



**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
June 2011**

**Drama**

**42402**

**(Specification 4240)**

**Unit 2: Practical Work**

***Report on the Examination***

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## GCSE Drama 42402

### General

I am pleased to report a smooth transition from the legacy specification to the new GCSE Drama specification. This is largely due to the fact that a significant number of teachers took advantage of the support offered to them both via the AQA website and through Teacher Support, Standardising meetings and using their designated Controlled Assessment Advisers.

Visiting moderators have reported that centres are enjoying teaching this new specification and enjoying the freedom to choose texts to teach their students. Teachers have generally shown a confidence in using the assessment criteria and the broader mark bands for Part 2. Most centres were well prepared for the moderation process, with good outcomes on the day of the moderation visit. Centres were welcoming and provided a quiet place for us to deal with the administrative duties prior to watching the live performances. Sufficient time and good performance spaces were generally provided but the timings of the visits are critical in centres where performance spaces are used as or are close to dining rooms, as the noise generated by these areas in schools can affect performances.

The sense of occasion was acknowledged by the centres and the teachers and most provided a supportive audience for the candidates to entertain. However, it should be acknowledged that, if an audience is present, the teacher who is responsible for assessing the candidates should not also be responsible for controlling the audience.

Centres have been generally efficient in sending DRF 1 forms in adequate time and have been conscientious in providing details and information relating to the moderation process. In general, teachers who attended a Teacher Standardising meeting were better prepared for the moderation process.

It is vital that the specification is thoroughly read and the requirements of the different options considered before entering candidates' choices for assessment purposes. The requirements of each option must be acknowledged. For example, if a student is offering Option 6, Set Design, then a Scale Model of the set is a requirement of the specification and must be present even if the set design has been fully realised in terms of production.

Please remember that the performance work seen at the moderation cannot be repeated at a later date and a different mark offered to the one agreed at moderation. However the marks awarded at the moderation may not be the candidate's best marks. Further assessments can be completed after the moderation visit and the highest two options are offered in the final analysis of the candidate's work.

DVD evidence is required to support the mark of each assessment project, including the moderation session. The evidence should be retained in the centre. Centres offering design and technical options at any time in the course must have their marks moderated on the day of the moderator's visit. If this work does not feature as part of the performance sample it must be presented to the teacher and the moderator during the session.

Post-moderation documentation still causes problems for some centres and centres need to allow time to check that the relevant documentation has been sent to the moderator by the end of May. Candidate Record Forms and Summary Record Sheets must be sent to moderators by the 31<sup>st</sup> May deadline to enable detailed checks to be made. The Candidate Record form has a concluding comment box which should be used to highlight anything that needs to be brought to the moderator's attention, which may not have already been discussed at the moderation visit. For example, if marks seen at moderation vary greatly from the marks entered for final assessment, then further DVD evidence of the work of these candidates might be requested by AQA to clarify the marks given for assessments carried out at the centre.

## **Part One: Preparatory and exploratory work in preparation for the final performance**

Centres must use the AQA pro-forma for recording these marks and clear, accurate and detailed evidence was offered at moderation. Marks awarded were generally fair and realistic, ensuring that teachers are monitoring the work of their candidates accurately. It is a requirement that the Part 1 Record sheet is used for each candidate for each option that is formally assessed. Part 1 Record sheets for the candidates in the sample seen for moderation purposes must be available for the moderator to sign on moderation day.

Summary Record Sheets for all the previous projects must be filled in correctly in pen before the moderation visit. The Summary Record Sheets will be signed by the moderator at the end of the moderation session, once any discussion of acceptance or adjustment of the centre's marks has been completed.

## **Part Two: Practical Work**

I am pleased to report that all 14 Options were seen for moderation purposes. Some really exciting and innovative work was in evidence which challenged the students but did not defeat them. Work was well presented theatrically with consideration given to the design and technical aspects which enhanced performance outcomes.

