

GCE
Drama Example Materials

Candidate J - Example Work with Commentaries

Edexcel
GCE Drama (6DR01 paper 01)
2010

Centre Name	Ashby School	Centre No.	25100	Centre Use Only		Edexcel Use Only
Candidate Name	Philip KING	Candidate No.	2057	Practical Exploration	23/25	See SAMPLE SESSION RECORD CARD
6DR01 - Unit 1 Exploration of Drama and Theatre		Edexcel COURSEWORK RECORD CARD & AUTHENTICATION SHEET ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY GCE DRAMA AND THEATRE STUDIES JUNE 2010		Exploration Notes	16/20	/20
				Evaluation of Live Theatre	9/15	/15
				TOTAL	48/60	48 /60

TEACHER-EXAMINER COMMENTS

Practical Exploration:

A natural performer Phil applied appropriate practitioner technique to character development. He revealed clear grasp of Torvald in A Dolls House revealing his journey physically and vocally through key moments within the script. Phil enjoyed exploring Brechtian gestures and excelled in his portrayal of Ralph within Our Country's Good recognising that whilst he could be perceived as weak he was in fact likeable, strong and principled.

Exploration Notes:

Phil has provided evidence to support practical exploration through a comparison of both texts. He has a personal writing style and his comments upon practical activities revealing understanding of purpose. He has analysed text and practitioner and his work has a sense of learning.

Evaluation of Live Theatre Performance:

Phil's evaluation of live theatre performance demonstrates a good understanding of how the production elements contributed to the overall effect. He is able to evaluate some aspects of the production with clear examples.

AUTHENTICATION

Candidate's declaration:

I declare that I have produced the work involved without external assistance apart from any which is acceptable under the scheme of assessment and is recorded. I declare that I have accurately entered the correct word count in the above "Word Count" box.

WORD COUNT	
Exploration Notes	Evaluation of Live Theatre
2994	971

Signature: 

Date: 23/02/10

Teacher-Examiner's declaration:

I declare that the student's activities have been kept under regular supervision and that, to the best of my knowledge, no assistance has been given apart from any which is acceptable under the scheme of assessment and has been identified and recorded, and that the final submission has been produced under controlled conditions.

Signature: 

Date: 30/04/10

Phil King

A Doll's House + Our Country's Good

Over the past couple of terms at Ashby School, my drama group and I have been working on and exploring, through Stanislavski, the script "A Doll's House", by the playwright Henrik Ibsen; and through Brecht, the script of "Our Country's Good", by the female playwright Timberlake Wertenbaker. The very first lesson, we were all told to look at the plays through the elements of language, interpretation, the practitioners, characterisation, vocal awareness, non-verbal communication, visual, aural and spatial elements, and social, historical, cultural and political contexts – and these are the guidelines to this text.

Ibsen created "A Doll's House" in 1879. Looking deeper into the social context; how the people reacted to the play when it first came out into theatres; and how times have evolved nowadays, it was a real challenge at first – mostly because in the present day, if you borrowed money then it's not really a big deal, but back in the time of Ibsen it ended in divorce! I understood afterwards that it would be a great and interesting task over the next few weeks getting into the mindset of the characters of "A Doll's House", and gaining a further knowledge of how they would each character would have been affected by the events throughout the play. I found it much more easy to put the play into context through historical context, because every lesson we did as a group touched on it – so, as each lesson went on it became clearer and easier to understand. In the script, the constant references to Nora being a "doll" especially summed up the historical context, due to the fact that in the times before the 1900s the male of the house was the one who was in control... just as a child would control the dolls in a play house to her will. As for "Our Country's Good", it seemed much more relevant to put in into context through culture (with the aborigine scenes exercise) and politics (looking behind the script into the history of the play, and events such as the Sorry Campaign, looking in depth at the line "We left our country for our country's good" from the perspectives of an officer and a convict). In the aborigine exercise, we had to put together all four of the small scenes involving the aborigine and create a journey through his eyes. This clearly put "Our Country's Good" into context by helping me to understand how the English came over so bewilderingly, bringing with them disease and death – and destroying the land which the aborigines considered to be their ancestors, crushing their beliefs underfoot to create prisons and settlements for our country. Looking at the play through the political context, on the other hand, I saw things from England's point of view. We did an exercise near the end of the course in which we only used one line – "we left our country for our country's good". Speaking them from the mouth of a convict or an officer yielded two very different opinions. On the one side, an average officer would actually mean this when he says it, because he would be making a healthy profit from the move. Other officers such as Ross would not be so simple though, due to his story on the stage. On the other side, a convict would mock this line purely because of the conditions in which they were brought over to Australia (made clear in The Voyage Out) and what was going to happen to them once they got there (Punishment).

