

GCE
Drama Example Materials

Candidate D - Example Work with Commentaries

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The live theatre evaluation

The piece of theatre that I am reviewing is Lloyd Newson's, "To be straight with you," performed by DV8 theatre company. Overall this performance was incredible; not only was it entertaining for a start, but it also captured the audience's imagination and stimulated an emotional response. As an audience member myself, I had my own views on sexuality challenged and so this probed me into thinking again about my attitudes towards these particular issue, which is usually kept hush, hush within British society.

From a structural perspective, the fact that the play was not based upon one character, made it more interesting for the audience. Instead the audience were shown just a short snap shot of many different people's experiences of homophobic abuse. This was an effective technique to use since it kept the audience engaged and interested as something new was happening all the time.

The opening of the play was very interesting from an audience's perspective; the first characters to come on stage were speaking with very thick afro-Caribbean accents therefore making it very difficult for their dialogue to be heard clearly. This firstly drew the audience in, since they had to listen more carefully in order to hear what was being said. But, perhaps more importantly, metaphorically, (to me at least) this was a way of stating from the start of the play that people who are homosexual are not understood by the rest of society and that the rest of society sees them as different and as a minority they are to be targeted!

From here on in, the play starts off slowly, with a series of monologues, with the speakers hidden under dim lighting and the lighting projection of pencil scribbles around their face, as if society is trying to erase them. The reason for dim lighting, it would seem is to present to the audience that these people's sexuality needs to remain hidden in order for them to still remain a part of accepted culture.

Perhaps the most grabbing and shocking message from the play is that of homophobic abuse and violence within families. When a young Muslim man goes to tell his father that he is, "gay," and he doesn't understand; the son has to use the phrase, "batty boy," to even convey meaning to his father, who only knows abusive words when referring to homosexuals. This on its own is comical, however, when the young man, is stabbed by his own father, we the audience are taken by surprise and are shocked that religious texts and morals can fuel such rage and hatred even for somebody's own son.

Perhaps the most intriguing feature about this play, was the way that the balancing act between staying loyal to religion and being an individual (being your own person) was portrayed to the audience. The company used physical theatrical techniques and dance to express the relationship between staying loyal to your religion and giving into your own desires, i.e. being gay. The skipping role scene is a good example of this, an Asian man skips continually throughout the scene, to express his desire to be free to do what he wants to do – to be gay. He occasionally trips and discontinues his skipping, this, I believe could represent how the continually balancing act between religion and being gay sometimes catches him out. I.e. he can always maintain both.

Another interesting moment within the play is when two actors mimic each other every move; this has important meaning since it shows that despite what religion or ethnicity you are a part of, the same issues surrounding sexuality exist. On the other hand however, the fact that they are both dancing still shows that they are determined to break free from society's expectations and to not conform to what family and religion deem as the acceptable way to lead your life.

One part of the play which I felt didn't work was a 1 minute long scene of a woman spinning around. The stage was partially lit with a white light and there was nothing else but the actress spinning around the stage, with her arms bent at the elbow and hands pointing upwards. There was no dialogue or music to accompany this and although after talking to others about what this could have meant, at the time I was left with questions as to what this scene was meant to convey to the audience. In hindsight I can now see that it was meant to convey a sense of desiring freedom. However, I still believe that there could have been more exciting ways of exploring this. For example, the same sort of thing could have been done, but with a circle of actors dressed in white and another actor in the middle dressed in black. The actor in black could have been spinning around and every time that they reached the edge of the circle of other actors could have pushed the actor in black back in to the middle of the circle. The reason for the person in the middle being dressed in black is to clearly convey to the audience the sense of a minority being push, literally, into the spotlight.

Interpretation

Oedipus

"There were two golden brooches, pinned on her dress. He opened them up, held them at arm's length, And then plunged them down into his eyeballs, screaming and groaning that his own guilt and suffering were too great for his eyes to see it, that now they would both be in darkness forever."

Here I would the chorus to create physically the emotion that this speech conveys. Throughout this speech emotional, un-happy, fast paced classical/romantic music should be playing, convey the sense of rushing around in confusion and emotion pain.

On the opening line, "Two golden brooches," I would have two members of chorus dancing gracefully into the audience. Since brooches are supposed to be beautiful and glamorous, I would portray this through dance. Once the line, "plunged them down into his eyeballs," has been said, the dancers would stop and suddenly fall to the ground and scream with pain. I would then present to the audience an Artaudian portrayal of suffering, with the two chorus members squirming on the ground; right within the audience's seating area.

Metamorphosis

I can hear you! You think I can't understand you- simply because you can't understand me, but I can, I can – I can hear every sound you make – every moan."

I would stage this moment with Gregor in the beetle position on the floor. But the lines would not come from him. Instead the lines would be typed on the back wall of the stage. But preceding each line, weird, abstract sounding, guitar effects would be made to convey the feeling and emotion behind each line. For example, one the line, "I can hear you!" I would have very distorted guitar, with lots of special effect, for a short period." However, for less aggressive lines – such as, "you can't understand me," a cleaner sounding guitar would be used and less distortion would be used.

Response to each practitioner

Oedipus and Kneehigh

If taking inspiration from Kneehigh Theatre Company and applying it to, "Oedipus the King," I would concentrate solely on making sure that all elements of the story are clearly explained. Kneehigh's theatre is very much based upon approaching important themes, "in a child like way," (quoted from Emma Rice) therefore; I think that the genre I would explore would be comedy.

I would dress the chorus in expensive looking suits and ties, as if they were lawyers or barristers. I would make this decision because suits clearly provide a visual stimulus for presence, power and authority. It also makes them appear to have a superior knowledge to the characters, which is what the chorus originally had.

