

# Examiners' Report

## June 2018

GCE Drama and Theatre Studies  
8DR0 02

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June 2018

Publications Code 8DR0\_02\_1806\_ER

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# Introduction

In the second year of this examination it is worth reinforcing the focus for this component.

*Theatre Makers in Practice* focuses on the work of theatre makers and the theatrical choices that are made by members of the creative and production team to communicate ideas to an audience. In the written paper, candidates interpret, analyse and evaluate their experience of a live theatre performance.

This written examination is 1 hour and 45 minutes in length and is divided into two sections *Section A: Live Theatre Evaluation* and *Section B: Page to Stage: Realising a Performance Text*. Section A is worth 16 marks and contains an element of choice to allow all candidates access to the question paper. Section B is worth 42 marks and contains two compulsory questions dealing with performance and design respectively; both are worth 16 marks.

The focus of each of the sections in the examination is as follows:

**Section A: Live Theatre Evaluation** is about candidates as informed members of an audience, reflecting on their experience at a live theatre event. This should enable them to demonstrate knowledge and understanding through analysis and evaluation. Candidates are allowed to bring in theatre evaluation notes of up to a maximum of 500 words.

**Section B: Page to Stage: Realising a Performance Text** deals with the exploration of a complete performance text to consider how theatrical ideas might be realised in performance and communicated to create impact on the audience.

The specified texts are:

*Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, Dario Fo

*Colder Than Here*, Laura Wade

*Equus*, Peter Shaffer

*Fences*, August Wilson

*Machinal*, Sophie Treadwell

*That Face*, Polly Stenham

Candidates need to consider how both performers and designers use theatrical conventions and dramatic elements to realise ideas from the page to the stage. Candidates respond to an unseen extract from the chosen text but are expected to demonstrate knowledge of the whole text in their response.

## **Section A: Live Theatre Evaluation**

The paper provided alternative questions to allow all candidates a choice: the contribution of the sound designer through use of live and/or recorded sound, or how non-verbal communication was used to create characterisation. This choice mirrors questions asked in the [Sample Assessment Material](#) published on the Drama subject page.

Alternative questions are provided so that candidates are not disadvantaged if the production they

saw did not contain some of the elements being tested. The alternatives are available to ensure all candidates have an opportunity to access at least one of the two options available.

The specification was developed with a clear understanding that drama does not mean a candidate is necessarily a performer: candidates may complete the qualification as a performer or a designer to make the most of individual skills and interests. Candidates are encouraged to focus on live theatre throughout the qualification. Theatre is a collaborative art form and it is important that candidates have a clear understanding of how different creative ideas are put into practice. Candidates are required to learn how to interpret, analyse and evaluate their experience of a live theatre performance and develop the skills to deconstruct specific elements. They should analyse and evaluate the ways in which directors, performers and designers create impact and meaning through dramatic and theatrical elements.

It is important to note that when choosing a performance for candidates to see, centres take into consideration that they may be asked to demonstrate awareness of a range of production elements, e.g. costume, set, sound or lighting.

Page 40 of the specification states:

When choosing a performance the following should be taken into consideration:

- *whilst both amateur and professional productions are acceptable, it is not possible to evaluate the work of other students for this assessment*
- *the live theatre performance cannot be a performance text that is on the prescribed list of this specification*
- *it should ideally demonstrate a range of production elements, for example costume, set, sound, lighting*
- *the production should present opportunities for students to discuss the work of key theatre makers, for example directors, performers and designers*

The production must provide opportunities for students to use a subject-specific vocabulary. For the purposes of this qualification live theatre means being in the same performance space as the performers. It does not include any performance that is sung-through in its entirety. The performance can be an amateur or professional production as long as the choice enables students to access the demands of this component. It is desirable for students to see as much live theatre as possible throughout the course, although only one performance will be written about in the examination.

The production seen should present opportunities for candidates to discuss the work of key theatre makers, including directors, performers and designers. For this particular paper, the questions focussed on analysing and evaluating the contribution made by one key theatre maker, or how a particular dramatic element was used in production.

There is an expectation from examiners that candidates prepare for the examination by creating notes to support *Section A* responses. Information concerning what is allowed in the notes and annotation of the text can be found in the Specification Pg. 41.

These notes may include reference to:

- *performers, including performers in specific roles*
- *design considerations, including the use of costume, set, lighting and sound*

- *the director's concept/interpretation and the chosen performance style*
- *impact on the audience, including, specifically, on the student, and how this was achieved*
- *the use of the theatre space*
- *how ideas were communicated during the performance. Sketches, drawings and diagrams may also be included in the notes and used to support the response to the question if required.*

The component requires candidates to respond to the specific focus of the question, rather than offering a generalised overview based too closely on pre-prepared material.

In the second series of this examination, examiners report that there is evidence of candidates being well-prepared for the demands of this unit. Those candidates who cited a range of specific, tangible examples allowed examiners to visualise the moment. This allowed candidates opportunities to create effective evaluative responses. This was particularly true in Section A, where the productions seen led the responses, allowing candidates opportunities to address the specific demands of the question.

Section A questions were largely responded to much better than Section B. Many candidates were able to write confidently about their theatrical experiences. Most managed to write a personal response capturing their excitement and enthusiasm.