Analysis of
historical
context

Practical
exploration

Language and
vocal
awareness

Practitioner explanation

In the first few lessons in which we looked solely at "A Doll's House", the class as a whole focused chiefly on the practitioner the play was written according to, Stanislavski, who believed that an actor or actress should become emotionally attached to whichever character he or she is playing. With a lot of preparation, Stanislavski said that actors should be able to portray a truthful experience to the audience, giving them a slice of reality on stage. After looking at some of his techniques such as emotional memory or circles of attention, it was then easy to move on to look at the character of Nora in the first scene. The stage direction says that Nora must "hum contentedly" as she enters with a porter, however without a Stanislavskian approach to this the actress playing Nora would have been totally unbelievable. So, drawing on the teachings of Stanislavski was crucial if you wanted to create a believable Nora. Not only that, but even if you weren't Nora and you were just a porter, you still had to use techniques like circles of attention to support whoever was playing Nora and help her create a more believable scene. Circles of attention is a device actors use to create a personal energy on stage which draws the audience to the character. A strong body posture would indicate a large circle of attention, whereas an introverted stance would point towards a small circle of attention. This first exercise, in retrospect, compared well with the workshop we did on "Our Country's Good", where we had to use purely Brechtian exercises, like gestus and characterisation to create the scene "An Audition" (contrary to Stanislavski, Brecht's aim was to educate the audience using gestured characters. He wanted to audience to have their own opinions so that they could think, consider and question). It was quite interesting to do, as I played the part of the lieutenant, trying to keep composure and control the rabble cast. I had to use the Brechtian theory of putting on a character like a jacket, as well as relying on the rest of the cast to do the same, in order to effectively create the chaos that was needed for the scene. This, coupled with the exercise we did on "snapping characters" between your self, an officer and a convict, helped me develop my gesturing skills whilst also considering the major differences between prisoner and guard.

Practical explanation embedded in notes

Gestus

In the "A Doll's House" lessons, we also looked at the script in further detail through Language. We looked at the first scene and noted how Nora acts with Torvald; and then went on to look at the Magic If, using the given circumstances of the script to gain hunches/theories about Nora that the subtext of the script may suggest. We found that the beginning of the script "A Doll's House" has a very deceptive atmosphere about it, especially when you look back at it after reading the rest of it and realising Nora's true colours. You could also compare the first scene with moments such as the Tarantella Dance at the end of act two, in which Nora portrays a much more desperate way of deception, but still a deception none the less. We also looked at how "A Doll's House" was what is known as a "well-made play", because of the uniform beginning, middle and end, and how it was split into three defined sections – and the sections were split into smaller units of action. Looking at the language in "Our Country's Good" through the scene "Punishment" was very helpful in terms of understanding how the English people did not fully understand the way they were destroying the native way of life. Watching Telemmi's group perform this scene really gave me inspiration and ideas on what to write for this section of the write up – in their scene, the officers seemed very casual, not really paying any attention at all the bird they were about to shoot, just watching it down a sight. However, upon shooting the creature, a lone aborigine dies and the officers do not

Text and Subtext

Structure of play.

Clear understanding of Symbolism

even notice. This aided me in understanding the messages mentioned earlier, about how England travelled half way around the world to seemingly do nothing but destroy the local way of life and everything they believed in... for the good of the country.