I would make choral odes entertaining and light-hearted. Choral odes provide the perfect opportunity to explore Kneehigh's hands on approach and one to one interaction with the audience. The purpose of a choral ode is to inform the audience as to what has happened in the play so far. In my case, I would like to do this in a humorous manner and make it very storytelling like, as is the way with much of Kneehigh's theatre. To do this I would place various members of the chorus in with the audience and get them to sit with the audience members and just simply and casually explain what has happened in a very calm but entertainingly gossiping way. For example, "Ooh aint old Oedipus got himself in a bit of a pickle then...?" and, "He's a goner that one, the God aren't gunna no nonsense from the likes of him." There will be a bit of banter between the chorus members as if disputing Oedipus' fate; like, "but he's bound to be exhaled, aint he?" "Ah I dunno to early to tell... The Gods wont get rid of him without good reason." These lines should be said in a casual voice and un-disturbing. The body language of the chorus members should be un-threatening therefore; actors should literally sit next to audience members and speak to them directly. This bridges the gap between audience member and performer and is overall a huge contrast between the normal scenes.

For a design perspective, I think that it would be effective for all the lights to come up during choral odes. This would be a stark difference from scenes with would be full of menacing looking lighting. The reasons behind the laid back feel is to allow the audience to relax and take stock of the events that have happened. Light-hearted choral odes also provide a distinct contract between the darker and far more intense and tense scenes of Oedipus' decline.

Metamorphosis and Artaud

Metamorphosis is written by Steven Berkoff, who's work was influenced heavily by Artaud's style of theatre anyway, therefore, the script and stage directions at least are going to be written employing Artaudian theories, concepts and ideas.

The scene I have chosen to plan is the part in the play where the family first meet the lodgers. I think this is an interesting scene, since the mood of the house changes drastically once the lodgers have made their stamp on the household.

On arrival the family are very excited about the prospect of, "cash, shoes, beer," etc therefore I think what might be quite effective for this opening sequence of words is for the family to be expressing the ecstatic energy through physical movement, by jumping around and twitching occasionally. They would also run through the audiences seating area, and shout into the faces of the audience; intimidating them with their exhilaration. I would make the delivery of the lines very loud but very slow at the same time, to contrast with how we would usually expect normal people to speak when they are excited (fast). I would also use lighting to convey the feeling of excitement by using brightly coloured light flashing around.

Once the lodgers have made themselves at home, however, the family become almost slave like them. To stage this, I would play around with levels, and have the whole of the family on their hands and knees to signify the fact that they are below the lodgers. The fact then, that the lodgers continually have a high height than them, means that they therefore, clearly have a higher status than the rest of the family.

Non verbal communication

Oedipus – The messenger speech

I chose this scene because I think it has much scope for non verbal communication being very effective as a method of conveying meaning to the audience. The contrasting movements of Oedipus and Teiresias I think provide great interest for the audience and also allow the audience to great differences in personalities.

Text

Oedipus: Do you expect to say such things and not be punished?

Teiresias: The truth protects me, if I tell it honestly.

Oedipus: The truth? What truth are you? You're blind all over, ear, mind as well as eyes.

Teiresias: I pity you. People will scream the same insults at you before too long. Everyone will despise you.

Oedipus: You live in darkness, permanently, you see nothing of the real world! My eyes are open. You cannot hurt me.

Teiresias: How could I? An old man. Its not my business. Apollo will do it. Its in his hands.

Direction/staging

Oedipus: Pacing, hands up in the air to signify power.

Teiresias: Gets up slowly, simultaneously, Oedipus' hands lower, metaphorically he looses his power and status.

Oedipus: Goes up to Teiresias' face, nose to nose, Teiresias doesn't move at all.

Teiresias: Turns away from Oedipus. Sits down again, and faces away.

Oedipus: Follows Teiresias around again, to face him, attempting to intimidate him.

Teiresias: Puts his hands up, almost shrugs as if there is nothing he can do now to help Oedipus; he's beyond help.

Metamorphosis – When Gregor wakes up for the first time as a beetle.

I have chosen this scene because I believe it is the most interesting in the play, the family coming to terms with the absurd reality of what has happened to Gregor over night.

Text

Mr. S: It's half past six. Where's Gregor?

Mrs. S: Half past six – Oh dear – perhaps the alarm clock's not gone off.

Mr. S: Did you set it?

Greta: Set it? Yes. I set it for four o'clock.

Mr + Mrs. S: Four o'clock.

Greta: I set it properly.

Mr. S. That ear splitting noise should have woken him.

Mrs. S. Gregor? (Sung) Oh, Gregor! It's quarter to seven already – shouldn't you have been at work?

Direction/staging

Mr. S: Have Greta with her feet together, and arms poised like clock hands. On the line, "Where's Gregor?" Everyone looks up, turns their head, points with their arm then walks, this happens simultaneously. Repeat 3 times.

Mrs. S: Mrs Samsa pacing across the stage, as she delivers each line.

Mr. S: Rises up high, towering over Greta. Points menacingly.

Greta: Fiddling with her hands, and twiddling her thumbs. Nervously edging away.

Mr + Mrs. S: Mrs Samsa joins in now with Mr Samsa, both threateningly tower over the poor upset Greta, who has been made to feel as if its her fault.

Greta: Greta on the floor, curled up in a ball, shivering.

Mr. S: Encircling Greta.

Mrs. S: "Gregor," (sung) to the audience, hands gracefully in the air, large smile. Suddenly snaps out of freeze and throws her hands up in the air and bashes on the door in anger and frustration as she says the rest of her lines.