The most popular production seen was undoubtedly *Frantic's Things I Know to be True*. Other popular choices included *Hedda Gabler*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Frogman*, *The Tin Drum*, and *The Caretaker*.

Successful answers were from candidates who had clearly enjoyed the theatrical experience and were able to offer detailed analysis, supported by an understanding based on their learning through the course.

Less successful responses did not address the question, merely describing the production seen. In some cases, candidates were very critical but failed to support this with detailed, considered analysis or evaluation.

Across the cohort there was evidence of candidates being able to access the question paper and provide well-informed, articulate responses. The extracts in this report represent responses that achieved higher level marks as well as examples of responses that illustrate common problems. The extracts demonstrate ways in which candidates can access higher level marks, and common issues when failing to meet the demands of the question. This will provide an insight into the range of responses examiners have seen. These responses should be read in conjunction with the commentary included with each extract, the examination paper, and the published mark scheme.

## Question 1

This proved the more popular choice, with slightly more candidates opting for this question. The most successful wrote about a live theatrical event that allowed access to the focus of the question. The use of sound was analysed and evaluated with varying levels of expertise and subject-specific knowledge.

It is important that candidates possess the subject-specific vocabulary required to write effectively about their chosen area of focus. A subject-specific performance glossary was made available as part of the *Getting Started Guide*; this covers Performance, Costume, Lighting, Set, and Sound Design and provides an indication of the level of technical language required.

Most candidates were able to consider a range of different sources for sound, presenting reasonably detailed levels of analysis and evaluation regarding the intended and actual impact. Unfortunately, sophisticated, subject-specific terminology was lacking in most responses. Whilst some candidates were able to write about panning, intensity, direction, source etc there was often a sense of candidates having difficulty in finding the language to communicate their understanding of how sound contributed to the performance.

Descriptive, generalised responses lacking subject-specific vocabulary, whether technical or performance-driven, will not gain access to higher levels.

The best responses were well-informed and made perceptive comments, balancing analytical understanding against informed, evaluative judgements. Knowledge of designer aims and objectives, and how these informed audience understanding, allowed some candidates the opportunity to create sophisticated responses. When evaluating the contribution of sound, a personal response, rooted in first person narrative, offered a much more accurate and precise evaluative focus than a generalised response from an audience perspective. There were examples of candidates writing in a limited way, demonstrating a lack of understanding, subject-specific knowledge and precise evaluative focus.

Successful candidates linked articulately the use of sound with wider elements of the performance. For example, in *The Caretaker* candidates considered how sound was created organically by other performers, to communicate meaning, eg wringing out a wet cloth to suggest that the characters were drenched.

Strong responses provided a clear context for the production, citing a range of examples. Candidates were able to connect analytically the use of sound to define its contextual function. There were some interesting examples of candidates comparing the impact of recorded sound with live sound, evaluating both methods as a means of communicating ideas.

A few candidates referenced the delivery of dialogue through voice, and how this was amplified by microphones; unfortunately, this did not allow them access to the question. Sound does not include dialogue but can include rhythmic and non-rhythmic choral elements, live music, songs and organic sound f/x.

It is essential that candidate responses contain a *balanced consideration between analysis and evaluation*.

Please note also that *responses which demonstrate isolated analysis without evaluation can only achieve a maximum of 4 marks*.

There was evidence of detailed analytical responses that contained no evaluative qualities, explicit

or inferred. Consequently, only 4 marks could be awarded.

Whilst the amount a candidate writes does not define the mark awarded, there are approximately 5 sides of A4 available. It is expected that in order to produce a fully-developed response, candidates will produce more than 2–3 sides of A4 under examination conditions. Examples of brief, under-developed responses, that do not provide the level of analytical and evaluative detail, were evident as candidates ran out of time or ideas. It is important that centres encourage candidates to write under examination conditions on a regular basis to ensure that candidates learn to manage their time effectively.

This is a detailed and lengthy response which focuses on the use of live and/or recorded sound. There is a range of examples provided, which are analysed and evaluated in fine detail.

## Performance details

Title:

The Birthday Party

Venue:

Harold Pinter Theatre

Date seen:

17th January

Indicate which question you are answering by marking a cross in the box . If you change your mind, put a line through the box  and then indicate your new question with a cross .

Chosen question number: Question 1  Question 2

Write your answer here:

On the 17th of January I watched 'The Birthday Party' by Harold Pinter at the Harold Pinter Theatre. During this I was impressed at sound designer Simon Baker's use of line and recorded ~~to~~ sound to portray Pinter's intentions of revealing societal repression and the depths of man. I ~~is~~ also believe it reflected well on Baker's own intention, parallel to Pinter's, which was to create a piece that reflected the individuality of man which was repressed during the time period of the ~~1970s~~ 1950s as ~~man~~ members of the public attempted to repressed ~~to~~ the horrors of the <sup>recent</sup> ~~recent~~ war by attempting to achieve the idealic lifestyle through marriage and children, both of which increase dramatically during the time.



