



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
June 2011**

**Drama and Theatre Studies**

**DRAM1B**

**(Specification 2240)**

**Unit 1B: Prescribed Play**

***Report on the Examination***

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## **DRAM1B - Prescribed Play**

### **General comments**

The general impressions of the standard of the DRAM1B papers this session was a very positive one. Very few candidates submitted very short or totally unfocused answers and most seemed to have at least some knowledge of the set text and of its theatrical potential, as well as a good, relevant knowledge of the play's period and genre. As in previous sessions examiners reported seeing responses across the range of texts with by far the most popular being *Antigone* and *A Dolls House* with a continued increase in popularity over previous sessions of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Oh What a Lovely War*. On the whole it was evident that most candidates had gained at least a reasonable understanding of the plays and were able to communicate their ideas for addressing the demands of the questions in the specified extracts with some degree of confidence.

Good responses contained structured and well focussed answers which used the text well to support their ideas in a coherent and logical manner with for the most part, all aspects of the questions being interpreted appropriately. It is pleasing to note that an increasing number of candidates were doing more than merely regurgitating information about the background and the way the social/political context affected the writer, but were really applying their knowledge in a practical and relevant way. Many clarified the details in their answers that were genuinely influenced by an understanding of the playwright's intentions.

Examiners reported that some candidates still failed to address the precise focus or did not read the questions carefully enough to realise exactly where the specified section starts and ends; this was particularly evident in *A Dolls House*, and where this was the case it inevitably limited the success of the essay. Where candidates clearly recognised and then dealt with the focus early on in their response, they were more able to demonstrate in a theatrical manner their ideas for revealing the requirements of the text.

Some candidates still attempt to relocate their productions in what appear to be quite bizarre and certainly difficult to justify settings and whilst these on occasions might be appropriate, the time that it takes the candidate to justify their choices would be better employed in tackling the specified section of the play. In general it was only the very strongest candidates who were able to manage such approaches with weaker answers offering no justification for transposing the text to a different period or country; *Antigone* continues to be the prime suspect here. Whilst there is no requirement for candidates to set their answers within the original context, it also becomes harder for them to reveal their knowledge of this in transposed settings and periods. Examiners reported an increase in responses that clearly identified the original production context, although there was some confusion as to whether their ideas were being applied to a contemporary audience or to an audience contemporary to the play's first performances.

The most significant fact in differentiating between strong and weak responses remains the amount of purposeful practical detail and precise and close reference to the text. Weaker responses tended to rely heavily on description and character sketches. Stronger responses maintained a focus throughout with really precise and well chosen use of quotations from the text. Candidates should be reminded that the use of the text needs to be sufficient to both allow the examiner to locate the moment and also for the candidate to be able to demonstrate how their ideas are linked to it; page references and very brief quotations, sometime no more than a single word, do little to ensure that the candidate has understood the moment sufficiently for their ideas to be coherent or developed.

Performance based questions continue to be the most popular with most candidates able to discuss the characters' role and function within the specified section. However, what particularly impressed examiners this session was where candidates had understood how a range of performance ideas could be brought together to create a complete picture of the character, making detailed reference to vocal and physical aspects as well as to the use of costume and prop (it is the *use* of these that must be addressed in performance questions and not simply a description of how the character would look with no reference to how this might support the focus of the question). At their best these answers revealed some truly thoughtful ideas about how the character might be performed which were entirely in keeping with their role and function in the specified section. Less effective responses were where the candidates had selected the briefest of moments to address and then went into the minutiae of performance without considering the whole picture. These answers rarely achieved at the highest level as they generally lacked coherence and appeared disjointed.

