



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

Drama and Theatre Studies

DRAM2

(Specification 2240)

Unit 2: Presentation of an Extract from a Play

Report on the Examination

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

DRAM2: Presentation of an Extract from a Play

General comments

This examination is no longer part of a 'new' specification and it is to be expected that most teachers who have been teaching the specification since 2008 have made themselves entirely familiar with the requirements and expectations built into Unit 2.

It is pleasing to report that the vast majority of teachers were completely *au fait* with the administrative and procedural requirements of the AS practical examination, this series.

Many teachers had supplemented their knowledge of the specification by attending one of the regional standardisation meetings which take place in the autumn term and/or by consulting their centre dedicated Coursework Adviser who is only a phone call or email away.

New teachers are reminded that further guidance is available on the AQA website in the Teacher Resource Bank and that information about the practical examination is provided in 'student- friendly' format in the AQA approved textbook, published by Nelson Thornes.

There were only infrequent occasions where teachers were not sufficiently familiar with the demands of this practical paper to be able to guide their candidates appropriately.

It is not inappropriate to reiterate the demands of DRAM2 for those new to AQA.

The Unit 2 'paper' is not simply a test of candidates' acting ability or ability to execute an effective stage design or to direct an effective piece of theatre. The paper assesses candidates'

- knowledge and understanding of an influential practitioner
- interpretation of a play representing a different period and genre from the play selected for Unit 1
- application of performance and/or production skills.

Where teachers appreciated the learning objectives underpinning DRAM 2 they were able to guide their candidates to make an appropriate selection of a practitioner and a suitable play that enabled candidates to demonstrate their understanding of that practitioner through their interpretation of their chosen extract(s).

Choice of text

As has been reported on previous series, during this 2011 examination series, moderators saw some instances where inappropriate plays were chosen that contravened the rubric either by being a set play from the AS or A2 prescribed texts list or by being of the same genre or same period as the play that the candidates were studying for their DRAM1 written paper.

There were also one or two instances of groups this year that offered a re-working of pieces that they had produced at GCSE or as part of a school or college production. This is not permitted, as candidates are expected to come to this work afresh and uninfluenced by any previous treatment of the text that they have experienced.

Other contraventions of the requirements have included candidates choosing to perform a screenplay and not a stage play. Furthermore, some texts that had been selected were rather simplistic in the theatrical demands made on candidates and not really suitable for AS Level study.

When choosing a play to perform, teachers and candidates should ask themselves whether their chosen text could possibly ever be a set text at AS, as this Unit is required to assess candidate's knowledge and understanding of a 'further' comparable text to meet the specification requirement that candidates study two published plays at this level.

Choice of Practitioner

Some candidates had failed to appreciate that the text selected for Unit 2 should be chosen specifically as a vehicle for the group to demonstrate their understanding of the purpose and range of methods of a single practitioner. Moderators saw some unfortunate pairings in this series.

For example, some groups attempted to apply Brechtian methods to a Godber play without realising that, although Godber may have been influenced by Brecht (amongst others), he is a 'practitioner' in his own right.

Candidates also applied the ideas of Stanislavski inappropriately to unsuitable sections of plays such as those which contained direct address to an audience, for example, *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg*. If teachers and/or candidates wish to choose a text that is quasi-naturalistic they might be well advised to look at practitioners such as Katie Mitchell, Max Stafford Clark or Shared Experience. All of these practitioners' theories are rooted in Stanislavski's methods, but each has their own distinct approach that is more suitable for 20th and 21st century 'naturalism' and semi-naturalistic plays.

It was also evident this year that many groups of candidates were operating from a basis of very restricted knowledge of their practitioner's theatrical purpose and methods.

Some groups' only knowledge of Kneehigh, for example, was apparently based solely on having seen the touring production of *The Red Shoes* or *Hansel and Gretel*. These candidates failed to appreciate that the bulk of Kneehigh's work has not been fairy-tale based and that their techniques far exceed the use of puppets and 'a bit of cross dressing'.