An example of this was during Act one when Stanley, played by Toby Jones, paraded around the ~~stage~~ front area of the stage with long strides with rhythmically banging a soldier drum while Meg (Zoë Wanamaker) doted on him proudly while standing stage left. The playing of this drum rapidly increased with intensity and speed while Stanley created a loud scream. As an audience member this shocked me as the <sup>harsh</sup> loud sounds created an intense atmosphere and darkened the scene due to the contrast created from the childlike experience seen moments before. I felt this was excellent collaboration between the sound designer and the director, Ian Rickson, to create an unsettling scene through the pairing of animalistic expression and diegetic sound. I felt this reflected successfully on the repression of society at the time as Stanley breaks free from his enforced ~~st~~ repression through childhood images to realise the world around him, which parallels both Shaffer's and Baker's intentions to reveal the repression of man ~~and~~ as well as their individuality as Stanley attempted to express himself. I also believe

it complimented the uprise in birth rates during the 1950s as members of the public attempted to create a family to distract them from their experiences of the war just as Meg attempts to achieve with ~~st~~ Stanley by gifting him a drum suitable ~~for~~ a child despite his adulthood.

Another example of this was in Act two through the use of diajestic music ~~was~~ Stanley and McAnn, played by Tom Vaughan-Lawlor, stood ~~up~~ upstage centre while in tense conversations which was disrupted by the use of projected whistling from the non speaking person, the tune created flowed smoothly from person to person as they remained engaged in tense conversation. I felt this was very successful in creating contrast between the calming demeanor created by the gentle whistle tune and the cautious speech from both characters. As an audience member, I felt unsettled by this moment as the mood of the scene constantly switched from casual to ~~mean~~ menacing. However as an informed audience member I felt it excellently reflected on ~~#~~ Pinter's themes of ignorance and repression.

throughout the play as each character suppressed their thoughts through the use of their ~~mouth~~ whistling. I saw this as an excellent collaboration between sound designer and director as the opposing styles created a conflicting scene parallel to the conflict created in the character's minds as they attempted to express themselves ~~but~~ <sup>but</sup> felt the weight of their societal oppression. I also connected this to the expectations men in the 1950s as when were expected to immediately return to their jobs in order for the country to resume schedules despite the rate of male hysteria and P.T.S.D skyrocketing after the war. Therefore ~~the use~~ Simon Baker's use of non-recorded sound created a scene that ~~so~~ perfectly demonstrated the conflict in repression and individuality of men.

Another example of this was Baker's use of diajective and non diajective sound simultaneously in Act two as McAnn stood downstage right while leaning on the whiskey cabinet that lined the stage as he sang an ~~and~~ Irish folkore song named "Garden of Eden" while, non-diajectically, accompanied by

a complimentary pre-recorded, piano tune ~~was~~ produce by the theatre's sound rig. → As an audience member I enjoyed the calming mood this created for the scene which contrasted the atmosphere of the ~~scene~~ rest of the play which adopted either an tense or mundane atmosphere. I also felt it was an excellent collaboration with the director as McAnn seemed visibly calmed while singing this tune which I felt suggested that he had a deep deep and personal connection to it. I also felt it reflected well on Baker's intentions of revealing the individuality of man as McAnn expressed himself through the use of song which complimented Pinter's beliefs for the necessity of individuality in life which is repressed by society. However in this scene I would have preferred to remove the non-diajestic piano as I ~~felt~~ feel it would have created more isolation of McAnn as he expressed a singular emotion, which would better achieve Baker's and Pinter's intentions.

In conclusion, Simon Baker's use of recorded and non-recorded sound was successful in creating a range of moods and atmospheres and reflected on the <sup>individuality of man</sup> x



The candidate provides a range of examples and analyses these with precision to allow for an evaluative conclusion.

The candidate writes from an informed perspective using first person narrative as opposed to adopting a generic audience impression.

Throughout, subject-specific terminology is used accurately and the candidate provides the names of designers, actors, directors etc.

The response is well-informed, and the candidate has been prepared well: there is an inherent understanding of the work of Pinter, the style of this theatrical genre and how sound contributed to the performance.

15 marks



Adopt a first person narrative

Focus on the use of subject-specific terminology and highlight key words and phrases

Develop a glossary of terms to ensure that your writing is precise. The glossary available online, 'Getting ready to teach' would be a good starting point

## Question 2

A surprising number of candidates did not understand what non-verbal communication comprises. Non-verbal communication is communication without the use of spoken language. This includes the use of gestures, body alignment, facial expression, character-blocking and movement. (This definition is taken from the AS performance glossary included in the online resource entitled *Getting Started Guide*). It does not include other visual elements such as set, props, lighting, costume etc. The structure of the paper allows for candidate choice, with the focus being on either design or performance. This is obviously a question driven by performance, not design. Candidates writing about visual elements missed the focus of the question and consequently could not access higher marks

Issues regarding the length of the response, levels of analysis and evaluation are common to both responses. It is essential that candidates possess the subject-specific vocabulary required to write effectively about their chosen area of focus. Descriptive, generalised responses which lack subject-specific vocabulary to define skills, whether technical or performance-driven, do not gain access to higher levels.

Some candidates were able to cite a range of key moments from the performance. They provided a forensic analysis and evaluation of how non-verbal communication was used to create characterisation. This added genuine precision both to analysis and evaluation.

Most candidates were able to separate the actor from the role and referenced performers' names throughout, which was reassuring. The focus for the question was not just how non-verbal communication was employed, but more specifically, how it was used to create character. Some candidates did not acknowledge this and consequently there was an impact upon the quality of evaluation offered and the mark awarded.