Vocal awareness

Oedipus

I'll tell you

Chocked up voice, emotional, quietly said. Therefore, everyone becomes quiet as well in order to listen to what is being said. Due to the quiet, the following lines, have extra added emotional impact on the audience.

She killed herself

"She," is repeated twice, as if the messenger can't quite get his words out.

You haven't seen it

Shouting, disturbed by the event, doesn't know how to cope.

And count yourselves lucky!

Goes up to an audience member, looks them in the eye, inches away from their face. Says the line quietly and personally to this person.

I shall never be able to forget it.

Bursts into tears. Loud voice.

That image will always be with me now.

Head in hands, head up, looking up to the sky.

Shouting.

I was there...

Hands high in the air, screaming!

Metamorphosis

Yes thank you mother – im getting up now.

Normally.

What's happened to me – everything seems to be the same – its still raining outside

"What happening to me," Panicking tone of voice. Rest of the line, trying ot me gain control, calmer tone, getting quieter again.

Oh, my leg

Screaming. Looking away

What's wrong with my legs?

Looking back again cautiously. Whispering

Turn over and go back to sleep, it's a bad dream

Calmly and slowly, commanding himself.

I can't turn over

Whispering, shaking

I can't turn!

Shouting, writhing around on the floor.

Characterisation – Gregor

Gregor is the arguably the central character throughout *Metamorphosis*, everything that happens in the play, is either in response or because of his transformation from the families main bread earner to a helpless beetle.

At the beginning of the play, when Gregor returns home from work, the night before he turns into it a beetle, he is tired and complains of feel unwell. To give an indication to the audience of Gregor's predicament; I would make Gregor's posture very stiff and stooped. His voice should be losing its diction and clarity, as well as becoming more and higher in pitch and crackling tone of voice. His movements should be jerky and un-human like; this should include almost robotic like movements. In the end of the first scene, Gregor, who says that he is feeling so ill, should crawl into his room to go to bed; this intrigues the audience as to what is going to happen to Gregor.

Once transformed into the beetle state. Gregor's eyes should be transfixed in a certain position. His eye lids should be painted with the image of an eye ball, so that whenever he blinks the audience always maintains eye contact with him. He should have an emotionless facial expression which intimidates the audience. Gregor's hair should be covered with a bandana like head dress, covering his hair; therefore, taking away his identity and with this taking away his pride. This then encourages the audience to empathise with Gregor and the situation that he has (through no immediate fault of his own) found himself in.

Gregor's movement (in the beetle state) shouldn't not be fluid or have anything in common with human movements. Gregor should move in an awkward fashion. His breathing should be different too he should breathe much much faster than a normal human (at rest) would. This is too reiterate the point that Gregor is no longer human. Not only has his appearance changed and his movement change, but also physiologically his body has changed.

As well as this, when ever Gregor says a line, his voice should be picked up by a microphone and amplified but also should have special effects on it, such as reverb and delay. This will remind the audience that Gregor is different in everyway to the other characters. It will reinforce the idea that Gregor is the outsider and the minority within the play. He is a freak and total different to everyone else, right up to the very last detail.

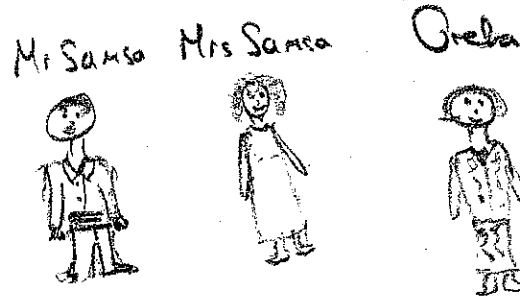
Spatial Elements

Key moments in the play

The opening scene (during the narration)

Play begins with pitch-black and silence. Then floodlights flash on and off illuminating the whole set. Then, a few instruments from the orchestra start playing. Timpani's play a drum roll gradually getting louder as well as guitars playing distorted harmonics getting lots of feed back. Violins also play quick trills. After Orchestra have been playing for 5 seconds or so, lights go pitch black and wild strobe lighting begins. Orchestra begins to use cymbal crashes, everything gets louder and louder, at this point Mr Samsa says, "As Gregor Samsa awoke from uneasy dreams."

(Through a microphone, with lots of delay, reverb and other various special effects) Strobe lighting as well as orchestra stops as soon as Mr Samsa stops talking. Very short 2-second pause, then spotlight hits Gregor! This slowly dims. And then he is lit from behind; backlight slowly fades up, until clear shadow of Gregor is being cast onto the back wall of the stage. Shadow of Gregor on the wall is suspended in the air to add to the weird and abstract images. Family then get off their stools and slowly and silently crowd around the shadow of Gregor on the back wall. As Greta says her line, "his numerous legs, which were pitifully thin compared to the rest of his bulk, waved helplessly before him." Meanwhile actor playing Gregor, slowly and rigidly moves limbs around him, so that this is projected on the back wall which is the image which the family are gazing and pointing at as if it is actually him.



Gregor's room isolated, alone.

Visual elements continued.

For serious moments with tension, such as, "We must get rid of it!" a dark red colour scheme will be used for lighting. For moments when Gregor becomes the center of attention, such as the families first meeting with Gregor in the beetle state, a smoke machine will be used to give the sense that Gregor is something from out of this world. Meanwhile the lighting will be a wash of green shades.



Rack light.

Greta

Greta has an innocent looking, little girl, type appearance - blonde hair, blue eyes. She wears a pretty white dress, therefore, big contrast to the dark colours of which the other two characters are wearing. This helps the audience instantly recognise that Greta is the symbol of hope within the play. Since white, as a colour, has positive connotations she is the one who still has belief in her brother. She is a symbol of hope for the family, that they could still possibly all life happily again. Therefore, eventually when she betrays Gregor and abandons him, it is a shock and surprise to the audience as she is dressed as a naïve child and she is the only one

who represents the glimmer of hope for Gregor.