Stanislavski's ideas were also frequently reduced in candidates' minds to the application of 'emotion memory' or the 'magic if' without any reference to how his ideas changed regarding physical actions or the fact that a leading tenet of his ideas was that an actor could not just pick parts of his 'system'.

Knowledge of Artaud was often restricted to his ideas on screams and addressing taboo topics without any consideration of his desire for a more primitive, anti-psychological and language-light theatre.

It is clear from reading the bibliographies in the Supporting Notes that some candidates had read very little and that what they had read was restricted to what they had found on the internet or on Youtube. These are both useful research tools but for this part of the examination there can be no worthwhile substitute for reading the practitioner's own words where they have documented their theories in a formal way.

Although, less common this year, some candidates made the mistake of attempting to apply the work of two or more practitioners to their selected play, also contravening the specification requirement for a single practitioner or company to be applied.

Administration

In the majority of instances:

- Centre teachers were very quick to reply to the initial telephone contact from the moderator and were able to select their first choice date for the examination to take place
- Form DTS (yellow) was returned promptly to the moderator – this should be done by return of post
- Completed DTS forms and copies of scripts were sent at least a month in advance for the moderator to check
- Teachers sent the moderator directions to the school, including a map showing the exact location of the venue to be used for the exam.
- Teachers had also thoughtfully reserved a parking space for the moderator which enabled a prompt start to the moderation session
- A private room has been designated for the moderator's use for the perusal of Supporting Notes and for the moderation discussion to take place
- A sensible running order for the moderation had been devised and suitable breaks for refreshment had been programmed into the session for the moderator and the teacher /assessor
- All candidates' Supporting Notes, including those to be sampled, were available for the moderator at the beginning of the moderation session
- Preparation and Supporting Notes sections of the Candidate Record Sheets had been completed in advance of the moderator's arrival.
- Mark sheets were sent to the moderator promptly after the examination had finished.

However, in some instances, teachers did not comply with the guidelines set out in the specification for the administration of the coursework and/or moderation procedures.

It may be worth repeating here some of the pointers offered in last year's report intended to be helpful reminders about some of the procedures associated with the moderation:

- AQA runs standardisation meetings in the autumn term where teachers will be able to see video material of both AS and A2 candidate work as well as seeing examples of Supporting Notes and having the opportunity to have any questions about the practical component answered by senior moderating personnel; if you wish to attend one of these you should contact the subject manager at the beginning of the autumn term
- Teachers are recommended to check their school or college calendar before arranging a firm date as this is not able to be changed after December 31st

- After December 31st, changes of date are not permitted for reasons of candidate absence or staff absence (whatever the cause of staff absence). In the case of candidate absence, advice should be sought from AQA on arrangements to accommodate the absence and on special consideration
- It is essential that centres send forms DTSV4 (with copies of the scripts to be used for DRAM2) **at least** a month in advance of the examination date. This is so the moderator can check for any contraventions of the rubric such as the prohibited choice of a set text, the choice of a text linked to an inappropriate practitioner or the injudicious cutting of texts at AS
- If teachers are unsure about the viability of candidates' decisions they should contact their Coursework Adviser well before the rehearsal process gets fully under way
- While moderators are willing to moderate during the evening, it is **recommended** that the moderation schedule is drawn up to ensure that no group is beginning to perform after 9pm and, therefore, that starting times for the first group in the sample should be no later than 7pm
- It is important that where centres choose to hold an out-of-hours examination, the moderator is provided with clear details about how to access the drama department and also given a mobile number to contact in case of difficulty.

Application of the marking criteria

Most teachers were accurate in the application of the marking criteria for each of the assessment objectives being tested in DRAM2. However, there were some instances where teachers had not fully understood the precise nature of AO3. This mark out of 10 is not related to the application/understanding of the practitioner but to candidates' understanding of the text from which their chosen extract is taken.