Interpretation



Practical explanation

Recreating the Tarantella Dance scene was another task we were given over the course of looking at the script of "A Doll's House". As we were allowed to use a different and more contemporary approach to this certain scene, it was left open to a lot of different interpretations. Watching and researching further into the Tarantella, I found that it was a very frantic dance, which people did if they were bitten by a tarantula in order to sweat out the venom. This was very appropriate to the subtext of "A Doll's House", because of the severely desperate nature of Nora's situation at that point in the events of the script. Our group chose to have the character of Nora tangled in ropes by the other characters (such as Torvald and Krogstad), symbolising a web of events with Nora stuck in the middle, struggling to free herself. We found that this worked very well, as the fast-paced but much more modern music also suited the way we portrayed the scene. When looking at "Our Country's Good", specifically the scenes "The First Rehearsal" and "The Second Rehearsal", it was exactly the other way around, just using Brecht instead of Stanislavski as a starting point. In these two scenes, the entire group was split into two and told to create each scene, with one member of the group directing. As there weren't really any contemporary methods used in this scene, and the performers all used pure gesturing along the way, bouncing off each other - this scene touched on almost every aspect of writing up drama there is. For that scene, in my opinion, the audience was able to have their own opinions on who was in the right, because of the way the scene was just put to them straight, with no emotional connection.

Attempt to compare practitioners theory.

Considering Design elements

Another task we had to do using the first part of the script "A Doll's House" was attempting to design the set by looking at the first stage direction of the scene. Visual, aural and spatial elements naturally had a massive part to play in this, especially as the stage direction describing the set in detail is so much precise detail. In our session we found that it was much more demanding to create a true Stanislavskian set than it is to create a Brechtian stage, because every item needs to be true to the period of the script. Plus, if anything differs from the stage direction then it would be completely wrong, as each part of the set has some significance at least once in the play (especially the fireplace, amongst other pieces). Lighting the scene with natural house lighting also helped create a realistic atmosphere, because there would only really be natural lights in an ordinary house - which is what Ibsen intended the house to be when writing the stage direction which describes the set. Looking at the scene "The Voyage Out" in detail in the script of "Our Country's Good" was excellent for writing up on visual, aural and spatial elements (this is because in this scene, my group decided to use a slightly different method deriving from the practitioner Artaud to engage the audience. We actually placed them right in the middle of the scene, as if they were convicts with us in the confined spaces of the cargo hold of a dingy and smelly ship). Other groups did the same, such as Atiqah's group, who used a blue blanket above the audience to symbolise waves and ocean crashing over the convicts and officers alike - I thought this was very effective, as it made me feel like I was in the boat with no room to move, thus helping me understand what it was like to be a convict in those times.

Artaud practical explanation

Audience viewpoint

Characterisation had a very large part to play throughout the entire period of studying "A Doll's House", not only because of the scenes that we had to act, but also due to the fact that the element of characterisation ties in very well with the teachings of Stanislavski, and also how different individuals interpreted the play on the whole. I personally felt like I needed to draw on many other elements of drama to look at characterisation, such as the language of the script, given circumstances and hunches, because characterisation is a very important part of any piece of drama. When looking at the last unit of action in which Nora finally leaves, it is important to characterise well, paying special attention to points such as circles of attention and tempo rhythm in order to portray a decent character (tempo rhythm is especially important if you are looking at that unit of action next to the first, as my drama group did in lesson. A tempo rhythm, in stage terms, is the pace at which a performer moves and speaks to reflect the feelings and personality of the character). The same goes for "Our Country's Good" in terms of characterisation, maybe even more so because of the way the practitioner Brecht would have wanted his plays - or plays based on his teachings, as this case would happen to be - to be carried out. Characterisation was especially important in the final workshop we did on "Our Country's Good", mostly since a new practitioner, Artaud, was introduced. Artaud said that a play should be spontaneous, and rehearsals were not always necessary. He said to his actors that they should just have an idea of what they were going to do and then to basically go ahead and see how it goes. It was not uncommon for audience members to get up and act as well, nor was it rare that injuries occurred due to that - therefore most of the time audience members had to sign a "contract" of some sort that stated they were responsible for their own actions before being allowed to see an Artaud play. The aim of the task was to incorporate Artaud into our aborigine scenes, further including the audience as a part of the cast. My group decided to combine the aborigine scenes with "The Voyage Out", with two officers leading the convict audience to centre stage. After they sat down, we did the scene as usual, but this time with the aborigines dying around the convicts at the hands of the officers. I found this very effective, even though we hadn't rehearsed it once! This exercise also helped me look into how instant characterisation was so important, especially when improvising in a Brechtian / Artaud manner.