Mr Samsa

Mr Samsa should wear worn, unpolished shoes. With laces undone. A dull coloured army dress uniform, which has clearly become dirty and stained with split food and drink. The blazer as part of the uniform is really frayed at the edges. Mr Samsa wears many of his army medals; he has lots of them, however, they are all unpolished and again frayed. Mr Samsa's physique: he is a large, overweight man. He doesn't care too much about his appearance; he has unshaven facial hair, therefore, untidy stubble. The reason for Mr Samsa looking so scruffy despite wearing the army dress uniform, is that it will show that he used to be a high flying, successful man, however, now he is just a slob and lazy. The fact that he still wears his uniform helps the audience to realise that he still sees himself as young and prosperous. However, as we the audience see the state of his appearance we all know that he is trying to convince himself that he is still that man.

Mrs Samsa

Mrs Samsa would be wearing a posh and unrevealing Victorian style dress. This dress would be a long, dull coloured dress and matching the same kind of shades of colour as Mr Samsa's costume. Mrs Samsa will have lots of make-up and a big, distinctive hairstyle. Mrs Samsa tries to cover up her emotions by hiding behind her appearance. Since she is quite a weak and easily distressed character, using her appearance as a façade is the only way that she feels is possible to ease the anxiety that she is having to cope with.

The play's climax

It is at this point in the play where Oedipus hears the truth about his life, about his marriage and his conception being a crime. Due to this he blinds himself, and ironically, in doing so he is able to see his corruption. In my production of Oedipus I have decided not to physically blind Oedipus; however, still show that Oedipus becomes able to see his corruption and that he will always emotionally be in pain. In reading the play, I am aware that the only reason he blinds himself is in order to go through a stage of catharsis (spiritual cleansing of the soul in ancient Greek religion); therefore, the religious modern day equivalent of this cleansing process is confession and purgatory within Christianity. Therefore, I would stage this part of the play as follows. There will be a circle of candles in which Oedipus is led into by the chorus. This is where he is judged on his sins, as his sins are told to him, the stage should be lit with a red light to symbolise the blood that was spilt when he killed his own father. As well as this, the candle flames should become larger and larger to represent his journey to his own hell that he has created. In effect Oedipus becomes a moral prisoner. This gives the sense that he is entrapped and there is no escape; this means that Oedipus must face up to his sins. The chorus, as vicars, would tell Oedipus about the truth of his past, "World famous Oedipus, you sucked and fondled at the same breast," etc. As Oedipus hears this, he would, like in the original, then mentally breakdown, cue the lines - "My father's killer, my mother lover." In doing this he confesses his sins to the chorus, who are in my modern day adaptation the religious characters within the play - since they represented as vicars. By confessing to the vicars (the chorus) Oedipus confesses his sins to the Gods which is what occurs within the original play. By confessing, he spiritually becomes aware of his corruption and is a better person because of this; however, since he is aware of his

Visual elements

The chorus should be dressed as vicars in as far as they should be wearing the traditional collar. The reason for dressing in this way is because they represent and preach about the moral and religious values of the play. Even though around the time the play was written Christianity didn't exist - viewing this play in the modern day, the chorus remind me of religious characters. In the case of Oedipus - I would dress him as a drug baron. Therefore, I would dress Oedipus in an expensive looking suit, with a huge fur coat; in addition with masses of over the top, thick, chunky gold jewellery (bling!) In dressing Oedipus, in copiously posh clothes, we, as the audience, gather the sense that he is a very rich man. His almost pimp like appearance, controversial though it may seem, fits into the surface theme of the modern day illegal and corrupt world, and is a metaphor for the way in which Oedipus, is acting with his big ego. Within the play Oedipus is clearly an incredibly powerful man - however is corrupt in his nature, therefore, I believe these characteristic are shared with the leader of an illegal, drug trading network.

Audience walkways

Audience walkways

Audience walkways

There will be a live band present to add musical accompaniment quietly in the background during the choral odes. To fit in with the modern surface theme of the drugs/crime community, the genre of music will be rap/garage, in the style of artists such as Snoop dog etc (therefore, DJ decks used, with a drum machine laid back beat.) This would be particularly suited to the style of the piece of theatre since this genre of music is often based around such communities where law and order is ignored. Sound effects such as, guns shots will be used, for a modern interpretation of the line, "I whacked him savagely with my staff." Instead of acting as described, a gun would be used instead - as this would fit in perfectly into the modern surface theme of street gun crime.

Directorial vision

I have chosen to modernise the play and to set it in the run down underworld/red light district of a major city such as London for example. I have chosen to interpret the play in this way and to bring the play into the 21st century because this gives play modern relevance. I have decided on this setting to represent the plague that takes hold of the city. Those that live in poverty in this dark underworld cannot escape it. Their only hope of escape is Oedipus, their king and yet his corruption prevents them from escaping their vicious cycle that is drugs and crime. I would present Oedipus himself as a lavishly dressed ignorant, arrogant gang leader who rules by his tough image and his powerful personality. The way he mocks and scorns other characters such as Teiresias and Creon reflects the arrogance of his leadership. Jocasta plays his gangsters moll, and she herself has secrets that come out as the play unfolds. The chorus provide the only light in the play. They represent the moral and religious values that we all should stand by. Oedipus ignores their advice at his peril. I have chosen to portray the chorus as vicars, since this is the modern equivalent of the religious characters in the original play.