Examiners reported that in the best answers to these types of questions and those for design, the use of sketches was essential in helping to communicate a full understanding of the candidates' ideas. However, all too frequently and as in previous sessions, examiners reported that candidates tackling design questions did so without sufficient knowledge or understanding of the necessary design fundamentals resulting in some very disjointed and poorly thought through answers. Many did not offer clear diagrams or evidence of design fundamentals in terms of scale, colour and texture. Some design ideas in weaker answers had not considered the traffic of the specified sections of text, or the demands of the style of the play. If candidates choose design or technically focussed questions, it is reasonable to expect that they have some understanding of the appropriate terminology, and can describe intended effects clearly. Many answers were able to achieve this but a disappointing number were not. As in previous series, there was some rather simplistic use of colour in design questions and in costume suggestions.

Candidates tackling directorial but particularly staging questions sometimes failed to recognise the scope of what they could be expected to include within the answer. The inclusion of a full range of staging demands and possibilities was rarely met with candidates often only briefly mentioning blocking, the use of set, props and costume and only passing reference to how lighting or sound might help to reveal their intentions for the specified scene.

Another general point worth recording is that many candidates find comic action difficult to explore. This was especially evident in answers to *The Taming of the Shrew*. Centres considering using texts which rely on comedy should focus on comic direction, comic style and key practices in order to allow students sufficient practical support and access to appropriate terminology.

It also still remains a concern that few candidates seem able to talk with assurance about the performance of the songs in *Oh What a Lovely War* and *The Shadow of a Gunman* (either ignoring them completely or merely discussing the content of the words), or to see the importance of discussing the performance of a character who is not speaking. The reactions of characters to songs or dialogue sung or spoken by others were often given too little weight.

It is clearly significant where candidates demonstrate an awareness of the roles within a theatrical team and use this understanding of the different responsibilities and strengths in terms of performance and interpretation of text. Good responses drew on this knowledge allowing candidates to express clearly the creative elements of the production process thereby producing responses which contained well-evoked and entirely practical ideas.

It is important that candidates recognise that, given the time constraints of the examination, the examiner is looking to reward a demonstration of how the specified section can be brought to life through performance, direction or design as appropriate to the question

It is essential that candidates have a complete familiarity with their text. Some of the specified sections are quite lengthy and this requires a degree of selectivity from the candidate; the need to pick the most appropriate moments to include in their response is paramount to success – at times candidates appeared to ignore what were often the most potentially dramatic and exciting moments. In most answers the beginning section of a set scene was well addressed, sometimes in too much detail, allowing little time to address the rest of the scene. Other answers became progressively more generalised, and, after a very effective start, later moments were glossed over with little detail or lapsed into narrative (or were ignored completely).

Examiners also reported a sense that many candidates needed more practice in how to tackle the demands of the paper in order to present their obvious knowledge and understanding to more advantage. It was interesting to note that very few candidates appear to plan their work at the start of the examination but examiners did report fewer instances of candidates following pre-determined answers which however well drilled rarely lead to a full personally felt response; candidates need to have confidence in their individual interpretations. Lastly, all examiners reported reading some really engaging and detailed responses that clearly demonstrated a full understanding of the theatrical possibilities of their chosen text and maintained a sense of the audience experience at all times.

## ***Antigone***

### ***Question 01***

This was by far the most popular question on the paper with many answers to it being detailed and appropriate and showing a very good understanding of the play, the situation and the character. There were some very precise details given for the physical portrayal of Ismene at particular moments and for her vocal delivery of particular lines. The main weaknesses were a lack of reference to context, with answers launching into the scene with no indication at all of the background circumstances which are known to the actor if not the audience. Some candidate's answers did not address the requirement of the question to consider the sympathy the audience should feel for Ismene whilst some suggested that sympathy for Ismene meant that no sympathy could be felt for Antigone, as though an audience must be forced to choose. Others simply described what the audience would be presented with, without reference to the word sympathy at all. Some candidates did discuss this in some detail but purely as a response to the situation Ismene finds herself in rather than how her performance must be shaped to enhance this, and the candidates who did not reach the end of the extract did not take the opportunity to discuss her final words to her sister and thereby to sum up their mood at parting. Examiners reported many instances of candidates who spent far too long on the opening of the section, frequently writing very lengthy paragraphs that detailed the entrance of the women before even dealing with the text at all and similarly, it was only the strongest of responses that developed ideas in response to Antigone's speech.

