



**General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)
June 2012**

Drama 42402

(Specification 4240)

Unit 2: Practical Work

Report on the Examination

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GCSE Drama 42402

General

In the second year of this specification, I am pleased to report that we have had a most successful year in terms of the controlled assessment option outcomes. All moderators viewed a significant number of high quality performance options in schools visited. The smooth transition from the legacy specification to the current specification is now complete and this has been facilitated by the support teachers have been offered during this process. A large number of teachers have readily taken up the support offered to them via the AQA website, through teacher support and the standardisation process and by seeking the advice of their designated Controlled Assessment Advisor.

It is imperative that all teachers access standardisation material; whether this is by attending a face-to-face meeting or by accessing the on-line service, to ensure they mark the drama options in line with the AQA standard.

Moderators reported that teachers are enjoying teaching this specification and relishing the freedom to choose which plays to study with their students, and which controlled assessment options to explore. Students were appropriately challenged and were confident in presenting their practical work during the moderation session.

The broader mark bands for Part 2 have been welcomed and teachers have generally shown a confidence in using the mark bands and the assessment criteria. Most schools were well prepared for the moderation process, which generally went smoothly on the day of the visit. Schools were welcoming and provided a quiet place for moderators to deal with the administrative requirements prior to watching the live performances. Sufficient time and good performance spaces were generally provided.

The sense of occasion was acknowledged by the majority of schools and most teachers provided a supportive audience for the students to entertain. However, please remember that if an audience is present during the moderation visit, it is not the role of the teacher, who is responsible for assessing the students' performances, to also control that audience.

The majority of schools have been efficient in sending DRF 1 forms to moderators in adequate time and have been conscientious in providing details and information relating to the moderation process. It was evident that teachers who had attended a teacher standardising meeting or completed the on-line exercise 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 students enter options for assessment purposes.

For example, if a student is submitting marks for Option 8, Make-Up, then they must prepare and present two contrasting make-ups for a play, a devised piece or an un-scripted piece. The two practical demonstrations must then be viewed under stage lights. The requirements for each controlled assessment option are clearly stated in the specification and teachers should be fully aware of these requirements.

It should be emphasised here that the performance/design technical work seen at moderation must represent the final mark offered for any particular option. This work cannot be repeated at a later date and a different mark given for the work. Teachers are also reminded that the moderated mark need not be used for assessment purposes if a student has higher marks for other options completed during the course. Further assessments can be completed after the moderation visit and it is expected that the teacher marks this future

work in line with the AQA moderated standard. For final assessment purposes two different controlled assessment projects must be entered.

DVD evidence is required to support the mark of each assessment project including the moderation session. The evidence should be retained in the school. Schools offering design/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 schools. Information sheets to guide teachers to complete the correct post moderation documentation are available at Teacher Standardising Meetings and in the On-line Teacher's Pack. This documentation needs to be checked for accuracy before being despatched to the moderator. This year a large number of students' marks were incorrectly totalled and/or transferred from the Candidate Record Form to the Centre Mark Form.

Candidate Record Forms and Summary Assessment Sheets must be sent to moderators by the 31st 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. For example, if marks seen at moderation vary widely from the marks entered for final assessment, then this fact should be highlighted with a short explanation. Further DVD evidence of the work of these students might be requested to confirm the marks given. In order to meet any possible requests schools must retain DVD evidence under secure conditions and be prepared to provide it on demand.

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

Schools must use the AQA pro-forma for recording marks to ensure that clear, accurate and detailed evidence is offered at the moderation. Marks awarded were generally fair and realistic, ensuring that teachers are monitoring the work of their students accurately. The marks were supported by the performances observed and students' strengths and weaknesses were exhibited in their presentations. It is a requirement that the Part 1 Record Form is used for each student for each option that is formally assessed. The moderator requires the Part 1 Record Form for the students in the sample seen for moderation purposes to be available for signing on moderation day.

At the moderation visit, the moderator will check the Part 1 Record Form for the 10 students in the sample submitted on the day of moderation. In addition, schools with entries for design/technical options should provide 6 design/technical students for moderation. Once the record forms are checked they are signed by the moderator.

Summary Record Forms were sometimes not available at the beginning of the moderation session. The Summary Record Forms for all previous assessments must be filled in correctly in pen before the moderation visit. These forms are signed by the moderator at the end of the moderation session, once any discussion of acceptance or adjustment of the school's marks is completed. Any adjustments required are made to all previous controlled assessment projects completed during the course.

Part Two: Practical Work

It is pleasing to report that most of the 14 Options available for study were seen. 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/technical aspects to enhance the performance outcomes.

Option 1: Devised Thematic Work

Candidates must prepare for, and perform a piece of work in response to a specific stimulus or theme.