Some candidates found difficulty in finding a sufficient range of examples of non-verbal communication within the production they saw. Consequently, responses tended to become rather repetitive, lacking a sense of the production as a whole. Many candidates found it difficult to use the appropriate vocabulary to analyse the use of non-verbal communication. Consequently, the focus became what was communicated rather than how this was achieved.

Weaker responses tended to be descriptive or did not address the demands of the question, focusing on alternative acting skills or even design elements.

This is an excellent response that focusses both on the use of non-verbal communication as well as the creation of characterisation.

## Performance details

Title:

The Birthday Party

Venue:

Harold Pinter Theatre

Date seen:

21<sup>st</sup> February 2018

Indicate which question you are answering by marking a cross in the box . If you change your mind, put a line through the box  and then indicate your new question with a cross .

Chosen question number: Question 1  Question 2

Write your answer here:

On the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2018, I went to see The Birthday Party at the Harold Pinter Theatre - a naturalistic production underpinned by Absurdist undertone that was praised by the Times as the 'ultimate Pinter revival' and which utilized non verbal communication (facial expression, body language, gesture, proximity) to depict the crumbling and deeply cynical Stan (Toby Jones), and the offbeat Meg (Zoe Wanamaker) and the suave yet sinister catalyst for Stan's destruction, Goldberg (Stephen Mangan).

From the first entrance of Stan, Jones uses

non verbal communication to present the fatalistic, unkempt yet ~~rough~~ spiteful nature of Stan: Jones dragged his feet with shoulders slumped and hands in pockets, panted with a laboured gait, yet maintaining his head tilted upwards as though he were in a constant state of irritation and irked abandon. He appeared with a grimacing facial expression somewhere between disgust and annoyance (eyes narrowed, brows furrowed, jaw tensed) in addition. Together, they successfully conveyed feelings of annoyance within me as Jones's characterization of Stan evidently and clearly embodied petulance and an inflated sense of self, as though his non-verbal communication was profusely exuding a distaste for his existence and thus a desire to burden both audience and the other characters with this state.

In direct contrast, Nanamaker utilized non verbal communication to deliver a character throughout the play who - linking to the nature of Absurdism - was entirely out of sync with reality. Nanamaker entered the scene with an excruciating shuffle yet maintaining



a stiff, awkward gait - successfully indicative of Meg's aging years or indeed her total severance from any strong connection to reality and truth, reflected in her repeated notion of her boarding house being 'on the left'. Moreover, her posture was awkward, shoulders slumping inwardly, with an overtly amicable facial expression (widened eyes, lips pulled into a smile and brows raised) as though Meg were contentedly in a bound and peaceful state, which Nana Maker's choice of non-verbal ~~and~~ communication effectively communicated about her character. The more significant dimension of her character arises in her relationship with Stan: close proximity between them, paired with Nana Maker's gentle, reaching or caressing gestures. Audience and I alike were left astounded yet uncomfortable by how these choices developed a maternal/romantic relationship between the characters, adding further to Meg's characterization as a deluded and detached figure ~~of the play~~ within the play.

The only significant change to Stan is in the

arrival of Goldberg and McCann and the following Interrogation in the Second Act. Goldberg's Mangan utilizes non-verbal communication in his tense posture, invasive proximity, tense limbs and purposely measured, predatory pace as he removes his glazer and rolls up his sleeve, tense, face stern (tense jaw, brows slightly furrowed) - this effectively caused immediate discomfort within me and audience as ~~the~~<sup>his</sup> non-verbal communication was intended as a warning for Stanley: that the suave Goldberg is swiftly becoming a dark and invasive figure of change, with Mangan's choice of non-verbal communication profusely communicating this side of Goldberg's nature as well as giving audience an idea of how imposing and manipulative his character is. His fluctuating level (tensing, crouching) paired with violently accelerated pointing gestures embodied his characterization as one of being a character eager to wear down Stan, hungry to exert his authority.

After the Interrogation, Stan's sense of self is obliterated, he is the picture of the broken man:

☞ Jones shuffles with a pained, stumbling gait across the stage space, buckling under his own weight, his head tilted downward and his expression catatonic, ~~expression~~ numb, staring (eyes wide, unblinking brows raised). It is here that non verbal communication reiterates that Stan has been utterly destroyed by the influence and bile of Goldberg and McCann and that no remainder of the bratty and spiteful man of the opening scene remains, with the collaboration of the found designer's (Simon Baker's) invasive, thrumming chords that construct a perverse sensation of isolation, echoing that Stan can no longer be salvaged.



The candidate produces a lengthy, detailed response which continually addresses the question.

Throughout, there is a forensic level of detail that allows the candidate to draw articulate, personal and evaluative statements about the production.

The candidate knows what non-verbal communication (NVC) is, how it can be used and what impact this had upon them personally. It is worth noting that the question contains two areas of focus:

- The use of NVC
- Creation of character

Throughout, the candidate connects these two elements making succinct, pertinent, observations.