The use of knowledge about Greek theatre varied from the excessive, including great detail and technical terms, the obvious result of an in-depth study, (but all too often not shaped to the demands of the question), to those which showed no knowledge or understanding of the period at all. Some candidates had obviously learnt some appropriate terms from classical Greek theatre but often without a full understanding of these. The use of the 'parados' was frequently identified but often described as being in inappropriate places in venues such as proscenium arch theatres. The conventions of entrances into the palace and the parados representing the exits to either the town or the country were not understood. The best answers hit a balance, with some reference to the style and genre in order to place the extract into a defined setting – whether Greek or transposed – and approached the answer with an overall concept or intention, which was then supported by detailed and precise references to the moments and lines to achieve this stated aim.

Worryingly, there were several misinterpretations of the text – more than one candidate had the dead Polynices on stage with Antigone and Ismene and one candidate had Ismene caressing the dead body which goes both against the text and that of the conventions of classical Greek theatre. Examiners also reported several instances of the chorus 'actively' listening to the conversation between Antigone and Ismene which also goes against the demands of the text. Most candidates saw Ismene as weak and helpless, often described as bullied by Antigone, so establishing sympathy for her was fairly clear. Some candidates were unsure as to whether Ismene is the older or younger sister and some ignored the fact that this was a 'performance' question, choosing instead to adopt a directorial approach – whilst not in itself a problem this frequently meant that the candidate strayed into discussing Antigone's performance as much if not more than Ismene's.

### **Question 02**

Examiners reported seeing comparatively few responses to this question with the best ones demonstrating how candidates who had chosen it had familiarised themselves with the conventions of classical Greek theatre and referred to the clothes worn at that time and the stage space used (it was pleasing to note that there are fewer candidates who are still insisting that 'togas' are typical Greek costumes!). However, most had transposed the play into a contemporary setting without offering sufficient explanation or justification for their interpretation. Similarly some candidates were not clear about period and context, stating that they were adopting a classical approach and then had Creon in a suit and Haemon in jeans and a t-shirt.

The best responses focussed clearly on two design elements going into real detail, not just in terms of description of set and costume (usually) but actually explaining how each of the selected elements were used at precise moments from the text. Weaker answers tended to describe in rather vague terms all four of the specified design elements without any reference to the text or with little clear explanation of the required mood or atmosphere; most responses were too generalised and lacking in sufficient technical understanding to create a workable presentation for the conclusion of the play – let alone a sensitive one. Technical terms were often used very loosely, revealing a serious lack of understanding; "I'd have an amphitheatre with a proscenium arch". The use of lighting and sound effects was often potentially very powerful, atmospheric and theatrical, but weaker answers tended to lurch from a red wash for death and a blue wash for sadness, with little subtlety, or with sufficient clear explanation as to when in the text these changes of lighting should be employed. Some candidates with little technical knowledge seemed to completely ignore the need to light the actors' faces. Few candidates addressed sound design, a couple of notable ones used a combination of recorded and live sound to really create and enhance the mood at the end of the play. Of those who chose costume the best provided clear sketches and discussed the influence of the period, but simply dressing the whole cast in black and then claiming that Creon in black will represent his evil nature and his state of mourning has little validity.

### ***Taming of the Shrew***

#### **Question 03**

This was the more popular of the questions on this text with some very lively portrayals created that revealed a man with many characteristics. Good answers quickly and appropriately defined their interpretation of Petruchio and explained in detail how this would be conveyed for a modern audience. These answers had a very clear sense of purpose as to how the audience would respond, and how the performance of Petruchio would reflect his developing relationship with Kate, which is germane to his representation in this scene.

The majority of candidates showed a good understanding of the historical context of the play and the style of theatre although this was at times explored in great length in weaker answers without making clear reference to the specified section. A few candidates offered very unsympathetic interpretations of the character which had some foundation in the text, but were unlikely within the genre of Shakespeare's comedy. These responses focussed unfavourably on Petruchio's early treatment of Kate.