Candidates whose interpretation of the chosen text ran counter to the dramatist's intentions therefore penalised themselves in relation to AO3.

Completion of Form DTSV3

It is worth highlighting the purpose of the completion of these forms which is to allow teachers to briefly summarise, in each box on the grid, the specific key features of a practitioner's work that were being employed by their candidates. Many teachers have followed the advice given in standardisation meetings and completed these forms in consultation with their candidates, so that all knew precisely the features to be explored and used in rehearsals and the performance. This practice also seems to help candidates in writing their Supporting Notes, and, in particular, Section 1.

Supporting Notes

It is worth mentioning again that the requirements for each section of the Supporting Notes are set out clearly in the specification itself, in the document 'Notes for Guidance' on the website and that there are examples of Supporting Notes available on e-aqa.

It is important that candidates write about the right things in the right section in order to achieve high marks. Most candidates restricted themselves to the recommended word limits for each section, although it is evident that some teachers have not communicated sufficiently the need to write 'precise and concise' notes and there were many examples of over lengthy work, sometimes as much as 800–900 words in each section. Candidates only do themselves a disservice when they do this.

Section 1

This Section requires candidates to explain the theatrical purpose of their chosen practitioner and the theatrical means by which the practitioner hoped to achieve that purpose.

Candidates should then justify their choice of play and extract in terms of how those techniques can be applied.

In order to do this, candidates have to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the practitioner's work. Good candidates demonstrated all of this.

Weaker candidates justified their choice only in terms of how it suited the group members and how much they liked the play.

Knowledge of the work of the practitioner was restricted to just a very few features and in some cases glaring misconceptions were evident.

Section 2

This section requires candidates to explain their dramatic intentions for an audience and to explain **how** they have interpreted the play using the practitioner's methods.

Good candidates gave clear and precise examples of how they had staged their play and interpreted their characters (if acting) linked to what their practitioner would have done.

Reading good work the moderator became clear about what it was they were to see live in the performance. Even weaker candidate were able to offer some attempt to define their aims although they were often only in terms of what they wanted for themselves rather than for the play's effect on the audience.

There was also widespread misunderstanding of what is meant by 'interpretation' and some candidates just described rehearsals without any reference to the play itself. Weak work often left the moderator wondering what they were going to see.

Section 3

Candidates have to do a lot in this section. They have to assess their rehearsals and their skills, assess the potential effectiveness of the piece and address health and safety issues.

Good work did all of this often focusing on how the practitioner's rehearsal techniques had helped to achieve the roles (if offering acting as their skill).

There was clear assessment of the piece. The best candidates were able to step back from their own production and consider if their chosen practitioner would recognise it as something of their own style.

Good acting candidates picked out relevant examples of how they had used vocal and physical skills to play their part.

Health and safety addressed the specific demands of their own work. Weaker candidates wrote about teacher lead workshops rather than their own rehearsals and there was a misunderstanding of what is meant by the skills of an actor.

Assessment of the potential effectiveness was often missed out. Health and safety was thin or just a guide on how to use the drama studio safely.

The weakest work was seriously under length and contained many spelling errors, although even the best candidates cannot get to grips with 'multi-roling'

Recommended length of Supporting Notes

It is worth reiterating that over-lengthy sections do not attract the highest marks; moderators have seen far more examples of work with sections of over 800 words this year. Candidates must be discouraged from this practice as, not only are they not rewarded for their extra words, but they actually penalise themselves by not fitting the Band 1 criteria of 'concise', 'precise' and 'purposeful'.

Group Performances

Many of the candidates drew inspiration from live productions they had seen during the year and this resulted in the choice of Berkoff, Kneehigh, Frantic Assembly and DV8 as very popular selected practitioners. Also, popular choices were Artaud, Stanislavski, Brecht, John Godber, Katie Mitchell and Max Stafford Clark. Some of the work seen was highly imaginative with clear and interesting interpretations of the selected plays coupled with appropriate aims for audience responses.