The chorus

Oedipus' declined begins to accelerate, these few members of the chorus will be raised into the air lying sideways, almost as angle like figures - the effect this has, emphasises that Oedipus is beginning to realise that there are people around him who despite having a lower status than him actually have a better and deeper understanding than him; this is therefore, represented through the use of levels. The fact that chorus is eventually raised over Oedipus, shows that they now have authority over him. And that that his fate has caught up on him and that he is now lower in status than they are.

Characterisation - Oedipus

The character I have chosen to write this essay on is Oedipus. In a nut shell, Oedipus begins the play, powerful, arrogant and naïve. By the time the play ends, he is a broken man, who has been shocked by the knowledge of the sins that he has committed. He discovers that his, "conception, a crime, marriage a crime." And that he committed a, "murder," on his, "own father."

There are many key stages that lead up to Oedipus' demise. He continually ignores the warnings of others due to his arrogance. Oedipus' predicament is best epitomised by Teiresias' statement; "you have eyes but cannot see your own corruption." Gradually, Oedipus pieces together pieces of the puzzle and slowly uncovered his grim fate and the truth behind his privileged life as king.

The first person to indicate to Oedipus that he is to blame for the suffering in his city, is the blunt and unafraid Teiresias, who tells Oedipus that he is the, "unclean thing." Oedipus who doesn't yet realise the reality of Teiresias' story, is quick to dismiss him as a liar. He quickly becomes irritated and doesn't want to hear any of it. He abuses Teiresias with cheap insults almost as a method of re-boosting his own ego and retaining (in his mind at least) some sense of status and creditability. I find this scene fascinating; it is really interesting to see Oedipus reacting to the challenge of someone of a lower status than him. As a king, we can assume that Oedipus has become sheltered from criticism of any kind and therefore it is humorous almost, to notice what a childish defence mechanism he uses to get back at the innocent Teiresias. To amplify this theme and to magnify Oedipus' childish and vindictive nature, I would have Oedipus shouting a lot of his lines, as this is a way of instantly losing integrity and the respect of others. Also, by raising his voice; Oedipus clearly displays that he feels threatened and that he is uncomfortable.

Physically, Oedipus would stand up whenever he feels at risk of being undermined or challenged. His lip would sometimes quiver, signifying weakness but also anger. His eye contact would be fixed when he is angry but he will sometimes look away whenever he feels at risk or when he doesn't want to hear something that he fears could possibly be true. Movement wise, Oedipus should pace around, as an output for his nervous energy. Whenever Teiresias makes harsh comments towards Oedipus, Oedipus should attempt to intimidate him, by moving right up to him and gesticulate in front of him.

Oedipus should wear glamorous and expensive clothes. He should wear polished black shoes and an exquisite suit, along with gold rings and lots of other jewellery. He should also have greased combed back hair. I have chosen to make these decisions because by giving Oedipus a lavish and well-to-do appearance, we, the audience, instantly assume and realise the magnitude of his status and standing in society.

Oedipus the king

Contextualising the play

“Oedipus the king,” was originally written by an ancient Greek play-write called Sophocles in approximately 420BC. To contextualise this piece, it is essential to comprehend what life was like back in those times. In 420BC, theatre was of far more popular and common place, than it is nowadays. Theatrical productions would take place in huge amphitheatres situated on curved hillsides in order to enhance the acoustic of the production. Some amphitheatres could sit up to approximately 10,000 people at a time! In the modern era, theatre has become something of a past time that stereotypically only the wealthier and superiorly astute people can enjoy. However, in 420BC, theatre was a way of life, religion was far more important than it currently, as in the 21st century religion is only followed by a small minority of people. However, in 420BC it was unheard of for people to be atheist, people were born into a culture where God was real and if you went against the word of God you would be punished. It wasn't a question of believing religion it was just simply accepted as the truth. Therefore, all theatrical productions around this era were heavily religious based. As in Oedipus many all of these religiously based plays had some kind of wrong doing in them to represent to the audience what would happen to people who ignored the Gods, therefore, all actors were masked to hide their identity from the Gods, as well as the, a spiritual blessing would take place on the stage before the play began; this reason for doing so was to inform the Gods that the sins they were about to see were only pretend and in order to spread the importance of religious awareness. In 420BC theatre, as well as being the main form of entertainment, also played an important role in reinforcing moral and religious values, hence, “judge no man...” just one of the many religious undertones in the play of, “Oedipus the king.”

In ancient Greek time, people lived in constant fear of the Gods. They were seen as all-powerful and in particular merciless to wrong doers. It was thought that the God's had planned out your life for you from the day you were born and therefore, the idea of inescapable fate and destiny was a strong theme for many plays, such as, “Oedipus the king.”

In the play, “Oedipus the king,” the plague is a metaphor for the spiritual corruption of society at that time. Before Sophocles became a play-write he was a soldier. Here it can be assumed that he gained a great sense of self-discipline, leadership and high moral values. Due to his time and experiences as a soldier Sophocles gathered a respectful patriotic belief. He learnt and believed that the Gods were being ignored as he could recognise that politicians were severely corrupt. Therefore, as a play-write Sophocles created the character of Oedipus along with his story to demonstrate the outcome of people in high positions of authority, abusing their positions of power and control. On the other hand, Sophocles also created the character of Creon, who despite being portrayed the not the most glamorous of leaders, is certainly idealised being a character who has an appropriate level of responsibility for the position of King of Thebes. Creon is presented as being the ideal leader that the audience should learn from, in so far as he is responsible, therefore, he is the complete contrast to Oedipus; Creon offers an alternative to Oedipus.