15 marks



Highlight examples of non-verbal communication to identify clearly what this is, and how it can be used

Explore how connections between examples cited, and the creation of characterisation, are made, and how these examples are then evaluated

Practice writing under time constraints on a regular basis to prepare for the final examination

## Question 3

### Section B: Page to Stage: Realising a Performance Text

The paper requires candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding to two key areas: performance and design. Candidates need to consider how both performers and designers use theatrical conventions and dramatic elements to realise ideas from the page to the stage.

Candidates respond to an unseen extract from the chosen text but are *expected to demonstrate knowledge of the whole text in their response*. This mirrors questions asked in the [Sample Assessment Material](#) published on the Drama subject page.

There were responses to all texts, but some were more popular than others. *Machinal*, *Equus* and *That Face* were by far the most popular choices, with *Colder than Here* and *Fences* receiving fewer candidate responses.

### Question 3

This question asks the candidate *as a performer* to discuss how they might interpret and portray *one of the key roles* in the extract, referencing the performance text as a whole.

This is not a question about exploring a role in the rehearsal room; it deals with how the interpretation is developed through performance. Rehearsal deals with preparation for performance not performance itself. Consequently, references to the rehearsal room or rehearsal techniques are irrelevant. There were very few examples of candidates referencing the rehearsal room in the responses seen, with the overwhelming majority dealing with the interpretation of the role in performance.

When interpreting a role, candidates should express ideas about their intentions for the portrayal of a specified role in performance. A candidate presenting a sophisticated response will have a fulsome, creative and perceptive grasp of how they intend to interpret and portray a role, providing justification for creative choices. This interpretation will demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the complete text and extract. This interpretation will be portrayed effectively to an audience using a range of performance techniques. The focus for development is in regard to how ideas and intentions are developed from page to stage, within the context of the complete performance text.

Connections with the complete performance text were not always explicit and some candidates focussed exclusively on the extract. The mark scheme references knowledge of the wider text at every level; this remains an area of concern. Centres should ensure that candidates are in the habit of addressing the character arc across the whole of the text. In many instances, connections to the wider text were inferred or implicit, rather than explicit.

In some cases, candidates took a distanced view of the role being interpreted, adopting a third person narrative. Consequently, nothing in these responses indicated that candidates were writing *as a performer* able to *interpret and portray* the role. This approach does not address the question as a performer but rather as a director, which is not what is required. Consequently, candidates who adopted this approach could not gain access to higher level marks.

In weaker responses, candidates did not put the audience at the heart of their response. Detailed accounts of how performance skills would be used were often linked to an understanding of character but, crucially, there was no explicit consideration of what impact this would create for an audience.

The exemplar materials marked by the senior examining team and published on line, contain extensive commentary regarding the application of the mark scheme, as well as highlighting this and other issues. These include:

- failure to justify performance choices, limited connection with playwright intention, themes/issues, limited use of quotation to provide justification/effective analysis
- responses that fail to focus on a key role
- practitioner-led responses
- descriptive responses, which lack the subject-specific vocabulary to define performance skills
- responses that fail to focus on a key role

Accidental Death of an Anarchist was a popular choice with some candidates, producing articulate, well-informed responses capturing Absurdist Commedia performance qualities. Unfortunately for many candidates, the complexity of political farce, multi-role-playing and extreme gestural physicality proved too demanding. Few candidates were able to extend their response outside of the given extract.

In responses to **Machinal**, a few candidates chose to write as the actor playing one of the male roles that appears in only one part of the extract. This did not disadvantage them because they focussed on the delivery of that moment, and were able to comment on how this might affect the previous or following scene. The role of The Woman seemed to be the more popular choice and candidates could reflect upon the impact of the extract on the play as a whole.

In **Equus** there was an equal balance between character choices for interpretation. Successful candidates could explore the moment contextually within the whole play and analyse how this would impact upon their portrayal of the role.

Whilst *Fences* was the least popular choice, examiners reported seeing a wide range of responses. Some contained beautifully detailed moments, which transported the examiner from page to stage.

**Colder than Here** produced some wonderfully poignant responses. Candidates were able to define their interpretation from a personal perspective, exploring how they would realise this using performance techniques.

**That Face** also provided some interesting responses, but these were often brief and failed to connect with the naturalistic nuances of the text. As a result, responses tended toward the descriptive and lacked analytical detail and contextual understanding of the role(s) within the scene.

Despite the phrasing of the question, very few candidate responses explicitly referenced the play as a whole, remaining steadfastly focussed on the extract. The vast majority of candidates lacked the subject-specific vocabulary necessary to analyse their use of acting skills in a sophisticated manner. A lack of confidence in the ideas being presented was communicated by candidates repeating phrases containing the words 'perhaps', 'maybe', 'could'. This shows uncertainty and a lack of conviction.

This is a detailed and engaging response which is well-informed and structured.

## SECTION B: PAGE TO STAGE: REALISING A PERFORMANCE TEXT

Answer **BOTH** of the questions in this section with reference to the performance text you have studied.

You need to read and refer to the extract in the source booklet from the text you have studied.

Indicate which text you have studied by marking a cross in the box .

Performance texts

*Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, Dario Fo

*Colder Than Here*, Laura Wade

*Equus*, Peter Shaffer

*Fences*, August Wilson

*Machinal*, Sophie Treadwell

*That Face*, Polly Stenham

3 As a **performer**, discuss how you might interpret and portray **one** of the **key roles** in the extract.

You should use examples from the extract to support your ideas and your answer should make reference to the performance text as a whole.