There were, however, instances where the apparent ease of invention and communication, as seen performed by a professional company, was outside the reach of candidates and examples of weak, sometimes imaginatively impoverished invention resulted. There was also a limitation in the use of physical skills with very basic choreography being created and without the precision that made the physicality effective as a medium of ideas or comment.

Some candidates used their chosen space in a highly flexible way, exploring depth, diagonals, use of levels and forestage locations in adroit and imaginative ways. Less skilled candidates tended to restrict their work to a lateral use of space and their stage pictures were flat and lacking in points of focus.

Some presentations lacked sufficient variety of pace and the work became monotonous, tending to become slower as the piece progressed. Stronger candidates maximized their variety of pace to create some very effective moments.

Many candidates had taken great care to costume and stage their pieces with meticulous consideration of the effect for an audience. This included the creation of uniformity, colour coding/co-ordination and even period costumes; this was often achieved through candidates' use of charity shops, local markets and sheer ingenuity rather than extensive funds. The need to present something which **suggests** the period/idea needs to be part of the initial consideration of the choice of play rather than becoming a challenge to meet at the last minute.

Some very successful presentations were seen this year that ran the gamut of world theatre. Moderators were delighted to see successful renditions of English and European classics,

from the Greeks through to Shakespeare, Sheridan, Wycherley, Moliere, Marlowe, Brecht, Lorca and Ibsen as well as more modern and occasionally avant garde work.

Moderators reported seeing more modern European plays that included, for example, Handke's *Offending the Audience* and Muller's *Hamletmaschine* and also noted the growing popularity of French writers such as Ionesco and Genet.

At the other end of the artistic spectrum some groups still offered plays that made few intellectual demands and in some cases few theatrical demands. What is important to remember is that candidates must be able to understand their chosen play and to be able to apply a range of their practitioner's techniques.

Very good groups revealed both. Their understanding of their text was most often demonstrated in their ability to meet its theatrical demands. So appropriate accents were adopted; costumes, props, furnishings were selected appropriately where specified. If needs be these groups also made judicious use of non-examinees and had selected their chosen extracts with care.

Some groups used appropriate music to set the scene at the beginning of their presentations which helped to reveal their understanding of the period and mood of the play or they used music or sound effects between extracts being presented. One such exquisitely tender presentation of *The Crucible* contained period detail in the costumes and props even down to the 'rabbit stew' along with the sound effects of crows outside which presented an ominous foreboding as well as revealing their consideration of Stanislavskian techniques in creating a stage truth.

In another successful realisation of the RSC adaptation of *Beauty and the Beast* a group had applied the methods of Kneehigh with real playfulness. They used a dolls house to represent the family's house, finger puppets to represent the other brothers in the family. They used a cardboard cut-out of the moon and had stars on sticks and, amusingly, flew in cash notes on a fishing line.

4.48 *Psychosis* continues to be one of the most presented plays - albeit not the most successfully attempted one – some moderators reported seeing one or two of these per week - but few groups have been able to address the nuances in the text satisfactorily, especially when Artaud has been chosen as the practitioner.

One group avoided the trap of just screaming at the audience all the way through and succeeded in demonstrating a good understanding of how Artaud's methods can unsettle an audience. As the audience entered the space they were confronted with floor to ceiling plastic sheeting daubed with fragments from the text. This sheeting was back lit so what was behind the plastic could not be seen. All that emanated from the plastic was the sounds of whimpers and groans. There was a strong smell of disinfectant which indicated a hospital. The whole atmosphere was unsettling for an audience which was further developed through a *coup de theatre* when the whole of the sheeting collapsed around us to reveal contorted bodies dispersed about some centrally placed scaffolding and ramps.

The hallmark of all successful presentations was that there were plenty of the practitioner's methods clearly in evidence and underpinned by a complete understanding of the text.

