemics from her. This demonstrates the end of their friendship and my sombre tone highlights my upset at having to leave. This again would provoke great empathy within the audience for me and increase the tragedy of my death. However, upon saying my last line: 'goodbye', I would look up and make eye contact with Nora intensely, demonstrating I do care for her, reaching out and touching her arm. The audience will compare this to Torvald's treatment of Nora in the previous moment, trying to seduce her, creating a feeling of dislike towards Torvald and reflecting on the treatment of women within marriage as Ibsen intended. The sombre dejected attitude of Dr Rank

Comment [JE11]: Poor expression. A little extreme perhaps.

Comment [JE12]: Focus drifting slightly.

Comment [JE13]: Good understanding.

here and his crippled posture show the development of Dr Rank's illness and character throughout the play.

In conclusion, I would use a joyous tone, faster gait, faster paced vocals and beaming smile in Act 1. To contrast, I would use a croaked tone, slow pace, hunched posture, and slow gait in Act 3. This would highlight his development through the play.

Comment [JE14]: Repetition.

CANDIDATE 1

Commentary

- A good effort. Clear sense of development and good focus on the demands of the question. A good range of indicators evident and a clear understanding of character shown. Well referenced to the text, there could be a little more on Act 3.

A02

- Consistent invention
- Very sound theoretical understanding
- Mostly purposeful use of text
- Information is well organised and expression clear.

Mark = 15 out of 17 (Band 1)

A03

- Coherent and compatible ideas
- Purposeful reference to period/genre
- Focused attention on development of character
- A good range of ideas and some clear understanding of the role.

Mark = 28 out of 33 (Band 1)

Total = 43 out of 50

Unit 1, Section B – Candidate 2

The answer of Candidate 2 is to a question from the January 2012 DRAM1B question paper.

CANDIDATE 2

Briefly outline and justify your casting decisions for Nora and Torvald and then explain how you would direct your actors, in the section of Act Two where the couple discuss Krogstad's position at the bank, in order to convey your interpretation of their relationship at this stage in the play.

(This section starts with Torvald's first entrance in Act Two and ends with the arrival of Dr Rank.)

During Helmer's first appearance in Act II, the relationship between him and Nora changes. I would therefore like the audience's perception of it to shift. Initially, in Act I, I would like the audience to dislike duplicitous, saccharine Nora and find Helmer's treatment of her to be masogynistic. All of Act II is a transitional phase, where I would like the audience to start to sympathise with Nora and dislike Helmer. All of this is to give the audience more conflicting emotions about the finale, by making them both sympathise with and dislike these two central figures. Most importantly, I want the audience to feel involved in the relationship, conveyed in a naturalistic style by the actor.

Comment [JE15]: Clear interpretation.

Comment [JE16]: Very focused introduction.

I would cast Helmer the same height as, or even a little shorter, than Nora. I do not want him to be physically dominant over her, to emphasise his emotional hold over her. This also forces the actor to stand away from her or for the actress playing Nora to slump slightly for him to be able to look down on her. I would also use this to contrast him further with Krogstad, who I would cast as tall, around six feet. This also adds to the impression of petty resentment Helmer gives in this interchange with Nora, as though he dislikes Krogstad's physical dominance over him. Nora I would cast as quite thin, with her own or a wig of long dark hair, which the character is very proud of. I want her to look well-cared for both to emphasise her role as a trophy wife and contrast her with Mrs Linde. Helmer I would also cast about 10 years older than Nora, to emphasise his patronising attitude towards her.

Comment [JE17]: Not very clear.

Comment [JE18]: Good.

Comment [JE19]: Generally clear and entirely appropriate casting suggestions.