### **Option 1: Devised Thematic Work**

Moderators saw some really thought-provoking and well-rehearsed work. Work produced included lines from plays and interesting movement set pieces. There was evidence of performances based on a number of stimuli, including the life of Sarah Kane which included lines from her plays alongside interesting movement set pieces. *The Diary of Anne Frank* was used to good effect with performers speaking in canon, superb synchronisation of movement and a poignant motif of the music box owned by Anne. Some excellent performances used World War II archive material. Work was generally simply staged with effective use of choral work, simple properties and wooden frames and carefully choreographed movement. Other centres provided devised work for assessment and some good performance outcomes were in evidence as candidates experimented with form and style.

### **Option 2: Acting**

This was the most popular option and some very enjoyable work was seen, with candidates using a wide variety of performance skills. Work seen was of an appropriate length and suited individual candidates. Pieces were performed with understanding and some were of a very high standard indeed. There were many examples of challenging material in a range of styles.

Moderators reported seeing inspirational performances. Work by Shakespeare, John Godber and Jim Cartwright was seen. Other performances included excellent versions of the classics including *Metamorphosis*, *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Journey's End*, *Angels in America*, *The Cagedbirds*, *My Mother Said I Never Should*, *The Crucible*, *Blood Brothers*, *Speechless* and *Find Me*. Some inspirational work was produced by centres involved in productions of the NT Connections plays. A full and comprehensive list of all productions used by centres will be produced for the Teacher Resource Bank.

The quality of presentations ranged markedly across centres from fully costumed events with an audience to school uniformed classroom affairs, although I am happy to report that there were very few examples of the latter. I would remind centres that Scripted Drama must be learnt and if students are still reading from scripts during the final performance then the final assessment mark must reflect this.

Centres have considered how a technical option such as set design, costume, make-up, lighting or sound can help raise the performance outcomes for acting and technical candidates, when the production is seen as a whole.

### **Option 3: Improvisation**

This was another popular option this year. This option challenges candidates to create a piece of original theatre from their own resources, enabling them to use a number of techniques, which they have developed over the course.

I observed that the strongest work seen had benefited from preparatory work establishing characters, resulting in credible performances. Creative use of performance spaces and believable interactions with others on stage resulted in some excellent outcomes. Improvised work based on the lives of Ann Putnam, Bonnie Parker and Mary Bryant showed candidates were confident in their use of theatrical styles and able to hold and respond to an audience. Weaker performances showed a lack of engagement with the work, topic or theme, resulting in an insecure performance where the vocabulary let the characterisation down. Candidates should be discouraged from seeing Improvisation as an easy option, but rather see it as a challenge to enable them to demonstrate skills learnt during the course.

### **Option 4: Theatre in Education**

Many centres now use Theatre in Education as one of their performance options during the course. The most challenging work was well structured and researched by the students and approached with sensitivity and thoughtfulness. *Too much Punch for Judy* was a popular choice for performance purposes, performed to a high level with an effective use of set, lighting, sound, costume and properties. The target audience fully appreciated the issues raised in the piece.

### **Option 5: Physical Theatre**

This year, work produced for this Option has produced the highest assessment outcomes. Some very exciting ensemble performances were seen with stimuli ranging from Evacuees, Red Shoes, Iron Hans, Holocaust and a Rags to Riches theme. The themes researched allowed students to explore the physical possibilities and contrasts in mood and atmosphere, evoking excellent responses from supportive audiences. Multi-media productions with back projection and excellent use of sound and lighting enhanced these already exciting outcomes.

### **Option 6: Set Design**

Some excellent examples of set designs were evidenced this year. The scale models produced were often constructed to a high level of expertise with a thorough understanding of the needs of the plays and the constraints of the spaces where the plays would be staged.

Some candidates then realised the set design in terms of the actual performance although this is not a requirement of the specification. The best work produced was from students who had a real passion for the design element of the course, whilst weaker work was produced from candidates who perhaps had no real enthusiasm for the task set.