Weaker offerings revealed either a lack of knowledge of the work of the chosen practitioner or a lack of understanding of the text or both. Some pieces demonstrated no features of the chosen practitioner. For example, one group performed all in black without any real attention given to the visual aspects of the work yet were apparently using Frantic Assembly techniques. Another group, who presented *Top Girls* using Stanislavski (not an ideal

combination), failed to have coffee or sugar on stage even though the characters mentioned both!

In many pieces, the pace was often ponderous with little or no variation. Accents were ignored or plays transposed from one location to another just because the candidates could not 'do' the appropriate accent. Transitions were slow and sometimes noisy with the audience left in the dark waiting for something to happen.

There were also pieces this year which were far too short. Even if there are only two in a group the performance needs to last for approximately 15 minutes. Conversely, some pieces went on for too long and weakened the overall impact on the audience. It is strongly advised that groups adhere to the suggested timings outlined in the specification.

In some pieces there was such an idiosyncratic interpretation that it revealed a complete misunderstanding of the text, often compounded by the misapplication of a practitioner's methods. In one piece – a Mark Ravenhill play – the group had taken out all the 'bad language' thus rendering the play unbelievable. Where strong language and/or 'adult' material are not tolerated within an individual institution, it is wise to advise candidates to opt for plays where these features are not part of the fabric of the drama.

Some very fine examples of non-naturalistic plays were seen that are worth mentioning, including *Seven Stories* by Morris Panych which showed a highly inventive use of Brechtian devices. A performance of *The Fall of the House of Usher* by Berkoff was an excellent example of ensemble playing and finely honed performance skills. *Adult Child: Dead Child* by Claire Dowie was chosen by one group who communicated very skillfully with the audience using the techniques of *Complicite*.

Another particularly successful piece was *Normal* (Anthony Neilson) based on the story of a brutal mass murderer using Artaud's techniques. The group placed the small audience in the middle of the space on swivel stools and performed on four sides around. At times polythene screens were placed between players and audience as blood was splattered to great effect leaving the audience with a feeling of total entrapment.

Directing

Candidates who offered this skill, this year, seem to have fallen into two camps: those who have an intelligent grasp of the play and the nominated practitioner, coupled with the skills and maturity required to handle a cast of contemporaries and those who seem to have gravitated towards the skill because they lack the necessary skills to be assessed as an actor or designer.

Those in the former category have had more success if they were using the techniques of a practitioner who has/had very specific ideas about the role of the director. Hence, those who have used Max Stafford Clark or Brecht fared better than those who had attempted to use, for example, Godber or Ayckbourn. In the work of better candidates it was evident that artistic decisions were closely linked to the intentions of the playwright. Here, detailed prompt copies revealed a disciplined and imaginative approach to the theatrical elements other than acting.

Where candidates had the necessary skills to lead a group, it was obvious that the whole group had benefitted from the ideas and objectivity of someone able to step away from the piece and offer purposeful advice about positioning, grouping and use of the space and of props. Very often, accomplished directors created effective stage pictures; a number had chosen to incorporate projected images and sequences and these were often very effective.

It was also clear where directors had employed the strategies of the chosen practitioner to shape the work on stage.

There were less satisfactory examples where the directing candidate did not apparently have an overall directorial concept and there was little in the final piece to suggest that there had been a single unifying force driving the work.

For some students who had no experience as yet of directing, the balance to be achieved between dictatorship and laissez-faire was not understood.

Few directors seemed to understand how to advise about the pacing of the performance and the effectiveness of the transitions between scenes should be clearly addressed by any directing candidate.

A group which has a strong, sensitive and focused director has a distinct advantage, with that candidate watching the whole piece and process from an audience's perspective. Practical aspects such as the blocking of the piece were well tackled and good directorial candidates made sure that the overall intention of the play and group came across strongly. Weaker candidates tended to support the group to varying degrees but not to make a distinctive contribution. Some adopted a role which was more that of the company manager.

Weaker directors revealed little sense of any controlling hand in the work. Positioning lacked invention and at times led to actors being masked or standing laterally across the width of the stage. Movement lacked motivation and there was very little sense of the tempi of the respective scenes. There was often an over-riding even pace applied to the performances and in some cases it was difficult to detect what directorial contributions had been made.