Looking further into characterisation, I then moved on to vocal awareness and non-verbal communication. As I had previously not attempted much work in the way Stanislavski would have wanted it, this was a much more testing part of the course than many of the other elements we studied. When looking at your vocal presence on stage, I found that it was important to varyate your voice much more than in actual life to create a believable character. That may sound strange at first, however when you look at the final unit of "A Doll's House" it would make more sense. In my opinion, Torvald is much larger than life in that scene because of his desperate situation (which has been switched around with Nora, as she is no longer in that state), whereas Nora is much less so because she seems to have accepted what Torvald cannot. In "Our Country's Good", similarly, my vocal awareness was raised greatly when looking at the character of Campbell in the scene "The Second Rehearsal". Campbell is an old, perhaps slightly drunken officer, whose

voice, as I interpreted it, would be gruff and slurred, weary as it would be with a long life... the best times already behind him.

Non-verbal communication was the other part that I found much more challenging than the other elements that we had to cover over our time studying the script of "A Doll's House". I felt I was able to achieve a further understanding of this element through the teachings of Stanislavski, and by looking at it through the way I acted on stage, as the porter, as Torvald and as Krogstad or Dr. Rank. Creating circles of attention was, for me, a much more easy way for me to comprehend how non-verbal communication is achieved, because a circle of attention is all about your presence on stage without saying anything. Playing the porter (which isn't really the most important character of the entire play) I felt I was able to experiment with this a lot because I didn't exactly have many lines to speak so I had to communicate with the audience in a different way. I also used the character of Campbell for non-verbal communication in "Our Country's Good", because of the way I decided to play him. Despite saying little, I was praised for my presence on stage and the way I slouched my back like an old man whilst still attempting to retain some of the features of being an officer, such as feet together, chin up etc. – and this made me understand (just as I did after playing the Porter in "A Doll's House") that even if you're not a main character, you must support those around you and be the best you can be personally.

Putting all these elements of drama together at the end of studying the scripts after the final tasks, I was able to look back and truthfully say that I had a vastly deeper understanding of the plays "A Doll's House" and "Our Country's Good". Explaining each element of drama in turn along with the characters involved in the scripts, I came up with many reflective questions based on what I'd learned. Was Nora right in choosing to leave? Why didn't she tell Torvald earlier? Was the English punishment system fair? Was it fair on Australian natives to reclaim their land? Questions like these will have a different answer whoever you ask... But as for me? I'm just glad neither of these plays happened to me, as the moral messages and meanings of the play can be quite dark, in my opinion.

WORDS = 2994.

Rackel

Brechtian
gesture of
character
- non-verbal

Attempt to
link
learning

The Long Road by Shelagh Stevenson
 At the Curve Theatre in Leicester
 On 18th March 2010
 Theatre review by Phil King

The Long Road, directed by Adel Al-Salloum, tells the story of a family whose youngest son has been killed by a young drug addicted girl, Emma. The mother of the family called Mary decides, through the help of a social worker by the name of Elizabeth, to visit the killer in order to come to terms with her loss and move on. The father, John, turns to alcohol after jogging to get over his loss, and all the while elder son Joe is stuck in the middle, feeling like his younger brother will always be better than him. The play had a mixture of dark humour and serious undertones, which was a result of the playwright visiting criminals in jail and discovering that, despite being killers, many still had a good sense of humour and were not the monsters the media made them out to be. This is shown throughout the play as the mother feels that without doing something about her son's death it will simply haunt her for life, and destroy her family from the inside out.

Produced by Synergy in association with The Forgiveness Project, the play was also intended to be shown in prisons – meaning that the emotions must be charged to the extreme, as in the dialogue they are raw, bitter and painful. The character of Emma seems especially successful, as she chooses to avoid personal questions by boasting about her violent, crime filled, drug and alcohol fuelled childhood. She also often goes on a tangent about seemingly random stories, making us unsure whether she really experienced all she says she has. These ideas are portrayed well on stage, and they certainly made me feel like Emma has had a great degree of mental scarring from her past, but she still retains the human qualities of me or you.