### **Option 7: Costume Design**

This was a popular option this year with work in evidence in a number of centres. The best work seen was from students with a real passion and flair for the role of the costume designer. Designs were produced for the productions of *Lord of the Flies*, *Too much Punch for Judy*, *Teachers*, and some excellent work on *Alice in Wonderland* which gave students scope for imaginative responses. One centre's students offered an excellent costumed performance of *A Night in the World Museum*, an original piece which enabled imaginative and innovative designs to be produced and worn in performance.

Reference should be made to the requirements for all design/technical options in the specification. The best examples of costume design were when candidates worked to a clear design brief, considered budget, colours, fabrics, constraints of costume in performance, the effects of lighting and

make-up and included accessories and footwear in their designs and realisation. Some realistic work was on display.

### **Option 8: Make-up**

Moderators reported rather mixed responses to this option with outcomes either excellent or rather weak. The best make-up outcomes enabled students to demonstrate a number of techniques, using a range of skills.

The specification requires two contrasting make-up designs to be offered for assessment and therefore the choice of production for this option must allow for this. Act 4 of *The Crucible* provided one student with a marvellous opportunity to shine. The make-up produced for Elizabeth and John Proctor was outstanding. Elizabeth had heavy rope burns, a bloodied and dirty face, sunken cheeks and dark set eyes. John had a bruised face, pale under the dirt, eyes red rimmed yet full of fire - an obvious contrast to earlier scenes in the play.

### **Option 9: Properties**

Students offering this option this year produced some excellent results. There were examples of fully appropriate properties for the productions and both the design and the construction of them had been carefully considered. Consideration had also been given to research in terms of historical period and style and materials to be used. I saw some fabulous properties for a World War II drama that included a radio and a severed arm. Very realistic indeed! The majority of the properties designed and constructed were seen in performance and were clearly durable and fully appropriate.

### **Option 10: Masks**

This was a minority option but moderators reported a few occasions where masks were used in performance. Some very interesting large masks were constructed based on Picasso style faces which were used in an improvisation. The specification states that the masks must be worn in performance, so consideration must be given to how an actor comfortably wears a mask for the duration of a performance piece.

### **Option 11: Puppets**

This was another minority option but where puppets were produced they were done so to a high standard of performance outcomes. In one instance puppets were carefully constructed for *Aladdin* and demonstrated to a primary school audience.

### **Option 12: Lighting**

Where this option was offered for moderation, students were usually skilled in designing and operating the lighting systems in their centres. Some excellent and thorough work was seen, which employed a number of lighting effects. Students' notes were excellent, production copy used to good effect and students had engaged clearly and enthusiastically with the task. Students had organised rigging and lights, chosen gels, made gobos and used back projection appropriately and effectively.

Weaker students saw this as an easy option and needed the support of a lighting technician to help produce the performance outcomes. This was reflected in the mark awarded.

### **Option 13: Sound**

Where this option was offered for moderation students were usually enthusiastic and talented in operating the sound systems in their centres. Sound was recorded on a number of devices, supported by live effects, used in the realisation of a production performance and demonstrated to an excellent standard. Cue sheets should be produced enabling anyone to operate the sound system in case of an emergency and candidates working at the highest levels produced good cue sheets. Good students selected sound for performances that gave them the opportunity to show their range of skills while

weaker students tended to offer introductory music to a performance piece and perhaps an additional couple of sound effects.

### **Option 14: Stage Management**

Without exception this year, students choosing this option produced work of a very high standard. They displayed excellent organisational skills and knew exactly what was required to run the show, understanding procedures and protocols well. They produced fully organised presentations supported by practical and well used prompt copies. A working notebook was often used to good advantage. They carried out risk assessments, chaired production meetings and were very organised and efficient. The nature of the complex role of the Stage Manager was clearly understood and identified.