Good answers were able to establish an overview but highlighted the change in the relationship with some deft direction and consistent comic focus, often suggesting a partnership between Petruchio and his wife. Some candidates failed to recognise that the play is a comedy playing Petruchio in such an aggressive manner throughout the entire

scene that it would be unlikely to convince. Conversely the application of slapstick humour, that included some overly graphic depictions of him eating and drinking at the table, was not always entirely appropriate. Most responses however focussed on an interpretation of Petruchio as the 'dominant male', emphasising his cunning, his bullying of Kate and his arrogance in front of the other males; very few saw any possibility of genuine love for Kate. The best responses revealed a development of character and offered thoughtful, creative performance ideas for Petruchio in each of his interactions with the many characters in this scene.

In weaker answers there was an unfortunate tendency to generalise and there was insufficient direct engagement with the text.

#### **Question 04**

Although this was not a popular question, examiners reported seeing some very polarised responses to it with stronger answers offering entirely appropriate disguises and using them to create comic contrasts and real moments of slapstick for example with costumes that were too tight for easy delivery of lines, or too long so that characters tripped up. These answers also looked at comic delivery of lines considering vocal quality and comic timing and often outlined comic moments that recognised the diverse nature of the group that are interacting on stage during this scene.

Weaker answers did not suggest a very secure understanding of the conventions of the use of disguises in Shakespearean comedy and in some answers disguise was barely mentioned, missing the focus of the question.

Some answers seemed unclear as to the functions of the characters at this point in the play and the intention of the scene whilst some of the disguises were very unlikely and would have been inappropriate to the intentions of the characters. Some candidates also ignored the focus of the question on directing and simply offered a set of costume designs without any sense of their use. Given the potential of this scene for directing a range of characters and revealing aspects of character and comedy through the use of the disguises, there were many disappointing responses. Where candidates did offer some directorial detail there were several examples that had very unsubtle suggestions for comedy resulting from over-exaggerated slipping over, burping and farting; justified by speculating what an Elizabethan audience would like without mentioning the modern audience. Few candidates seemed able to discuss how Lucentio would reveal himself to Biondello at the end of the extract.

#### **A Doll's House**

##### **Question 05**

As expected this was a very popular text and this, the more popular of the two questions on it. The majority of candidates' understanding of Torvald was often addressed with great perception and a real sense of the way the characterisation changes in the course of the specified extract. Starting with Torvald's return from the party, the excitement, the drunkenness, the love/lust shown, the irritation with the presence of others and his shock that his advances are rejected were all discussed in detail with precise textual support and with a sense of the progression through the scene. Many candidates used their background knowledge of the period, the role of women, the power of the man in the relationship, to enhance the playing of the scene and to inform Torvald's behaviour.



Unfortunately, it also caused the biggest problem highlighting the significance of the need for candidates to carefully read the question and the explanation of the start and end of the extract that they should be focussing on. A sizeable number of candidates saw 'Act Three' and failed to identify correctly where the selected section ended so moved beyond the specified ending to the end of the play itself. Some candidates obviously found it difficult to see elements of Torvald's attitudes towards Nora in the sections that included Mrs Linde and Dr Rank so they ignored these and moved on to what they perceived as the 'easier' section (beyond the identified extract) where Torvald's attitudes so obviously change towards his wife. It was very disheartening to see that these candidates often had a good understanding of the role and a secure knowledge of Torvald's attitude to Nora. In these instances, credit was given for understanding of the context of the play and the style of the writing but these answers were inevitably self penalising as there was insufficient precise focus on the demands of the question. Even those candidates who did stop at the right point in the text often found it difficult to address the sections with Mrs Linde and Dr Rank. They focused almost entirely on Torvald's sexual desire for Nora and then his anger when she refuses him. This was perfectly valid but they needed to take a broader approach to the set extract.

There was some confusion in many answers about where the Helmers had been and the location, relative to their own apartment. Most answers focused quite well on the changing attitude in the extract but fewer related this specifically to his attitude to Nora.