The devised work must contain both elements of script – extracts from plays, verse or prose – and of original work

This was one of the most popular options offered for assessment this year. Moderators reported that some really thought-provoking work was produced in schools. Work produced included an excellent performance piece entitled *Blame* which looked at the summer riots in Britain last year. Video footage, words taken verbatim from the trials and from news reports were linked together by a news-reporter. The piece featured movement, sound, mime and improvised action which gave an immediacy and compelling impact to the theme.

There was evidence of performances based on a number of stimuli, including *The Pendle Witch Trails*, *Staring from Her Hood of Bone*, based on four women joined together by their suicides, and a black comedy *The Edge* based on the true story which inspired the book *Touching the Void*.

A stunning performance based on Seneca's *Oedipus* combined text and physical theatre to produce some excellent outcomes. Themes of *War* and *Childhood* were explored with some excellent performances using archive material from World War I. Performances were simply staged with effective use of choral work, simple properties, wooden frames, lengths of material and carefully choreographed movement. Many schools provided devised work for assessment and some excellent performance outcomes were in evidence as students experimented with form and style. The work seen was well researched and shaped.

Option 2: Acting

Candidates must prepare for and perform an extract from a script for a play. Scripted drama must be learned.

This was again a popular choice of option this year with some very enjoyable work seen with students using a wide variety of performance skills. All work seen was of an appropriate length and suited individual students. 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 a refreshing blend of old and new standard pieces. Schools used the scenes from Jim Cartwright's *Two* to great effect showing what a sound innovation it was to allow duologues. Shakespeare was represented as was John Godber with the ever popular multi-role vehicles of *Bouncers*, *Teechers and Shakers*. Other performances included excellent versions of many plays including *Chatroom*, *Touched*, *Journey's End*, *Amy's View*, *A Servant of Two Masters*, *My Mother Said*, *The Crucible*, *Blood Brothers*, *Speechless* and *Find Me*.

Some inspirational work was produced by schools involved in productions of the National Theatre Connections plays. Plays from previous seasons were also used most effectively. A full and comprehensive list of all productions used by schools will be produced for the Teacher Support Resource Bank. The quality of presentations ranged from fully costumed performances to school uniformed class room settings, although I am happy to report that there were very few examples of the latter.

Schools considered how technical options, such as set design, costume, make up, lighting and sound, can help raise the performance outcomes for both sets of students when the production is seen as a whole. Characterisations are produced with confidence, allowing students to demonstrate a variety of skills learned during the course. Most students performed to an invited audience.

Option 3: Improvisation

Candidates must prepare for and perform a piece of polished improvisation. Improvisation is defined as any non-scripted work in drama.

Another popular option this year. This option challenges students 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.

The strongest work seen had benefited from preparatory work which established 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 a chilling version of Little Red Riding hood entitled *Ruby* juxtaposed all the usual comic elements of pantomime with a sinister theme of child abduction. Improvisations from work based on Pinter and Hitchcock made for a lively mix of thoughtful characters and complex plot lines. Work inspired by Goldoni used a high level of performance skills and strong ensemble pieces.

Theme based work was also successful with students who were able to create their own roles and develop interesting ensemble work. There was some strong physicality and controlled vocal work. Timing was used effectively as well as chosen theatrical techniques such as inventive staging, well-chosen music and SFX.

Students were able to use a range of theatrical styles and able to hold and respond to an audience with a high degree of confidence. Weaker performances showed a lack of engagement with the work, topic or theme. Students should be discouraged from seeing Improvisation as an easy option but rather see it as a challenge to enable them to demonstrate skills learned during the course.

Option 4: Theatre in Education

Candidates must prepare for and perform a piece of Theatre in Education based on a theme designed for a specific target audience.

Many schools now use Theatre in Education as a performance option during the course. The requirement that the performance needs a specific target audience is fully appreciated. When TIE work was seen at moderation the target audience was present, delivering some excellent outcomes. The most challenging work was well structured and researched by the students and thoughtfully executed on stage. *Too much Punch for Judy* was another popular choice for performance purposes performed to a high level with effective use of set, lighting, sound, costume and properties. A performance of *Kinder transport*, performed to a group of Year 6 pupils, also worked well. Themes such as 'myths and legends', 'transfer to high school' and 'bullying' were all successfully explored with the target audiences fully appreciating the issues of the pieces.

Option 5: Physical Theatre

Candidates must prepare for and perform a piece of physical theatre, which is a mode of performance that pursues storytelling through primarily physical means. It is a visual form of theatre.

Moderators reported an increase in work produced for this option this year, achieving some of the highest assessment outcomes. Some very exciting ensemble performances were seen with stimuli ranging from *Theseus and the Minotaur*, *Iron Hans*, and *The Holocaust*. The pieces produced encompassed strongly choreographed movement, slow motion and well-honed mime skills. The stylised movement suited the material and resulted in high marks being achieved. Work seen included both contemporary and classical dance styles alongside physical comedy, resulting in some deeply symbolic ensemble pieces. 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 the use of sound and lighting enhanced already exciting performances.

Design / Technical Options

While design and technical work produced must contribute to an actual group performance the work produced must be each student's individual work.

Option 6: Set Design

Candidates must prepare and present a scale model of a set for a play, a devised piece or an unscripted piece.

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 students went on to realise the set design on stage, 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. For example, a production of *Oedipus* gave the student the opportunity to design a classic setting with columns and strong theatrical symbolism. *The Crucible* and Becket's *End Game* offered students the opportunity to reflect an appropriate style and period or mood and atmosphere through the set design. Weaker work was produced from students who perhaps had no real enthusiasm for the task set and this was evident in the outcomes of the designs.

Option 7: Costume Design

Candidates must prepare and present a costume which they have made or assembled for a play, a devised piece or an unscripted piece. The costume must be supported by designs for at least one other costume to be used in the performance.

A number of schools offered work for moderation in this popular design option. 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 *The 39 Steps* and *Road* and *The Tempest* gave students scope for excellent imaginative costumes. Inspiration for Ariel's costume was taken from the sea, where a 'floaty' fabric in various shades of green and blue was used. The basic tunic shape had twisted pieces of fabric which were also woven into the actress's hair. A contrasting design of a simple tudor-style dress was produced for Miranda. A production of *The Night before Christmas* offered a student the opportunity to design a zany, pantomime

style costume for the crazy Elf, which was both durable and comfortable to wear. The best examples of costume design seen are when students have worked to a clear design brief, considered budget, colours, fabrics, constraints of costume in performance, the effects of lighting and make-up had included accessories, and footwear in their designs and realisation.

Careful analysis of the requirements stated in the specification for this option should be explored by the schools before allowing students to engage with the design process.

Option 8: Make up

Candidates must prepare and present two contrasting make-ups for a play, a devised piece or an unscripted piece.

Few examples of the make-up option were reported this year. However, the best make-up offered enabled students to demonstrate a range of techniques and 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.

Touched by Stephen Lowe gave students the opportunity to explore contrasting make-up required by different age groups in this World War II setting. The use of make-up in *DNA* demonstrated a good application of skill and understanding of the needs of the piece. A bruised and bloodied face, messy hair and a cut lip contrasted well with the more natural make-up of a young girl.

Option 9: Properties

Candidates must prepare and present two different properties for a play, a devised piece or an unscripted piece.

Students offering this option produced some excellent results. There were examples of fully appropriate props for productions and both the design and the construction of the properties had been carefully considered.

The students that chose this option showed a real passion for the role of the properties designer, and their properties produce really enhanced the outcomes in terms of performance.

Consideration had been given to research of the properties in terms of historical period, style and materials to be used. Some useful properties for *Gosforth's Fete* were adequately realised and appropriate to the needs of the piece. The majority of the properties designed and constructed were seen in performance and were clearly durable and fully appropriate.

Option 10: Masks

Candidates must prepare and present two contrasting masks for a play, a devised piece or an unscripted piece.

A minority option again this year, but nevertheless a couple of schools entered mask work for assessment purposes. Masks inspired by Kneehigh Theatre showed a fair understanding of the demands of mask work.

Option 11: Puppets

Candidates must prepare and present a puppet for a play, a devised piece or an unscripted piece.

No evidence of the use of puppets was seen this year.

Option 12: Lighting

Candidates must prepare and present the lighting for a play, a devised piece or an unscripted piece.

Where this option was offered for moderation, students are usually skilled in designing and operating the lighting systems in their schools. Some excellent and thorough work, which employed a number of lighting effects were seen. 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.

Lighting for *The 39 Steps*, *DNA*, *The Crucible* and *Teachers* was viewed and demonstrated an excellent understanding of technical language, as well as how to rig, use special effects and colour and the use of gobos. The work of weaker students was less successful in its outcomes, and this was accurately reflected in the mark awarded.

Option 13: Sound

Candidates must prepare and present a sound plot for a play, a devised piece or an unscripted piece.

Where this option is offered for moderation, students are usually enthusiastic and talented in operating the sound systems in their schools; demonstrating this use to an excellent standard. Sound was recorded on a number of devices, supported by live effects and used in the realisation of a production performance. Cue sheets should be produced to enable anyone to operate the sound system on a contingency basis and students working at the highest levels produced appropriate cue sheets. Good students enjoy a challenge and selected sound for performances that gave them the opportunity to show their range of skills.

A superb sound plot for an Improvisation inspired by *Lord of the Flies* represented work of the highest standard. Weaker students tended to offer introduction music to a performance piece and perhaps a couple of sound effects in response to the task set.

Option 14: Stage Management

Candidates must prepare for and present a practical demonstration of the stage manager's role in a play, a devised piece or an unscripted piece.

Students choosing this option generally produced work of a very high standard. They displayed excellent organisational skills and knew exactly what is 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 is often used to good advantage. Stage management students carry out risk assessments, chair production meetings and are very organised and efficient. The nature of the complex role of the stage manager is usually clearly understood and identified.

Weaker students choosing this option do not fully realise the extent of the role and this is reflected in the mark given.

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