It is fair to say that candidates who offer this skill need to have a high level of maturity and intelligent understanding of the text as well as knowledge about rehearsal techniques. In some offerings it was difficult to assess precisely what the directing candidate had been responsible for and in some unfortunate cases a whole group will have lost marks for understanding because of the director's autocratic interpretation. In one case a group mounted a play by Brecht all wearing leggings and tee shirts which goes against any ideas that Brecht had about the visual aspects of his productions.

Acting

This was by far the most popular skill offered by candidates and there were some outstanding performances witnessed by moderators.

In many cases the acting skills on display were very impressive and portrayed clear understanding of the demands of the chosen text and their character's place within the piece. Whether the pieces were naturalistic or not, many candidates had taken enormous care to inhabit or to commit fully to their role and to present the required qualities and emotions to the audience in a manner which was completely enthralling and convincing. The quality of physical theatre was often very impressive and there were fewer performances seen where candidates had elected to use a physical presentational style without any real understanding of the demands and the style specific techniques involved, such as extension, synchronization and unremitting focus.

In the best naturalistic performances, the thought processes behind the lines were evident, resulting in the revelation of a detailed emotional journey that was shared with the audience. Good candidates always display a sensitivity to the rhythm of the language, whatever the play, but particularly in Shakespearean pieces. The same careful note of the poetry of the

text was often also seen in renditions of Berkoffian characters. These candidates revealed a complete understanding of the verse form in such performances, so that, although heightened, the characterisations were based in truth, rather than being mere exhibitions of verse delivery. Use of pauses and silence was also effective.

Good performers did not mistake effort for energy but controlled their use of pitch and tone effectively. Accents, where adopted, were sustained without losing the feeling and sense inherent in the lines. Props were handled adeptly and their apparently effortless use was clearly the result of many weeks of rehearsal. Props can be very unpredictable co-stars and scenes which involve throwing plates/chairs/paint need to be rehearsed **more** than the rest of the performance, not trusted to behave in a way which is optimistically expected.

Some of the best work was of an ensemble nature and this demanded a high level of focus, dexterity and discipline.

Often it was evident from the performances, that however much theoretical knowledge candidates had of the ideas of their chosen practitioner, the work had barely been affected at all by those ideas.

Less effective acting was often at odds with the intentions and/or methods of the nominated practitioner, so that candidates who had, for example, chosen Frantic Assembly were unequal to the physical disciplines involved or those having chosen Brecht could not always cope with the Brechtian need for demonstration rather than a naturalistic identification with the character.

Others did not have the appropriate accent and, at the lower end of the ability spectrum, in some cases, had not even mastered their lines sufficiently. This often led to hesitancy and nervousness on behalf of the rest of their group as they worried about whether their fellow group member would get through the performance or not. It is worth reminding candidates that they do not have to choose Acting as their skill and that, if they do opt for performing, that the ability to learn lines is a very basic requirement.

Set design

All design candidates need to be reminded that they may select a different practitioner from that of the acting/director candidates in the group. Candidates who had done this, this year, were often more easily able to realise their designs fully and the most successful were those designers who worked in a non-naturalistic style.

That having been stated, some candidates had been able to create very impressive realistic sets for their actors, taking into account locale, period and space for the actors.

One such candidate had gone a long way to creating a successful set for *The Crucible* – a huge challenge for any young designer. The white washed walls, backing flats with a scene of a field projected onto them and attention to set dressing, including straw on the floor and benches with period pots and pans really helped to convey the essence of the scene.

Another candidate built moveable periaktoi screens with various locations painted on to them which served as very effective backdrops for *Mistero Buffo* (and were moved and manipulated by the actors in true Kneehigh style).

Many weaker Supporting Notes for this skill had not addressed the requirements stated in the specification. Notably, photographic records of construction, front elevations, costs and ground plans were often missing.