Good answers however, offered a range of performance ideas, often very detailed and showing quite subtle changes in Torvald's attitude to Nora. A few answers made inappropriate suggestions for his physical contact with Nora whilst Mrs. Linde was in the room or offered ideas for an inappropriately aggressive Torvald, indicating less security with 19th century mores.

As with all performance questions; the best answers used the text purposefully with clear direct reference to it and evident understanding.

### **Question 06**

The staging of the scene between Mrs Linde and Nora was approached very well in many cases with good focus on the differences between the two characters. A variety of aspects were employed such as casting, costuming, levels and the use of stage space; others concentrated on the delivery of lines.

What was often lacking was reference to sufficient detail. Costume was described as "period" or "blue", rather than giving any precise reference to the detail of the design. However, many answers revealed a real knowledge and understanding of the costume options for the period, considering contrasting fabric, fashion and line as well as condition. Some candidates became carried away with the idea of contrast, suggesting that Mrs Linde was little more than a tramp, or suggested an age difference between them which made the fact they were at school together an impossibility. Some candidates felt the need to make the differences between the two characters so extreme as to be almost entirely out of keeping with the text with several responses that had Mrs Linde dressed almost in rags with unkempt hair to show her lack of money compared to Nora. Most candidates fixated on the class differences that they perceived existed between the two characters. Mrs Linde was often described as speaking with a rough accent to show the difference in class between her and Nora, but no real textual evidence was offered for this class difference. Better candidates were prepared to accept that 'differences' can be quite subtle rather than exaggerated.

As with so many questions, what gained the best marks were ideas which were linked to clear and appropriate justification and a detailed use of the text. Once discussing the actual text of the scene, the differences between the two were fairly clearly identified: Nora was generally seen as naïve while Mrs Linde was more worldly-wise; Nora as flippant and vain while Mrs Linde was more serious; Nora as unaware of the potential trouble she faced and Mrs Linde more concerned about it. Good answers were able to contrast the characters effectively through movement and delivery and showed a very secure understanding of the text and sub-text suggesting precisely why, despite their differences, there should be a closeness in the relationship and how these very different women could have been friends; whilst weaker answers offered quite a superficial reading of the characters, particularly of Nora, and showed only a limited awareness of the conventions of behaviour of the era.

Consistency was also vital: it is no use stating in the opening paragraph that the period was a very formal and restricted one and that this would be reflected in the costume, only to have Nora lolling stomach down on the sofa in a manner which a corset and 19<sup>th</sup> century conventions, would prohibit.

### ***The Shadow of a Gunman***

#### ***Question 07***

Examiners reported seeing some very practical answers to this question with some very creative comic focus. The entry of Mr Gallogher and Mrs Henderson was often addressed very imaginatively, with the idea of the ineffectual man hiding behind the imposing woman. Unfortunately, some candidates became distracted by this moment and spent too much time on their entry and offered too much discussion of the performance of Mrs Henderson. The delivery of the letter was given some very imaginative treatment in some answers, but many tended to discuss it as one chunk of text, without tracing the details through, or the variations of comic potential at different moments. In many answers the biggest omission was the fact that the lines which are intended to be humorous were not addressed. Only occasionally did a candidate explain “parrotox” and how to deliver the line, though some suggested good reactions for Mr Gallogher when Mrs Henderson states the wrong county.

Weaker candidates tended to over-play the comedy exaggerating the differences between the characters so much that they appear to think that comedy has to be almost pantomimic to be made clear to the audience. Mr Gallogher’s appearance was a source of comedy but the use of O’Casey’s description of him as a ‘spare little man’ with a ‘thin nervous voice’ was taken to extremes by some candidates who had him quivering in the doorway and speaking barely audibly. This then was at odds with the confidence he appeared to gain from nowhere when the same candidates had him dancing around on the top of the table with great pride in himself for his letter. Elements of both these aspects are perfectly valid as the character is nervous initially and then becomes more self-important but there needs to be some sense of consistency in the interpretation and also an awareness of the style of the play itself.