The role of women in Oedipus is clearly outlined. In ancient Greek times, women were seen as having a much lower status. The play clearly highlights this through the character of Jocasta, in which she is constantly ignored by Oedipus throughout. In fact, back in ancient Greek time, women were considered to be of such a lower standing that when this play would have been originally performed, around 420BC, the role of Jocasta would have been played by a man, as women were not considered worthy; unlike today's society where, thankfully, there is now relative equality. In addition to this, the play reaches its climax when Oedipus blinds himself and Jocasta hangs herself. The fact that Oedipus doesn't kill himself, presents him as being a stronger character than Jocasta. As, had he killed himself, this would have been seen by the Gods as taking the easy way out, which is precisely what Jocasta does. Therefore, not only does the play highlight moral values of corruption, it also accentuates the status and perception of women within society at the time of 420BC.

There are many moral values and messages that can be transferred from, "Oedipus the king," written in 420BC, to the modern day. Perhaps the most relevant, is that of leadership. This play was written for religious and moral reasons, it taught those in positions of power to use their level of authority wisely, as otherwise you will be punished by the almighty Gods. These days, in essence, the message is still relevant, politicians will lie, deceive and cheat their people, in order to get what they feel is best for the nation, or even in some cases for themselves. The element of punishment comes in the form that eventually, their wrong doings will be uncovered. For example the BBC might do a programme covering a political scandal, this then results in the story being passed around the media, on the news and in the tabloids and eventually can end up with even the most influential world leaders losing their jobs and being hated by the nation. This is exactly what happens to Oedipus, he commits a crime/sin, the word spreads around, he gets punished – blinds himself and exile from his country and in the end he has the terrible knowledge of knowing that everyone hates him, hence, "everyone knows my name."

Metamorphosis

Contextualising the play

Franz Kafka, the original writer of *Metamorphosis*, was born in Prague on the 3rd of July 1883. He was a Jewish play write born into a middle-class German speaking family living in what used to be called Austria-Hungry.

Kafka had a disturbing and unhappy upbringing, caused solely by his father, Herman Kafka, who used to bully and intimidate both Kafka and his mother. The relationship between Kafka and his father was one of abuse and continuous threats. Kafka was made to feel frail and inept in the way that his father would often mock his own son and sarcastically humiliated him.

Kafka's father was a merchant by trade; he had a hard-working attitude towards business and was obsessed with money and social prosperity. He was clearly a very powerful man as it is evident that he got away with abusing his family. Herman was capable of making Kafka himself feel inferior and unworthy of a position within his own family; this is reflected in his play, *Metamorphosis*. Kafka himself is Gregor, as both Kafka and Gregor the character, feel unwanted and cast out from their families. Kafka's father is Mr. Samsa, in the way that he clearly despises his own son and is very quick to give up on him. Kafka likened himself to a beetle to represent how, like a beetle, he felt helpless in the circumstances that he had to endure. Kafka's relationship with his mother on the other hand, was thankfully more positive, despite the fact that he was not particularly close to his mother; he was able to relate to members of his mother's side of the family, as they were more gentle natured.

During his life, Kafka worked for an insurance company, which was a career choice almost, placed in front of him by his father. By day he worked there but by night he wrote novels. In a way *Metamorphosis* is almost like a diary or biographical account of his life story. Working to the brink of exhaustion day in day out, with no let up, or as Kafka himself put it, "Excruciating torture." Kafka metaphorically represents his real life stress and anxiety, through Gregor's transformation into a beetle.

Steven Berkoff was brought up in Luton. His father was a tailor. Berkoff apart from one close friend was an extreme introvert, who took pleasure from being mostly alone. At school Berkoff was bullied, partly due to his Jewish origins, however, mainly just because he was an easy victim for abuse due to his withdrawn and shy nature. Berkoff's experiences are in a way very similar to Kafka's; both men were generally unhappy due to the expense of others. Therefore, in the same way that Kafka likened himself to a beetle due to his feelings of helplessness, it is clear to see how and why Berkoff felt he could relate to the character of Gregor also. Berkoff excelled in his early schooling life. However, after he passed his 11+ with flying colours, he went to a new school and didn't fit in. Although he was perfectly academically capable he wasn't considered astute enough, for Berkoff this was severely humiliating and it was enough for him to lose all sense of motivation, he therefore, left school without any GCSE's.

Around the age of 18 Berkoff discovered theatre. This was the one thing that, "spiritually fulfilled," him. He believed that it was a suitable form of escapism for

himself. Berkoff's 1st ever production was, *Metamorphosis*. He had read the novel years before hand and remembered being able to identify with it completely, therefore, he played the character of Gregor. Berkoff concluded that in theatre you can only make the audience believe, what you, yourself, the actor believe. Therefore, since Berkoff sensed an extraordinary similarity between the character of Gregor and himself, he knew he could create a success performance as his experiences with mime could help him act in the form of a beetle, and then he could use his own life experience to replicate Gregor's emotions on stage.

Antonin Artaud, disagreed with traditions of realism in theatre, as he believed that it was unable to create, "life's truth on stage." His theatre consisted of 3 major influences - dance, extreme visual images and absurd comedy. He accepted the fact that, "gestures, postures, dance and music are less able to define character." However, he also argued that theatre doesn't necessarily have to portray the character for you. By creating theatre in his particular way, the audience is challenged to make their own opinions of what they are experiencing. The Artaudian theatre is one, which offers a total experience of light, sound and text. It uses as many different theatrical techniques of acting as possible in order to create a disjointed and seemingly irrational piece of drama.