(16)

'Fences' by August Wilson follows the lives of an African American family living in 1957 Pittsburgh. Throughout the play, we learn of the oppression and segregation that Troy has faced from trying to play baseball professionally to driving the "white's-only" truck. The play follows the relationship between the main character (Troy) and his family and friends, ranging from love to hate such as when Rose finds out that Troy has had an affair and fathered a child to Alberta. I will show these emotions in this extract by creating a tense

atmosphere, showing Troy's distancing nature.

Prior to this extract, Troy told Rose that he's been having an affair and that Albert (the woman he's been seeing) is expecting his child). After this extract.

Troy dies and the family come back together to remember the effect that he had on their lives. This creates a mood of loss and destruction and I will show this through vocal and physical skills.

One moment when I will portray Troy is at the beginning of this extract when Cory has tried to push past me. On "You ain't gonna say excuse me? You just gonna walk over top of me?" I will use a tone of disbelief to show that I am surprised how the tables have turned as I have no power anymore. In addition to this, I will use a spitefully low pitch to give the effect that I'm disgusted by Cory's actions. Accompanying this, my physical skills such as facial expressions (wide eyes and raised eyebrows) are used to show my anger



at Cory for disobeying me. My posture is  
I crouched to give the <sup>overall</sup> effect that I no  
longer have authority over Cory, or  
anyone else in the house. This creates  
the audience response of shock as they  
feel that Cory is finally breaking out of  
the walls that I have put around him.

On "You don't count around here no  
more" I will respond to this ~~etc~~  
with a humorous tone on "oh I see."  
as I want to give the effect that I still  
have an authority even if Cory thinks he  
does. I will use a loud volume to show  
my anger accompanied by a high pitch  
to convey my distress. I am confident  
in the situation so I show this  
through proximity. I will get up extremely  
close to Cory's face to intimidate him.

I will <sup>also</sup> use a confident posture to  
create the overall effect that I am going  
to power over Cory creating the  
audience response of fear for Cory's  
situation.

on "I don't spend the last seventeen years

worrying about what you get. Now it's your turn, see?" I will deliver this with a

Sadistic tone to convey my humorous reaction to Cory's sudden confidence.

I will use a slow pace to show how strongly I feel that Cory is making the wrong decision. Physical skills such as gestures (clenching my fist) are used to show my evil side as I have a very scary nature due to my harsh upbringing.

I will also use a persistent physicality to intimidate Cory creating the overall effect that I'm going to win the argument. The audience will respond to this with fear and pride for Cory standing up to me.

On "I told you to leave your mama out of this" I advance towards Cory with a frustrated tone to show that I have been wound up by Cory's words.

On "I told you" my pitch will be high to show I'm losing control abruptly. My physicality will show

signs of inner strength as I have found the strength to put Cory in his place

after his absurd request. My clenched fists will rise at this point giving the overall effect that harsh conflict is going to occur. This creates the overall response of fear and dread for the audience as the family is falling apart.

On "I'm gonna show you how crazy I am! Go on... get the hell out of my yard!"

I will exclaim with a fiery tone whilst viciously closing the proximity between us to show that I have snapped. My volume will be louder than ever before in the play as it shows that this scene is one of the most important in the play. I will also use a tense posture and ~~put~~ a screwed up face to convey that my actions were power driven and spontaneous. This gives the overall effect that the relationship has deteriorated beyond repair and makes the audience respond with utter dismay as the family bond has fully broken.

On "go on and get away from my house"

Cory and Troy have just had a struggling fight. I will convey an exhausted tone

with a high pitch to show that I am shocked by what I have done. Troy's My strength is conveyed through ~~his~~ my gestures such as waving ~~his~~ <sup>my</sup> fist in the air. My volume is not as loud as before, showing that my body is slowly deteriorating as I'm getting older. This gives the overall effect that the family has been ruined by Troy's conflict. This contributes to the overall audience response ~~as~~ as they feel that Troy has ruined everything.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The candidate covers a lot of ground and this is a fulsome response.

Throughout, the candidate writes adopting first person narrative, which ensures they are addressing the question as an actor **not** a director.

The candidate uses quotations effectively to ensure fine, detailed analysis and precision.

There are clear links to the wider context of the play, which is an essential requirement for this section.

14 marks



Explore the response with candidates by replacing first person narrative with third person, so they are aware of the impact this has on the response and their focus. '*I would get Troy to speak using a fast pace....*' adopts the register of a director not a performer in performance.

This question is about performance, not rehearsal: it is essential that candidates do not refer to rehearsal room techniques.

Create a performance glossary. Develop it by focussing on specific performance elements, eg:

- Voice
- Physicality
- NVC

## Question 4

In all instances, performance texts present major challenges for design candidates trying successfully to realise a rationale that meets the demands of the question, honours the playwright's original intentions and explicitly references the whole of the play. The challenge at the heart of this question was how design could be used to create impact through theatrical elements.

For up to 16 marks in an AS Level examination, there is an expectation that candidates are presenting well-rounded and considered responses developed to meet the specific demands of the question. They must offer sufficient examples to demonstrate to the examiner that their ideas could work in performance.