Successful answers considered the stage directions carefully and used these to develop the performance of the character in his interactions with others developing detailed suggestions for delivery of lines and comic business with his glasses and his papers. Weaker answers offered only limited detail and some candidates were unclear as to the intention of the letter. Unfortunately, several candidates did not discuss comedy effectively and the suggestions offered were unlikely to be funny.

### **Question 08**

Examiners reported seeing very few responses to this question with few achieving at a particularly high level. Reasons for lack of success were that candidates did not securely understand the genre of the play and consequently did not adequately reflect the changes in mood during the course of the specified extract.

In the main the candidates offered directorial suggestions for the scene but paid scant attention to the moods created by their direction. Most candidates did recognise that the mood changes but often only at a very superficial level, identifying tension and suspense as being the main moods of this extract.

Candidates usually discussed Seumas' attitude towards the landlord, Davoren's attempts to continue writing and the interaction between Davoren and Minnie but without specific references to the moods at these points. Very few candidates addressed Tommy Owens' entrance. However, better candidates took the same moments and offered some detailed direction which clearly indicated understanding of the relationships between the characters and the contrasts between them but also discussed this in terms of the ways in which it contributed to the moods. Davoren was often seen as immediately interested in Minnie from her entrance which is unsupported by the text but seemed to appeal to the romantically-minded candidates.

### ***Oh What a Lovely War***

#### **Question 09**

There were some good answers to this question which showed a good understanding of the designer's role and of the style of the play and also of the demands of the specified section. Candidates who had clearly thought about the style of the play and were able to put the extract in context, whilst retaining focus on the question supplied some very inventive designs which were capable of not only achieving the transitions but also showed understanding of the requirements of this section of the play.

Weaker answers did not have that sense of context and there were some very unlikely suggestions involving multiple props and considerable set changes. Some candidates had chosen to explore the Pierrot theme and had introduced elements of circus and clowning into their designs. These were often successful especially when supported by detailed diagrams and design fundamentals such as colour, scale and texture.

Less secure answers often spent a considerable time discussing the work of Brecht and his design intentions. This often detracted from the intentions of the set text and some commentary was over lengthy, thereby losing the focus of the question, or inaccurate. Candidates who acknowledged the influence or intentions of Theatre Workshop but focused on their own designs were far more successful.

### **Question 10**

This was a very popular question and examiners reported seeing a wide range of responses to it. Good answers showed a balance between the representation of the trenches and the ballroom. These answers focussed very firmly on direction and offered detailed suggestions for the actors whilst also demonstrating a good understanding of the demands of the transition between the trench and the ballroom and achieved the contrast effectively with useful ideas for pace, setting and performance.

In the main the candidates discussed differences between the two groups of people – referring to ‘rough’ accents for the soldiers and ‘posh’ accents for the people at the Ball; however, only the most secure responses identified the focus as being the contrasting experiences of these two groups of people who were all at war at the same time. The conditions in the trenches were generally well referred to and there was some sense of the soldiers’ experiences there but the attitude towards the war displayed by the characters at the Ball was mostly ignored. Littlewood’s main point about those who fought and those who commanded in ignorance from the rear was largely missed in these responses.

Weaker answers were less practical and some suggestions for the setting of the ballroom were over complicated and unlikely given the style of the play. Suggestions included flying in of walls, chandeliers and setting of banqueting tables with silver-ware and glasses. These answers were often uneven in their treatment of the text, giving much less attention to the direction of the actors in the ball room.

Generally, the direction of the actors was more successful in the former part of the extract with some acute understanding of the soldiers’ lines and some effective direction illustrating their attitudes. However, many candidates started their direction after the song ‘Gassed Last Night’ or failed to understand the significance of the juxtaposition of the up-beat quality of the song against the images and the following section. As a general point, songs seem to be rarely well-handled.