It is clear to see how Artaud style effected and influenced Berkoff's work. In *Metamorphosis*, all, or as many different types of emotions as possible are conjured up, to help create a total theatrical experience for the viewing audience. This is done by using all aspect of production to their full potential i.e. by taking everything to the extreme. In both Artaud's and Berkoff's work, both exercise the use of crescendos and silences, in order to add a dynamic interest to their pieces. Berkoff took inspiration from Artaud, as he forced his actors to be incredibly physical in their performances. Artaud believed that an actor should be trained like an athlete, in order to be able to achieve the most of which they're physically capable. Perhaps the strongest influence for Berkoff from Artaud's work was that of making the audience feel part of, or even in some cases trapped inside the performance with the actors. This was a big development of 20th century theatre as a whole, as the actors invade the audience's space and in a way almost intimate the audience.

Metamorphosis highlights the distinct disadvantage of living and working in a capitalist society. In all three cases – Kafka, Berkoff and (the character) Gregor, all three are, or have been at times, under great pressure to succeed. In a capitalist society, if you are not prosperous you will not have a good quality of life. Therefore, in order to succeed there are great pressures to keep and to stay in education and employment. In *metamorphosis* both of these aspect of the Samsa' life fall apart and we the audience see the consequences – the family collapses!

In conclusion, Kafka wrote the novel as almost a reflection of his own experiences. Berkoff identified himself with both the character Gregor, and the experiences of the novelist Kafka himself. Berkoff then used his own knowledge of mime as well as taking inspiration from the revolutionary Artaud. Berkoff then used the frameworks of Artaud's total theatre experience to arouse all the senses of every person in the audience, to realise and notice the financial dangers and social knock-on effects of struggling in a capitalists society.

Language

Name of characters	Quotation	Comments
Messenger	<p>“Plunged them down into his eyeballs... stabling his eyelids again and again, till his face was a mass of blood and tears.”</p>	<p>This quote is an example of reported action. Here, the messenger describes what he has just seen, in alarming and gruesome detail. The reasons for reporting on the incident rather than acting it out is that, performing this whole scenario could appear a little farfetched and it would be very difficult to make it all entirely convincing. As well as this, due to the unities of Greek theatre, everything is only allowed to happen in one place and since Oedipus, “stabs his eyelids,” within the palace, the setting is not allowed to jump from outside the palace to inside it. Therefore, a description of the events has to happen. However, in many ways a description could be and in this case is, more convincing and effective than actually acting, as strong and powerful language allows the audience to imagine the sight for themselves.</p>
Shepherd and Oedipus	<p>Shepherd: “It was me. I wish I’d died that day!” Oedipus: “You’ll die today, unless you tell the truth.” Shepherd: “I’ll die if I tell it, as well, that’s for sure.”</p>	<p>This quote is an example of stichomythia, a common and effective technique typically used within Greek theatre. The quick exchange of short and to the point lines helps to increase the pace and tension within the scene. This series of quotes is said just before the play’s climax; therefore, the playwright’s almost builds up a fast rhythm within the dialogue, by using this technique. Stichomythia enables the audience to get a greater sense and understanding of Oedipus’ journey as he reaches a stage of panic.</p>
Jocasta	<p>“Aren’t you ashamed... squabbling like boys... Go inside my husband and you too, Creon, go back to your own house.”</p>	<p>With this quote, Jocasta naturally adopts a motherly role in dealing with both Oedipus and Creon. In response to the way they are behaving, she treats them like little children and it would appear to the audience that Jocasta is acting like a responsible mother would. This is particularly ironic as not only is Oedipus, similar to a child, in the way that he is immature and naïve at times, but also it ultimately also becomes known that Jocasta is Oedipus’ birth mother! Therefore, the fact that Jocasta behaves in a motherly fashion and that Oedipus acts like a child almost tempts the fate of the Gods and for the audience, is an omen of what is to be uncovered later on within the play. In essence, it is a glimpse of the inconvenient truth for both Oedipus and Jocasta.</p>

Use of language	Quotation	Practical Application	Impact on the audience
Factual, distant cold narrative.	Mr. S, "As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams..." Mrs. S, "He found himself transformed into a gigantic insect." Greta, "His numerous legs, which were pitifully thin compared to the rest of his bull, waved helplessly before him."	All three characters stood in a straight line facing the audience, staring harshly, with cold, hostile and intimidating expression on faces. Lines should be said at varied tempos, different dynamic levels and in various tones of fear. Characters to be lit from the back, so that a silhouette is created, however, shoulders upwards are dimly lit with torches.	Because the audience can only see a silhouette of each character, it means that the audience cannot easily tell which character is saying which line – this helps to emphasize a dreamlike sense of confusion and puzzlement. The peculiar speech helps again to create a dreamlike environment, in which not everything makes perfect sense. The inescapable eye contact means that audience feel intimidated by the family. Therefore, the audience feels concerned for Gregor's well being as they know that his family is isolating him.
Use of repetition.	Mrs. S, "Lodgers!" Mr. S, "Cash!" Mrs. S, "Lodgers!" Greta, "Shoes!"	All three characters point excitedly in the same direction, as Mrs. S says, "Lodgers," in a pleasantly surprised tone. Then, all characters then freeze as Mr. S says, "Cash," all three characters point again in the same direction as one another however, this time in a different direction as Mrs. S, "says, "Lodgers," again, this time with an excited tone of voice. All character freeze and Greta then says, "Shoes!"	Due to the fact that all three characters all point in the same direction, it emphasizes the fact that all the family members (apart from Gregor) are desperate and eager to have lodgers as an extra source of income, or in otherwise they are unified in their efforts to attract lodgers into their home. The repetition of lodgers helps to reiterate the importance of this much-needed extra income for the family. The transition in tone of voice from surprise to excitement reflects the fact that the family cannot believe their luck! This makes the audience feel happy and pleased for the family, as its clear that at this point at least, they are beginning to adjust to life without Gregor's input.
The change in the language the family use to describe Gregor.	At the beginning: - Greta, "There's brother Gregor." Towards the end: - Greta, "We must get rid of it!"	The line at the beginning should be said in happy and positive voice, with a childlike smile and energetic body language i.e. point excitedly at him. However, the line at the end of the play should be said with a desperate and regretful tone, with a tinge of hatred for Gregor. Greta should talk like an adult and behave like a mature woman grieving for upsetting loss. At the end of the play she is mentally and physically tired after having to look after Gregor, this sense of exhaustion should be known to the audience, movements should be slow and posture stooped, almost like an old woman.	At the beginning, Greta says the word brother, as if she is proud to be his sister. This reflects her naïve and innocent character at the beginning of the play, as it has never occurred to her to imagine what life without Gregor would be like. However, by the end of the play, Greta's character has matured, this is reflected by the language that is used. She is defiant in wanting Gregor gone and it's ironic and in a way sad that she is now the driving force of family's hatred for Gregor when at the beginning of the play it never even occurred to her that some day, Gregor wouldn't be there for them. These two lines not only show the change in the language as the play progresses, but they also represent a change in Greta's character and she grows and realises that Gregor has to in a way be sacrificed in order for the family to survive i.e. She knows that she has to be cruel to be kind.