In many responses, there was a sense of candidates finding it difficult to make prepared ideas fit the demands of the question. Many candidates had thought about how design elements support characterisation, thematic ideas, and the creation of time, location, etc, but they were unable to consider how these elements could be used to create impact.

There were examples of candidates offering inappropriate or unworkable interpretations of the chosen text. What the examination is demanding of them in Q4 is that they respond to the question as a designer, acknowledging the playwright's intentions and stage directions, whilst resolving the design challenge of creating/supporting the impact inherent in the extract, and the play as a whole.

Candidates can be imaginative and make creative choices, but their rationales must acknowledge the playwright's original intentions and be justified in terms of how these are honoured. Responses also need to extend beyond the extract to consider design implications for the whole play. The design rationale must reflect how the design elements can be used throughout the complete text, as well as the extract.

Where candidates were unable to justify their design, they had tried to move too far away from the original or had not considered the whole text in their interpretation. Consequently, ideas were offered alongside examples of how the intended interpretation might work for the extract, but these could not be justified fully in relation to a whole production. In some instances, candidates provided in-depth, detailed design ideas which, whilst being imaginative and innovative, simply could not work on stage.

Some candidates did not refer to the play's title in their response and it was difficult to establish which play the design rationale was for, until some way into the response. This was indicative of the lack of focus regarding most responses to this question.

A number of candidates did not focus on the requirements of the question and, rather than defining how design elements communicated impact, they simply provided a prepared design rationale. The purpose of this part of the examination is to gauge candidates' understanding of how design can be harnessed collaboratively to communicate essential ideas within the text, and resolve design challenges presented by the playwright. Presenting an in-house design rationale can limit candidates' ability to think about the question being asked, creating 'one size fits all' responses. Candidates who did address the question were particularly convincing when discussing lighting, which was one of the most popular design elements, alongside set and costume design.

Successful candidates ensured a range of theatrical elements were encompassed and that these were explored in detail. Candidates stated their intention clearly, placing audience understanding of impact at the heart of the response. Such responses had clarity, providing examiners with a clear sense of intentions dramatically, visually, and aurally. Most candidates chose to write about a range of design skills which, when applied holistically, created opportunities to discuss the production of

the extract and play as a whole. Unfortunately, in many cases, candidates seemed to list pre-prepared ideas rather than developing these fully to address the question.

The pages in the booklet have been compiled with an expectation of the maximum amount a candidate can be expected to write in a two-and-a-half-hour examination. Taking size of handwriting into account, there is no expectation for candidates to write beyond the pages of the booklet to access the higher levels of marks. The examples in this report are taken from work by candidates completed within the framework of the answer booklet.

This question proved the most demanding and contained the weakest responses. The length of responses tended to be brief, with many candidates unable to access the full range of marks. It appeared as though many candidates seemed short of time. It is vital that candidates are given opportunities to write under examination conditions and are aware of the timings involved and the specific demands of each question.

There appeared to be fewer examples from *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* than last year. It was enjoyable to read some answers relating to *Fences* (which were often very strong) and *Colder than Here*. The responses tended to be quite brief with many candidates unable to access the full range of marks due to this brevity.

There were some strong answers for *Equus*: the moment where Alan rides Nugget gave a clear opportunity to use design creatively to generate impact. Responses to *Colder than Here* and *That Face* often did not consider how design could be used in a naturalistic way to generate impact. The PowerPoint in *Colder than Here* created an obvious opportunity for design impact: disappointingly, this was not considered by many candidates.

Many *Machinal* responses focussed heavily on Expressionism and this enabled candidates to explore some engaging and relevant ideas for theatrical elements, particularly sound and set design.

Candidates writing about *Fences* wrote confidently about the tree, fence, house, beer bottles, and the baseball hanging in the tree. There was less consideration of how these specific elements would help communicate impact. More successful responses suggested how the set would deteriorate over the play in relation to the events.

Successful candidates ensured that the theatrical elements were covered in detail and were able to state their intention with an audience at the heart of the answer. These responses had clarity and examiners gained a sense of what candidates were trying to achieve visually and aurally to generate impact.

This is a lengthy and detailed response which covers much ground. The candidate produces work which is of the suggested length, ensuring a range of detailed examples.

sound, light, set, costume.

- 4 As a **designer**, discuss how you would use **theatrical elements** to create **impact** in the extract.

You should use examples from the extract to support your ideas and your answer should make reference to the performance text as a whole.

(16)

As a designer, in the given extract I would aim to convey the design features in order to create an atmosphere that reflects Augustus Wilson's idea of a house for the Matson family. The house is located in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania on an estate which is cramped and bustling with life, much unlike the damp, weathered remains of the Matson household. In the given extract I would aim to not only convey the setting but the social context also as the African American family struggle to fit in the majority white supremacy region. Segregation would therefore hold a key role.

In terms of set design, the given scene would include a nearly finished white picket fence, as a symbolism of the American Dream and being able to 'make it big' in America. The other missing pieces of wood, would be carelessly left around the back yard, where all



action takes place, to show the breaking up of the household as Rose was desperate to have a fence as a pen to keep everyone in, elegantly quoted by Bono previously in the play 'some people build fences to keep people out, some people build fences to keep people in'. This key design feature of which the play is named after therefore shows the breaking up of the family as they are no longer held together as Troy committed adultery against Rose to his lover, Alberta (mother to Raynell), prior to this scene 'I don't know how she stand you... after what you did to her.'