The Ballroom scene is a complex one which requires precise direction but many candidates did not seem to have a clear idea of what this scene is intended to highlight and therefore how to stage it, with little indication of the importance of positioning and timing. Some candidates showed signs of having directed and experimented with the material themselves, which is, of course, the ideal way of studying any text. It is, however, important to remember that workshop productions, text in hand, in the drama studio or classroom often have to make short cuts and simplifications in relation to most aspects of the production and are not sufficiently precise and theatrically developed when the text is considered for a full production.

### **Playhouse Creatures**

#### **Question 11**

This text continues to be one of the least popular, possibly because of the impact it has on choices for DRAM2, however examiners reported seeing a range of responses. In many cases, ideas for casting the two women often referred to facts already known about them as effective justification for details of build, accent and colouring, although some references to casting could be given little credit because there was no supporting justification for suggestions which could have been very acceptable. As has been flagged up previously, some candidates appear to be confused about what constitutes casting and in these cases the discussion was inappropriate because it focused on how the character was to be played, ignoring the fact that any professional actor would be expected to portray the range of

emotions mentioned. Examiners also reported several cases of candidates nominating particular actors to play the roles with no justification as to the qualities they were looking for.

As with many of the questions, weaker answers did not focus on the precise wording of the question. The delivery of lines was quite well covered, although time was spent on sections which did not relate to their “attitudes to each other”, and although there was reference to the delivery of lines there was not always sufficient recognition of how much could potentially be conveyed by both performers in this scene through their non-verbal portrayal, their responses to the focus of the scene and the lines of the other. However, there was some particularly good detail on the unspoken responses during the exchange with the audience and some very useful description of Nell’s reactions to Mrs Farley’s showing off.

There were many varied ideas for Nell’s behaviour in this extract but not always well related to the text, especially the moment when Mrs Farley calls her over, and their previous encounter was rarely mentioned and neither that nor the present situation was used well to inform their performance in this extract. Some did attempt to account for Nell and Mrs Farley’s actions during this section but often tended to exaggerate their directions such as Nell mincing up and down mimicking Mrs Farley which is unsupported from the text and would have been distracting for an audience. Nell was generally seen as fairly timid but more successful candidates were able to see that she is over-awed initially but becomes more confident later. The most successful responses used the text and offered precise details for its delivery.

### **Question 12**

Many candidates showed very good understanding of the Restoration period, the theatre conditions, and Mrs Betterton’s role within the Playhouse as well as the challenges facing the character at this point in the play with some very sympathetic work being created in her conversation with her unseen husband. Unfortunately, quite a few candidates failed to apply their knowledge sufficiently and only the exceptional answer explained what the discussion on “shares” relates to. Some even suggested it was a reference to a fair share of the parts being allocated.

This was a long extract and required a selective treatment of sections, but the majority had run out of time before they had finished discussing the section with Doll, let alone the later developments. Candidates must be aware of the need to be selective in their approach, a little judicious planning would allow them to cover moments from across the section, particularly if, as in this question, there is room for a range of responses to the character. Some candidates did address the rehearsal section very well with indications of how Mrs Betterton’s sufferings would affect her performance and could affect the audience response, with great subtlety in some cases, but others took this far too extremely, dressing her in rags and filth as an indication of her problems, thereby ignoring the fact that this is a rehearsal of a play not a direct representation of Mrs Betterton’s own situation. However, many candidates failed to even mention her ‘performance’ of Comet.

The less successfully handled sections were mainly in the direction of her attitude to Mrs Farley’s pregnancy and her participation in the attempted abortion. Some good candidates grasped the significance of the section and directed Mrs Betterton with understanding of the context. Weaker candidates however did not securely grasp the impact of Mrs Farley’s situation and its effect on Mrs Betterton, and some direction was superficial and lacked understanding. Many candidates failed to consider the section at all possibly due to either lack of time or because Mrs Betterton says less here. The reference to the Queen’s brooch did not always seem to be understood.

Although most candidates did adopt a performance perspective, several did so without considering the audience's response to her with only the better answers fully addressing this required focus.

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

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