GCE
Drama Example Materials

Candidate D - Commentaries

Edexcel
GCE Drama (6DR01 paper 01)
2009

Commentary on Exploration Notes for *Candidate D*:

Language:

This section shows how much the candidate clearly understands about both texts. The *Metamorphosis* page has some interesting directorial suggestions for how various aspects of the language could be delivered in performance. There is clear evidence that the candidate has engaged very closely with each of the texts and he justifies his decisions about the interpretation of the lines with genuine commitment. He makes links with the language and the ongoing narrative, the development of characters and their relationships, such as that between Greta and Gregor, and shows excellent understanding of the thematic development in the scenes. There is clear analysis of how the language functions for an audience. This is incisive and well-organised writing that proves this candidate has explored the texts practically and with an eye for eventual performance. He does not fully develop how his directorial and analytical responses to these short sections of dialogue have come to be, however, through targeted practical exercises. This is a feature that, were it to be developed, would ensure very high marks.

Non-verbal communication:

There is clear evidence of the candidate's practical understanding of both texts. He does not explain how practical exploration has gone on but does produce evidence that it has. He has made some clearly imaginative directorial decisions for these short text sections but does not fully justify them.

Vocal awareness:

The notes are the result of practical exploration, but do not detail how this came about. It is clear that the candidate has a firm grasp of how these lines might be delivered by actors, and the impression is that they would be successful. However, there is no sense that he has considered any alternatives or why they should be spoken in this fashion.

Characterisation:

The *Oedipus* section is mostly an essay about the character. The strongest part is where he shows how he would interpret the character through detailed emphasis on gesture and movement. His ideas are very well justified and are evidence of a thorough and detailed approach. He clearly understands the text.

The section on *Metamorphosis* is a director's plan for how an actor could interpret the character of Gregor. It is detailed and thorough. The work would be improved through more emphasis on how these very sound and well-informed decisions have come about.

Social, cultural, historical and political context:

The candidate provides evidence of excellent understanding of the contexts of these plays. The notes are analytical and well researched. We do not, however, get a sense of how this knowledge has been practically explored. The section on *Metamorphosis* explores some ideas of Artaud and how they influenced Berkoff, but there is no evidence of practical use of this understanding.

The writing is highly communicative and this able candidate has grasped how various elements have influenced these playwrights in their work. With a more practically influenced set of opinions this candidate could access very high marks.

Visual, aural and spatial elements of a production:

The candidate has considered both texts as a director. He justifies most of his ideas and many of them are highly detailed. His ideas are supported through

contextual information, such as the reason for Oedipus blinding himself. Both sections are clear evidence that the candidate has explored and understands the plays, but there is no sense that any practical experimentation has led to these ideas, albeit they are fully formed.

The response to a practitioner:

Again the candidate speaks as a director. He takes moments of each play and describes how and why he would stage them in accordance with the ideas of Kneehigh and Artaud. There are good justifications for most of his effects and stylistic elements and he has considered the reaction of an audience, how the actors would develop a relationship with them and what emotions they might be feeling.

This section shows how an able candidate can grasp how practitioners may influence the interpretation of a play, but in this case, we are not party to his practical working methods.

Interpretation:

A very short section that shows how the candidate sees two short moments of the play in performance. Neither paragraph is evidence of practical trial and error in the workshop.

Moderator comments:

This candidate is clearly highly able and a very effective communicator. He has obviously thoroughly explored both of the texts since his ideas for their interpretation are inventive, thought through and imaginative. He has an excellent understanding of the contexts of the plays, their writers and how the ideas of practitioners might help him to develop his own performances.

The missing element is the candidate's practical exploration: his justification for his excellent ideas. He has clearly been involved in the workshop process, but we never get a glimpse of how. The candidate thinks like a director and provides the reader with enough evidence to think he is capable of being one, however, for Unit 1, there is a need for the reader to 'see the working' and not just the, albeit fully formed, ideas.

The quality of the written communication is excellent.

These notes are far too long.

Band 2

Commentary on Theatre Review for Candidate D:

The theatre performance has impressed and challenged the candidate and he uses most of the review to explore the meaning within the piece. He proposes and decodes the meaning of several scenes in detail, as he understands it, and tries to convey his responses with clarity and objectivity.

He does not fully explore how production elements have contributed to the meaning expressed by the performance, although he mentions lighting and sound in passing.

The final paragraph explores one scene in detail and here the candidate proposes an alternative way of playing it. This is not a necessary element of a review but does show how much the candidate has engaged with the work and is approaching it as both a director and an informed audience member.

Band 2