Additionally, the set would include a baseball bat ~~is~~ left by the tree in the back garden, with a baseball hanging from a branch by a piece of dirty white string. By using dirt it not only symbolises the money issues the family has, but also just how often Troy uses it as a coping mechanism as a way to compensate for the time he missed and opportunities of being a professional

baseball player, despite his race and age which hindered him at the time due to segregation in the 1920's.

In terms of lighting, I would use a scale from 60% to 80% intensity in order to create a scene which takes place in the day time. This also would help to portray the naturalistic theatrical elements August Wilson intends to portray in the domestic drama. I would use fresnel lighting in a colour scheme of mostly light greys, with a few browns and yellows to show the dirt and pollution of the city as well as the family's class and sense of poverty. The yellow would also represent the time of day as well as the chance of hope the family has of working out. This yellow would gradually fade out using a hazer throughout the scene however, to show that the chance of a united family has completely disappeared due to Troy and his selfish ways. I would use 4 bank of 4 par cans in order to incorporate the light but, to also show the blocking of light from nearby houses to help intensify the cramped

atmosphere of the city the Marsians live in.

I would also use two ~~desperate~~ separate followspots, to highlight Troy and Cory.

Troy's followspot would be in a much harsher colour than the par car's and the white 'natural light' coverstage, thus creating a brooding darkness around Troy.

Cory would have a yellow coloured followspot ~~to~~ as it would signify his false confidence and the deeper fear and cowardice he has below the surface. This therefore allows Cory to look nervous, even when he is acting confident 'why don't you just get out my way', allowing Troy to see through his facade and humiliate him in order to show Cory he is still the boss.

In terms of sound, I would initially have the sound of kids playing football on the street, which shows the strained relationship between Troy and Cory as Troy prevents Cory from doing what he wants out of jealousy. Additionally, I would have cars moving and rushing around with the occasional horn to show the aggression in the outside

world, as well as in the Watsons world, helping to intensify emotions.

Additionally, for costume Troy would be wearing oversized, dirty and miscellaneous stained brown dungarees from his days of being a worker with Bono hauling rubbish into the 'trash van'. This would show pity for Troy as he misses being with his best friend who he never sees anymore due to Troy caring too much about beating segregation than his relationships. This shows that despite getting more money, he is more unhappy, which shows that the idea of the American Dream hasn't worked for Troy and his family. Cory would be wearing casual clothing to show that he is still just a kid with no job, so he doesn't have a uniform. This helps show the contrast between a man and a child.



A wide range of design ideas is presented, which are relevant, in keeping with the playwright's original intention and defined by impact.

Throughout, the candidate justifies their design rationale in terms of impact. This is informed by a wider contextual understanding of the complete text.

Design ideas are workable, clearly defined using subject-specific terminology, and contain relevant subject-specific terminology.

14 marks



Develop the necessary subject-specific terminology in order to present your ideas with clarity and precision

The glossary available online, contained within the document *Getting Ready to Teach* is a good starting point

# Paper Summary

In the second year of this examination it is worth referencing again a number of areas that have been highlighted to offer further guidance regarding the structure and purpose of this examination.

In order to support colleagues delivering the new specification, a wide range of support and planning materials has been made available on line. These include Sample Assessment Materials, mark schemes and exemplar materials marked by the senior examining team, overviews of, and approaches to, the specific texts with examples of responses from both Section A and Section B. These cover all areas of the SAMS, containing extensive commentary regarding the application of the mark scheme, as well as highlighting issues regarding how the candidates had approached the sample questions. Ask the Expert is an ongoing forum providing colleagues with information regarding common questions and issues. We have also regularly updated a FAQ, which has again answered questions from colleagues regarding the delivery of the specification and the examination. These materials have been well-received by colleagues who appear to have found them useful for preparing candidates for the examination.

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

## Section A: Live Theatre Evaluation

Q1 and Q2

- It is expected that in order to produce a fully developed response candidates will produce more than 2 – 3 sides of A4 per question under examination conditions.
- It is essential that candidate responses contain a balanced consideration between analysis and evaluation. Responses that demonstrate isolated analysis without evaluation can only achieve a maximum of 4 marks.
- Candidates must possess the subject-specific vocabulary required to write effectively about their chosen area of focus.
- Candidates must address the question, not regurgitate live theatre evaluation notes.

Section B: Page to Stage: Realising a Performance Text

Q3

- Candidates should not adopt third person narrative when writing 'as a performer' able to 'interpret and portray' a role. This approach fails to address the question as a performer BUT rather as a director: this is not what is required.
- Candidates should not write about exploring the role in the rehearsal room. The question deals with how the interpretation is developed through performance.
- Candidates should reference the play as a whole, instead of remaining steadfastly focused on the extract.

#### Q4

- When responding to the question as a designer, candidates must acknowledge the playwright's intentions and stage directions.
- Responses must extend beyond the extract to consider design implications for the whole play. The design rationale must reflect how the design elements can be used throughout the complete text, as well as the extract.
- Candidates must focus on the requirements of the question; rather than provide a prepared design rationale, they should define how design elements communicate impact.

## Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>