To show that Helmer is constantly occupied by work, I would have him always carry or wear round (of the period (1879)) spectacles. For his entrance from the "door to the hall" at the centre of the up stage wall, he carries the spectacles in his right hand and his papers in the other. Nora greets him with her hands outstretched to him, crossing from the door she has just closed after Mrs Linde up stage right, but he makes no move to adjust his work to take her hands, so, as she says the line, "No, Kristine. She's helping me", she drops them behind her back, allowing her to look childish as she rolls onto the balls of her feet, standing two feet away from him, shoulders slightly to look up at him, and says in a high pitched voice asking for approval, "I'll look splendid". This mirrors her actions towards him at the start of the play, allowing the change in their relationship to develop for the audience.

Comment [JE20]: Clear and precise intent with well visualised practical suggestions.

To emphasise the change, I would have Nora's playful act dropped, very quickly, in front of Torvald, as she stops him from leaving. Instead of doing it physically, I want her to adjust her posture to straighten her back, stand with her weight balanced, and, in a deeper pitch and louder volume, to create a commanding tone, say "Torvald". His reaction to this should be surprised, conveyed with a quick turn, raised eyebrows, his pitch also deeper. Here, she instantly changes back, but this glimpse of how she is with Krogstad and Mrs Linde should convey to the audience a sense that she is realising how differently she acts with Torvald, helped by a small start from Nora before, high pitched, high paced, and melodic, she leans towards Torvald and adopts her "squirrelkin" attitude again.

Comment [JE21]: Very good, perceptive suggestion.

As I would stage this on a thrust stage, I rarely want the actors to stand too closely, as that effectively removes from view both actors to the majority of the audience. However, I want Nora to draw close to Helmer as she praises him, saying, "If you hadn't been so kind to him, so helpful", said clearly, slowly, elongating the words "kind" and "helpful" to emphasise them. As she says it though, I don't want eye contact. He looks down at the side of her head while she looks around the room, lightly touching his shoulders. Lack

Comment [JE22]: Suggestion is not useful (or particularly appropriate).

of eye contact will show her continued desperation and not limit the action too closely to the two of them, but, especially by placing them at a diagonal to the stage with Nora facing down stage, include the audience.

Comment [JE23]: A well-evoked moment.

Helmer's speech against Krogstad should cause Nora to show disgust and disbelief, new to her. This should form gradually during his speech, but especially towards the end. Torvald's face should be marred by a scowl, addressing not Nora but the room at large, his back to her. She gazes at him, wide-eyed, her jaw setting on his high-pitched, mocking delivery of "Hey, Torvald, Torvald..", and this continues with the lower pitch and slow pace she delivers her line, "Torvald, you're joking". This is a real change in their relationship - Nora viewing him without respect, and this jaw-set attitude should make Helmer angry, with a raised volume and larger gestures than earlier.

Comment [JE24]: Apt and focused on the demands of the question.

At the end of this interchange, their relationship seems to revert a little back to how it began, but I would want a few changes. As he holds her at the waist, she stares at him, her jaw no longer set. But before she couldn't keep eye contact or used it to get what she wanted. Now I want her to look as if she is examining him, trying to gauge something. This causes him to avoid eye contact with her, and adjust his weight uncomfortably. The audience starts to see a change, now, in Helmer, a first for this scene.

Comment [JE25]: Good reference to the development of their relationship in the scene. Worth more use of text.

In conclusion, I do not want the audience to have an overall assumption of how their relationship has changed. I prefer lots of small changes, so the audience is left guessing until the last moment what the characters will do at the end, as they are never assured.

CANDIDATE 2

Commentary

- A clear intention and overview, very well related to the performance of both characters and their relationship in this scene. Seen in context and period with apt reference to casting. There could however be more reference to the text and a slightly greater range of moments considered.

A02

- Consistently and thoughtfully inventive with appropriate casting and directorial ideas
- Very sound theoretical understanding of text – although there could be more use made of it.

Mark = 15 out of 17 (Band 1)

A03

- Coherent and completely compatible ideas
- Focused attention on conveying the relationship between Nora and Torvald.
- Purposeful reference to naturalism throughout
- Detailed and perceptive.

Mark = 30 out of 33 (Band 1)

Total = 45 out of 50