The set, by Julie Shillingford, proved to be extremely effective throughout the show, especially during the preset with the help of lights and sound. It featured a very Brechtian and bare living room (two chairs at a table, and behind a set of drawers, two more chairs, and the son's ashes set upon the top which are blatantly smashed later on in the show, emphasizing the gritty nature of death) which hints at a family house without giving away any facts about the family – items such as pictures or personal decorations are nonexistent. However, above this set was a pile of rubbish, all in a wooden brown colour, with the face of the son projected over the top of this. This overbearing piece of scenery resembled a bird's nest, which signified the murder perhaps as a cuckoo, stealing the young of a family and destroying the otherwise happy nest, which also worked very well for me. During the preset, voices of teenagers can be heard speaking of their ambitions for the future, which adds to the despair of the family, as they know their son will never achieve any of these things.

Themes such as redemption, revelation, forgiveness and crime are prevalent throughout, and the projection of the boy's face on the back of the "nest" reminds of this, because it was in my eyes a way of portraying that the young son was always on the family's minds, and as the play goes on, his face seems to fade and decay as if the family are finally letting go of their loss.

Another point which I found very effective was the use of lighting during the preset. Three down lights adorned the edges of the stage, which may have signified walls or

Production values

evaluative

analysis
 of
 projection
 +
 set

bars. This made me feel like it was actually the household that was imprisoned, and not the girl who committed such a heinous crime. The lights also caught the dust in the air, which hung lifelessly. This, coupled with the extreme lack of any colour other than the dirt spectrum, gave the set a very gloomy feel, as if all of the vibrancy of the area had been drained away to leave a dull reflection of what once was.

The address to the audience gave the play a very Brechtian and educational feel, chiefly during the opening sequence as each family member tells us their feelings on the situation so far. I believe this is because the characters are trying to let the audience make up their own minds on who is right, which is a key idea of Brecht. These addresses are good in the opening, however sometimes it felt to me as if they weren't needed – they did make the play seem longer (like a Long Road, perhaps) but I think the pace would have been aided if they carried on interacting with each other and not the audience.

The acting of other characters is exceptional, however I found Mary's journey within the text unconvincing due to the poorly explained reasons as to why she would go back to Emma after being treated so horribly the first time.

Each character deals with death differently, and their relationships worked very well together, for me. The constant presence of Emma was also a hit, further highlighting how she is taking over the family without physically being there (squatting like a cuckoo, mentioned earlier). Joe, John and Mary all deal with it in their own ways, and this drags them further and further apart as time goes by. The only one who doesn't seem to understand this is John, as the other two eventually meet Emma with Elizabeth. These varying degrees of success are what made the play for me, and The Long Road tells us that if you do not overcome death, it will eventually take away your dignity and slowly make you into just as much of a monster as the criminals who belong behind bars, only in a much more painful way.

971 WORDS.

Evaluative
Production
values

Evaluative

Production
values

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Candidate J - Commentaries

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Commentary on Exploration Notes for Candidate J

Top of second band

He takes a very sound decision to place his work for each play within one of the elements of exploration; he chooses historical context for *A Doll's House* and cultural and political contexts for *Our Country's Good*. Practical exploration, including work on language and vocal awareness, is immediately woven through the notes.

The use of practitioner theories is very clear in his writing about workshops, where he has experienced them for himself or through watching others. He has a good sense of what these can do for an actor. There is a sense he is reflecting back on practical explorations, bringing together his learning from several sessions. He shows excellent understanding of how text and sub-text interact and how the play's structure is rooted in when and how it was written.

There are some good ideas gleaned from working with design, although these are not fully explored and they are a little vague in terms of his personal understanding. We can see he is considering the response of the audience. His work on characterisation is less convincing, although he brings in some ideas from a third practitioner, showing how much he has employed a range of theories within his own practice. He alludes to how design influences the way visual, oral and spatial aspects of drama create meaning.

An excellent set of notes with a genuine sense of the personal journey undertaken through the exploration of these plays.

Centre marks agreed by the moderator.

Commentary on Evaluation of Live Theatre for Candidate J

Top of third band

This is a very good evaluation that clearly communicates his experience of watching the play, *The Long Road*. He spends a little too long over the analysis of the play itself. While this is interesting, in a short evaluation such as this, there is not enough room to take up so many words with this aspect. The set design is well analysed but less effectively evaluated, although the lighting is addressed very well. He brings in the theories of a practitioner though does not explore the acting performances nearly enough. It is clear he has understood that performances have worked or not, but not how this has happened through the elements of acting.

Centre marks agreed by the moderator.