Costume design

A number of successful costume designs were seen by moderators this year. Centres are reminded that costume candidates have to realise a single costume from scratch and oversee all the other costumes worn by the group.

Good candidates produced costumes that were clearly influenced by the nominated practitioner; additionally, they actually fitted the actors for whom they were designed.

Where candidates had chosen Artaud as their practitioner there were varying degrees of success. Costumes that had an all-black, distressed look about them had clearly ignored Artaud's ideas on costume. Better candidates had clearly looked at photographs of Artaud's own (limited) productions as well as at his own art work and one candidate had created detailed 1950's costumes complete with fully fashioned stockings and net petticoats but with hieroglyphics appliquéd on to them to create a more surreal look.

Another candidate had wittily employed a variety of tat to construct workable colourful costumes for a Kneehigh piece.

Weaker candidates had not taken into account that their costumes had to work at a distance and some of the detailed embroidery could not actually be seen when on stage. Nor had weaker candidates taken into account how their costumes would change under stage lighting or reveal any attention to detail. It is unlikely a king will have dirty shoes for example or that a beautiful princess will have her bra straps showing as was seen this year in one presentation.

Good candidates had made effective use of a costume plot in their Supporting Notes and addressed the issues of durability, cleaning and costs. Weaker candidates had merely adapted things they had found in the costume cupboard.

Mask design

This was not a popular choice; moderators reported seeing only a handful of mask designers this year.

There were a couple of groups who had chosen Trestle as their influential practitioner and there were some quite effective masks seen that were based on Trestle's hallmark style.

Masks were also used in an impressive and purposeful way in presentations of *The Tempest* - for Ariel and Caliban and also for the Masque characters, Juno and Ceres; in this presentation, Prospero also wore a huge headdress-cum-tribal mask when he was controlling the action, and this made for some effective theatrical moments.

It was obvious that the actors in these successful presentations had spent a considerable time working with the actors in their masks to ensure they were able to achieve complete audibility as well as to be able to move effectively in their masks.

Weaker candidates constructed masks that were not entirely fit for purpose and moderators were disappointed to report that some groups would have achieved better marks if they had been able to perform without them.

Technical Elements

This skill continues to grow in popularity but centres are reminded that in order for candidates to be able to realise their designs they need appropriate equipment. Lighting was more popular than sound design and there was some very good work seen.

The best work contained well focused lanterns, precisely timed changes, and a sophisticated approach to colour mixing. These good candidates were artistic in their approach first and foremost and technicians secondly.

One candidate whose group were using the techniques of Katie Mitchell had chosen to select Paule Constable, a lighting designer who has worked extensively with Mitchell, as her practitioner. Using Constable's own egg yolk yellow Lee filters she was able to create a foggy eeriness when passed through low lying smoke on stage.

Other candidates used moving lights to play on the physical work of their actors which only served to enhance the overall look of the scene. Moving projections were also used effectively in non-naturalistic pieces.

Weaker work consisted mostly of colour washes with no precision at all and red was often used in a very clichéd manner to symbolise blood or death. Often only the centre stage area was lit and actors disappeared into the murk when they moved out of that area. In the weakest work flashing lights went on for far too long and the use of strobos was illegal in some cases.

There were some lovingly created soundscapes where sound mixing had been precisely recorded and coupled with the candidate's own compositions. Directional sound was used effectively in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* to convey the sound of Yang Sun's plane flying overhead. The weaker work just consisted of pop music blaring loudly often so that the actors could not be heard.

In the Supporting Notes the best candidates provided detailed cue sheets which contained information about cues, actual cues whether they were visual or spoken, levels of intensity or volume, channels and rates of fade and cross fade.

Weaker cue sheets revealed nothing more than 'cue 1 cue 2' etc. but without any attendant instructions as what the precise nature of those cues were. There are very many books on this subject available and technical candidates are advised to refer to them to see how cue sheets should be communicated.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion