

GCSE

Edexcel GCSE

Drama (1699)

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Summer 2005

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Examiners' Report

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Contents

1.	Paper One - 1699/01 Drama Coursework	1
2.	Paper Two - 1699/02 Drama Performance	6
3.	Grade Boundaries	12

Paper One (1699/01) Drama Coursework

At the end of the fourth examination series of this Specification most centres have adapted to its requirements and either moved on to more adventurous schemes through which to assess their candidates or adapted the 'tried and tested' from previous years. The overall impression is one of excellent practice in most drama departments both in the UK and International centres.

Centre Standardisation Meetings

Most D1c forms indicated that teachers had attended a Centre Standardisation meeting, had read the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination (ICE) booklet, Notes for Guidance for Centres and observed the Specification requirements closely.

Problems occurred where teachers had not been standardised or had not followed the requirements outlined in the relevant documents - either because they were new to the Specification and education system or because they had arrived halfway through the examination of the paper. This affected both the candidates' achievements and the quality of evidence submitted for moderation. It was noted that a number of teachers had completed one or both units before leaving for new posts to ensure that their candidates would not be penalised.

Performance Of Candidates

Most candidates met their potential through exciting and challenging work that was interesting and stretched their understanding and use of drama forms. It was heartening to see that many candidates earning lower marks had been well taught and could complete all parts of the paper to the best of their abilities. It was evident in many centres that Records of Work included differentiated activities that interested and challenged all their candidates.

Much work showed depth, using strategies, elements and medium in exciting and inventive ways so that, for example, lighting and set design developed from practical improvisation or on text work. This clearly added to the candidates' understanding of the relationship between issue/text and drama.

Unit 1 themes were similar to those from previous years: conflict (eg War, Civil Rights, Refugees), more obvious historical themes (eg The Plague, Witchcraft, The Disappeared, Transported Children) or more abstract concepts (Dependency, Love and Hate, Crime). Those that went beyond the obvious use of texts and explored the issues inventively did the best for their candidates. For example, in one centre groups of candidates took it in turns to lead the rest of the class in practical drama activities to evaluate the unit.

In **Unit 2** there was also evidence of much excellent practice and, interestingly, slightly less emphasis upon performance. Challenging texts from Shakespeare, Miller, Wertebaker, Priestley, Cartwright, and Churchill were used as well as the tried and tested favourites from Godber, Russell and Wheeler. It was noted that candidates of all abilities gained much from challenging playtexts when they were made accessible through focused teaching and appropriately selected extracts.

However, a significant number of centres limited their candidates by planning and teaching schemes that met the basic requirements but did not provide sufficiently challenging texts/stimuli or practical drama activities, thus the work lacked depth. Another factor was the introduction of a new text/stimulus for each session so that the candidates spent most of the assessment period responding and were not able to develop their understanding of the issues and ideas through practical drama. Too many interpreted 'improvisation' and 'workshop' as preparation for performance. For example, introducing two or more texts/stimuli in Unit 1 which were developed towards presentation in the final session of the assessment. This prevented candidates from meeting the Assessment Objectives for this paper focusing instead upon Assessment Objective 3. It was also felt that where the focus of Unit 1 was a dramatic concept, e.g. Constructing a Character, Seven Levels of Tension, it was more difficult for the candidates to meet the Assessment Objectives fully since their use of drama was not necessarily informed by sufficiently stimulating texts.

Other candidates were limited by a more basic approach that did not stretch or challenge, sometimes producing work that was more appropriate for KS3 than GCSE. A real cause for concern were poorly constructed sessions that tackled difficult issues leading to work that lacked depth and understanding. Teachers that used texts/stimuli and exciting drama activities that led to the heart of the issue were much more successful.

It was felt that a change of teacher or a series of supply staff often had a profound effect upon the candidates in some centres. Where this was well managed the candidates' work for Unit 1 may have been different in style from Unit 2 but not necessarily of a lower standard. It was noted by moderators that there is an increase in unsupported supply staff endeavouring to make sense of an unfamiliar specification.

Records of Work

The presentation of Records of Work varied considerably. Most centres understand that these should demonstrate how the centre had met the Specification requirements, what took place in each assessed session and indicate what had been recorded on video. Pre-planned schemes that have been annotated during the process of the teaching and assessment of both units showed what took place most fully. A significant number of published and downloaded schemes were used; these are generally appropriate but centres are advised to check that the requirements have been met and to annotate the schemes to show how they had been adapted for their own candidates.

Records of Work were presented in many different ways: tabulated to show the strategies, elements and medium used in each session matched to Assessment Objectives; as a continuous outline describing what took place; lengthy descriptions of several weeks work with highlighted sessions to show the 6 assessed hours for the Unit.

There were some very brief records - word processed or hand written, often on a single page - that did not show how the requirements had been met and did not match the video recordings or the candidates' portfolio evidence. Centres should note that the Record of Work acts as an examination paper written by the centre

showing the standard and breadth of the challenges provided for the candidates to meet the assessment criteria.

Video / Video Time Sheet (D1b)

The D1b form had been changed to ensure that centres entered the Assessment Objectives for each teaching strategy in the recorded sessions and this was largely successful. The details on the form greatly assisted the moderators as part of the overall evidence of the centre's standard, particularly when the sound or visual quality of the recording was poor. Videos generally showed candidates participating in a variety of challenging tasks and were most illuminating when the whole session was recorded and the activities could be seen in context, especially when the Record of Work had indicated which sessions were on the video. There was some concern about centres where the progress of the sessions were interrupted by note taking for the portfolio.

Unfortunately, a significant number of videos had been stolen, were missing, had been damaged or were too brief to show the standard of work. Some centres submitted edited 'highlights' or candidate presentations at the end of the Unit which were inappropriate and did not show how the candidates had met the objectives.

Centre Details (D1c)

The Centre Details form (D1c) is part of the evidence to show the overall standard at the centre and the number and range of candidates. This was generally fully completed and included details of how the marking had been standardised within the centre. It was noted that a number of teachers had been supported and their marking standardised by more experienced colleagues, ASTs or outside agencies. While this is a most positive sign that many new teachers are being supported by other professionals there was some concern that full understanding of the Specification and criteria had been lacking in some cases.

Teacher-Examiner Comments (D1a)

There is still some confusion about the entering of marks on to the D1a form although most centres are familiar with the process of awarding marks according to the three Assessment Objectives for both the portfolio and practical work and then showing separate marks for the two parts of the Paper. There were significant errors in addition on many D1a forms and in transferring marks to the OPTEMs. Some errors were noted by moderators who informed the centres concerned. The teacher-examiner comments generally included much detail about the candidates' practical work which had links with the portfolio evidence and really helped to support the marks that had been awarded. This was much more appropriate than quotations from the criteria. A significant number of candidates had received special needs support and had contacted the relevant department at Edexcel. The level and type of support was then indicated on the D1a and/or in a covering letter.

Portfolio

Once more portfolio evidence was often exciting and beautifully presented showing candidates' interest and enthusiasm for the subject and the work completed during the two assessments. A wide range of approaches was used: essay style, annotation on scripts and texts/stimuli, storyboards, role on the wall/gingerbread showing exploration of characters and roles in depth, diagrams to show movement and use of space among others. A3 was generally used purposefully to 'patchwork' different pieces of writing, diagrams and texts used to meet portfolio tasks. Most portfolios showed the candidates' experience of the assessed units and contrasted effectively with the Records of Work and the video evidence to give the moderator a full picture of the standard and quality of work at the centre. Many centres structured the portfolio tasks to meet the requirements, recording and reflecting upon the practical activities which contributed to subsequent sessions.

The balance of issue and playtext to drama was generally appropriate with candidates evaluating their understanding of drama and how their exploration of the issue or playtext had challenged their use of drama. A significant number of candidates were too focused upon the issues and background to the playtexts: collages of downloaded images, research and discussion about the playwright are all irrelevant. Others neglected the drama to focus entirely upon the issues explored in Unit 1 or completed a literary study of the play in Unit 2 and so did not provide any evidence of the drama experience.

Where candidates had responded to many different stimuli with no clear development the work lacked depth and understanding. It was noted that dependence upon stimuli and a limited range of strategies produced both practical and portfolio work that was less discursive and lacked depth across the ability range. Writing frames were generally more inventive and flexible allowing for candidates to record and discuss their own ideas within a supportive framework.

There was real concern about the Evaluation tasks for both units: candidates are reiterating their writing for both Response and Development or discussing a final performance rather than significant moments during the assessment for Unit 1. Too many discussed their own performances in Unit 2 rather than evaluating a performance given by others. Concern was also expressed that many candidates are not seeing live theatre at any point during the course. Evaluations of work presented by other GCSE candidates was appropriate but more limiting than evaluations of more formal performances of amateur or professional work. It was felt that AS and A2 pieces and BTEC performances were as valuable as professional TIE and touring company productions.

Although the presentation of portfolios was often inventive and was a strong indicator of the quality of work and candidates' enthusiasm for drama, many centres did not observe the ICE booklet. Many candidates exceeded the maximum number of words and a few exceeded the number of pages. Work sometimes arrived in a state of disintegration: A4 sheets of paper had been stuck back to back; A3 sheets with different pieces of paper insecurely attached: loose pages and the use of sugar paper and card held together with paper clips instead of staples. Some centres had ensured that candidates had written their names, the task and title of the unit on each sheet which was very helpful when reassembling the work. Although there were fewer ring binders and plastic wallets this year, too few centres are observing the instructions for portfolio evidence.

A few candidates did not submit portfolio evidence at all although it was noted that an increased number of candidates who struggle to record and reflect upon the work had completed some or all of the tasks. Centres are finding ways to support candidates who find paperwork difficult.

Marking

Most centres understand the standard appropriate for GCSE and plan and teach the two units to enable their candidates to meet the criteria to the best of their ability. The evidence indicated that most are able to mark both the practical and portfolio work appropriately, making necessary adjustments for absence and missing tasks in the portfolios. The standard of work for the most able blurs the line between AS and GCSE in a number of centres. However, it was felt once again that many centres had rewarded their candidates so positively that marks were above the appropriate level, although only a few were overmarked to such a degree that alterations had to be made.

Deadlines

An increased number of centres did not meet the deadline of 6 May which had a serious effect upon the ability of the moderating teams to meet their deadlines. While it was understood that the circumstances were unavoidable in a few centres, moderators are not obliged to moderate materials that arrive late. The loss of documentation and videos in a number of centres contributes to the case for examination officers retrieving and storing drama examination materials in a secure place as soon as possible after each unit has been assessed.

International Centres

Many International centres continue to produce excellent work making use of local influences and stimuli, particularly in Unit 1 and Unit 2 Evaluation. Some work from published sources was less appropriate for these candidates who are either not of British origin or who have lived outside the UK for much of their lives. The most successful work made inventive use of playtexts such as 'The Red Thread' or 'Macbeth' that found resonance in the candidates' cultural experiences. Less successful centres were those that had clearly not received the ICE booklet or Notes for Guidance for Centres although it was noted that a number had benefited from the Centre Standardisation Pack.

Conclusion

Although this report contains much negative comment it was evident that most candidates have been advantaged by exciting and challenging drama work throughout their GCSE course leading to high standards of work for this paper. The achievement of candidates across the ability range in all parts of the paper is particularly gratifying - evidence of much excellent practice by teachers using this specification.

Paper Two (1699/02) Drama Performance

Introduction

In the third series of this Specification it is clear that the majority of centres have a very high level of understanding of the requirements and demands of this paper and have in place a structure that enables candidates to prepare well for their final Paper Two performance. However, again this year there were a number of centres new to the Specification and/or teachers delivering Paper Two for the first time. Many of these centres produced very credible work.

However, examiners noted that there was an increase in candidates working with non specialist teaching staff or sometimes with a series of supply teachers. It was felt that these candidates were sometimes disadvantaged and often candidates and staff did not seem to fully understand the requirements of this paper.

In all three options work awarded marks in the higher bands arose from the clear teaching of the skills needed for Paper Two, a well structured final preparation period and a sense of occasion and focus in the examination sessions.

Where work was seen that could only be awarded marks in the lower bands it was often very under prepared, brief and showed little understanding of making live performance for an audience. Often the centres were unsure if candidates would attend and there were examples of groups being put together to prepare some work on the day of the examination.

Timing of the Examination

A notable feature of the 2005 examination series was a considerable increase in centres choosing twilight or evening sessions for their performances. Centres felt that the advantages were that there could be a greater sense of occasion and less interference e.g. noise from lesson changes from a school in full session and that there was a greater opportunity to identify appropriate and supportive audiences.

However, centres are reminded that although many examiners responded positively to this as they were able to be in school more themselves some examiners are unable to make these sessions. Some centres requested examiners to visit on Saturdays and Sundays but it proved very difficult to find examiners able to do these days or evenings. It must be noted that examiners did not find that there was any advantage in when centres chose to do the performances, the key feature was ensuring examination conditions as specified in the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination (ICE) booklet.

Centres are reminded that Paper Two can take place at any time in March, April or May. It was felt that the timing of the Easter break this year helped create a rather different pattern of examination dates. Many centres opted for dates in mid to late May. This meant that not all centres could have their preferred date. All centres are reminded that they must not fix a date or time for their examination before contact and discussion with their allocated examiner. In a few instances centres lacked flexibility and this resulted in work having to be examined on video.

There was a significant increase in centres having agreed a date and time with an examiner then wishing to change the arrangements. In future, should this situation arise, if the allocated examiner cannot make another date at the centre Edexcel will not contact other examiners but the centre will need to video the work and send the video to their allocated examiner.

Some centres did not have their allocated examiner due to last minute circumstances. In most cases this was due to ill health or travel difficulties. In some cases a replacement examiner was found. Most centres who found themselves in this situation responded with a very high level of professionalism and submitted video evidence with comments and a suggested rank order and/or marks. The examining team would like to thank those centres for doing the extra work needed in these circumstances.

Examination Conditions

In the 2004 report the importance of examination conditions was highlighted, particularly the need to have another teacher/adult to support the rigour of examination procedures. Many examiners felt that this had been put in place by centres and it was felt that this did support candidates and teachers.

Unfortunately there were a number of centres who were poorly prepared for the examination sessions. Examiners found themselves making and fixing 'Examination in Progress' notices, redirecting classes from the examination room, arranging chairs for the audience and reminding the audience of appropriate behaviour. Centres are reminded that examiners are there to be totally focused on assessing examination work only.

Examiners must be given the optimum conditions in which to assess the candidates both in seeing the performances and considering the work and making notes in between performances.

As a very experienced member of the senior examining team noted, many of the problems relating to assessment would be solved if centres read and put in place all of the requirements stated in the ICE booklet. The ICE is sent to centres in the autumn term and is also available to download from the Edexcel website.

However, the vast majority of examiners commented on the excellence of the organisation at the centres who ensured that Paper Two was often an uplifting and positive end to GCSE Drama course for candidates, teachers and examiners.

Administration

The majority of centres completed all the documentation required prior to the examination with care and professionalism. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the examiner can be well prepared prior to the examination.

Candidates must take the responsibility to ensure that details of their performances are clear. The overwhelming concern is the lack of clear identification of individual candidates. Candidates must be described in words or shown in photographs as they intend to appear in performance. It is appreciated that there may be for some candidates last minute changes in costume or

appearance. In future series centres should consider providing prior to or at the examination session a photograph of each performance group as they appear in the performance with names, candidate numbers and role(s) played clearly written on the photograph.

Examiners felt that small 'headshots' of individual candidates were clearly time consuming for centres but of limited value for examiners.

The identification of candidates should be built into the preparation of the paper.

Video Evidence

For 2005 centres were required to check the video evidence of all performances/presentations and complete a Video Time Sheet. It is appreciated this is an extra task for centres however the vast majority of centres completed this with a high level of professionalism and understanding of this new requirement.

The record of live performances/presentations is in effect 'the scripts' for the examination. They are a vital element in the monitoring of examiners and in ensuring that standards of the examination are maintained year on year. For centres they provide a record of work that can be referred to in future series and are the basis of any Enquiries About Results procedures.

Centres **must** ensure before each performance that candidates introduce themselves to the camera in costume stating slowly name, candidate number and role(s). The camera **must** then record them as a group in long shot. The centre must check all this information is clear on the video particularly if editing in previously recorded introductions.

It is noteworthy that centres made comments regarding the quality of the recordings and realised for the first time the importance of ensuring the video reflects the performance seen by the examiner. Many commented on how the camera caught the back of audience members' and the examiners' heads well but little of the performance, how only part of the performance space was caught on video or how candidates could hardly be heard. Centres should carefully consider the importance of the video for future examination series.

Examiners should have received the video within seven working days of the examination, very few did.

It was felt this was due to the requirement to check the video but centres are reminded that completing this task as quickly as possible is vital to the whole exam procedure as examiners cannot enter marks until monitoring procedures are completed.

Accompanied Visits

Visiting examiners work in small local teams, these teams then are in areas with Assistant Principal Examiners. As part of the monitoring process examiners may be accompanied by their Team Leader, Assistant Principal Examiner and in a few instances Principal Examiner on one centre visit. These accompanied visits are

always decided by time and location. Those centres who had accompanied visits this year are to be commended for the level of professionalism and hospitality extended to the visiting team. In a few cases the discussion disrupted the timing of the performances, every attempt will be made to avoid this occurring in future examination series.

Performance Support

There was an increase in candidates offering this in 2005, although it remains the least chosen option.

There remains a small cohort who clearly have not made this a positive choice and it was noted that these candidates were often absent on the day of the examination. However, often other group members told the examiner that this would not effect their performance.

Where centres clearly had the resources and expertise to make these options an integral part of the GCSE course some excellent work was seen. It was creative, skilful and enhanced the performances. There was excellent use of projected images and information that both created atmosphere and showed understanding of some Brechtian devices particularly for issue based devised work. Much of the sound work was of a very high quality both technically and creatively. Examiners reported on being introduced to music and performers unknown to them that had been used with sensitivity or emotional 'punch'.

Costume candidates had the widest range of achievement. Much was beyond the standard required for GCSE down to a presentation that informed the examiner that the candidate asked if the performers had clothes they wanted to wear and they had 'so that was lucky'.

More performance support candidates worked with scripted performances than devised. Some performance support candidates, particularly lighting, although only examined with one group provided support for other or all groups. This was certainly a measure of their enthusiasm and commitment.

It should be noted that many groups who did not have performance support candidates still worked to enhance their performances with sound, set, lighting, costume produced by themselves.

Scripted Performance

This is an increasingly popular option, particularly with centres delivering the Specification for the first time who may bring their expertise from other GCSE Specifications.

Examiners also noted that candidates referred to work explored or seen for Paper One Unit Two as the inspiration for the choice of text. This could be enjoying an author's style, most frequently Berkoff or Godber or really engaging with a Unit Two text and wanting to bring a part of it to performance standard.

Examiners commented on challenging texts such as Shakespeare, Priestley, Beckett, Pinter or Churchill being presented, often at a high level.

The National Theatre Connections series and Grimms Tales, Arabian Nights and Twisted Tales were seen as appropriate choices that produced some 'entrancing' and 'magical' work. Some were played to a target audience of primary school children to great effect.

Two other writers of plays targeted at this age group are Chris Owen (A Mother's Voice / The Last Resort) and Mark Wheeler (Hard to Swallow / Too Much Punch for Judy) produced work that fully met the criteria for this paper and was often well matched with candidates' interest and knowledge.

Crucial to success was the choice of text. Candidates achievement was affected by texts that were too simplistic and poorly written or too complex and demanding for their skills and understanding. Equally the foundation for success in scripted performance is delivering the lines and picking up the cues with confidence and skill. A disappointing number of candidates read the lines, needed frequent prompts or gave a rough approximation of the words. This clearly disadvantaged others in the performance group.

There was an increase in teachers clearly working with candidates to adapt a longer text retaining the flow of the whole play rather than an extract. This was particularly true of 'Bouncers' and 'Shakers' which remain popular choices. This was much in line with the requirement of AS Unit 2 Edexcel Drama and seen as very good practice for candidates considering taking this course post GCSE.

Less successful (and for candidates less enjoyable) work was when all groups performed the same text and often extract as it did not work to the advantage of individual candidates' skills.

Devised Performance

This continues to be the most popular option. Work was seen by examiners that covered the full mark range, from candidates who briefly sat or stood in the performance space and said nothing to those whose work was felt to exceed the standard required for GCSE with high levels of rapport, performance skills and understanding.

Centres must carefully consider the size and composition of each performance group. Very few were too large but examiners did feel that groups of six or more had more of a challenge in ensuring that all candidates had the opportunity to meet the requirements of this paper. Some groups were reduced to 1 or 2 on the examination day and often other candidates stepped in to support them.

It remains a concern for examiners that both overlong (over an hour for 4 candidates) or brief (7 minutes for 6 candidates) disadvantage candidates.

It was clear many more centres had enabled candidates to focus on the need for content and purpose in devised work. Work awarded marks in the higher bands had clearly arisen from a strong initial stimulus that engaged and stimulated candidates supported by research into the material. There was powerful work from centres across the country that examined 'the way we live now' looking at inequality, abuse, religions and social prejudice but within the school or family context or in the bigger world picture. Work based on literary extracts, historical documents,

visual images or music also produced some excellent work. As did performances for specific target audiences such as work to support anti bullying work with year seven or healthy eating for primary school children.

Many centres had considered the staging of the performances and used very simple devices such as blocks, symbolic props / costumes, lighting or sound to enhance performances. However, too much reliance on in particular many and often overlong blackouts or many costume / scenery changes really affected the pace of performances and focus of the candidates. Both of these should be avoided by centres.

The Third Way

There was an increase in centres using a playtext as the stimulus for performance this year. Often this was a text used for Paper One Unit Two exploration or evaluation. Another text by the playwright or a play in a similar style was often chosen. This approach was felt to support and stimulate the full range of candidates. Some outstanding work was seen based on Blood Brothers, Crucible and Berkoff's style of theatre.

Conclusion

It is greatly to the credit of the professionalism and commitment of teachers and enthusiasm and hard work of candidates that examiners report seeing a wide range of work that ranged from them being moved to tears to crying with laughter. It is clear candidates, audiences, teachers and examiners were engaged in performance work that extended in power and impact far beyond the requirements of this GCSE paper.

Statistics

Grade Boundaries 2005

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Mark	97	87	75	63	51	39	28	17	0

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