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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel GCSE
Drama (1DR0)
Theatre Makers in Practice

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Introduction

This is the third year of the 1DR0.03 Component, which was developed as part of the new 9-1 GCSEs which were designed with a new AO (AO3 Knowledge and Understanding) in place, intended to improve the rigour of teaching, learning, achievement and assessment across all the reform GCSEs. The cohort of the 2011 was extremely small due to the cancellation of all public examinations in June 2020 following the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. This led to a re-sit series being offered in the November of 2020 for those candidates who wanted to improve on the centre assessed grades awarded in Summer 2020. As the paper was only sat by 23 candidates it is very difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions and centres are directed to consult the reports for the 1806 and 1906 series for greater analysis and detail. However, in this unusual series of this examination, it is worth reporting on a number of areas to offer further guidance for teachers in preparing their candidates for future examination series.

The paper set in Autumn 2020 was not written specifically for this 're-sit' series; it was initially intended for use in May 2020 as a paper for a full cohort. As such there were some alterations to the examination paper. One such amendment was that this was the first series in which the text '100', by Diene Petterle, Neil Monaghan and Christopher Heimann, was offered as a new Section A Set text. This text replaced the withdrawn text 'Dr Korczak's Example' and led to the re-ordering of the question numbers on the paper so that the questions and extracts were listed in alpha-numeric order. The new question/ text order in the 2011 series was as follows:

- Q1 – 100
- Q2 – 1984
- Q3 – An Inspector Calls
- Q4 – Blue Stockings
- Q5 – The Crucible
- Q6 – DNA
- Q7 – Government Inspector
- Q8 – Twelfth Night

These set-texts were divided into two 'lists' to support centres in meeting the contrast requirements for this specification. More details regarding text choices can be found on p.6-7 and p.46-7 of the specification.

From 2019 onwards, centres have been required to submit a Live Performance statement to Pearson. However, with the exceptional circumstances created by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the closure of theatre, centres were permitted to use digital, streamed and recorded performances in the 2011 series.

Component 3: Theatre Makers in Practice

Paper Overview

Theatre Makers in Practice requires students to show knowledge and understanding of the work of theatre makers and their creative choices and to analyse, and to evaluate their own experience of a live theatre performance in terms of both performance and design.

This paper is the single 'EA' assessment for Pearson GCSE Drama, with the other components that make up the specification comprising of NEA assessments. For the 2011 're-sit' series, grades were derived from Component 3 only, as per governmental guidelines.

For the first time in 2011, this written examination was 1 hour 45 minutes in length, with an additional 15 minutes of completion time having been granted to support candidates in completing the full paper and this seemed to have supported and benefited candidates in the mid-range of marks, who might previously have struggled to complete all the questions on the paper.

The paper is divided into two discrete sections for assessment, and while there are 9 questions in total, Candidates are required to answer on two of these 9 "questions", responding to both Section A and Section B.

Section A: Bringing texts to Life

Worth 45 marks, this section offers a choice of eight questions, each related to a single set-text, which candidates will have explored in preparation for the examination. Candidates must answer all 5 sub-questions in relation to the single set-text on which they have been prepared. The single assessment objective for this part of the examination is A03 (Knowledge and Understanding). Candidates need to consider how both performers, directors and designers practically realise ideas in performance to bring the text to life. They will respond to an unseen extract from the chosen text and are required to demonstrate knowledge of the performance context in their response to (b) (i) and of the whole text in their response to (b) (ii).

Of the eight texts available, this very small cohort responded to five texts with over half of responses being written in relation to 'An Inspector Calls' (Q3) and 'DNA' (Q6). This is as expected, as these have historically been the most popular texts in previous series. There were also several responses to the new text '100', 'The Crucible' and 'Blue Stockings'

Q (a) - Sub-questions (i) and (ii)

1DR0.03 is structured in terms of demand, and this is most evident within Section A which is constructed using stepped questions. Q (a) (i) and (ii) are the lowest demand questions which require concise ideas for performance and a short, linked reason for each idea. The maximum mark for each sub-question was 4 and 6 marks respectively; in each case, half the marks are awarded for relevant ideas/suggestions for performance skills offered and half the marks are awarded for linked reasons for these 'ways' of using performance skills.

Question 1-8 (a) (i)

Candidates were asked to write from the perspective of a performer, focusing on one named character from the extract, in relation to one named performance skill area. In the 2011 series, this was *Physical skills*, and the named characters were, respectively:

Ketu (Q1 - 100); Julia (Q2 - 1984); Sheila (Q3 - An Inspector Calls); Mrs Lindley (Q4 - Blue Stockings); Hale (Q5 - The Crucible); Cathy, (Q6 -DNA); the Mayor (Q7 - Government Inspector); Feste (Q8 - Twelfth Night).

Question 1-8 (a) (ii)

Candidates were asked to write again from the perspective of a performer, focusing on the use of performance skills to play one named character from the extract, in relation to a short, text specific, statement about the character. In the 2011 series, the named characters were, respectively:

Alex (Q1 - 100), Parsons (Q2 - 1984), Gerald (Q3 - An Inspector Calls), Carolyn (Q4 - Blue Stockings), Parris (Q5 - The Crucible), Richard (Q6 -DNA). The Superintendent (Q7 - Government Inspector), Viola (Q8 - Twelfth Night).

In 2011 for the first time, a structure was introduced in the answer booklet to encourage candidates to write succinctly and with a clear, concise focus on the examples and reasons required for each question. This appeared to be a successful innovation, with many candidates evidently able to fully meet the requirements of these sub-questions although there were also incomplete responses and several responses where candidates had offered no reasons for their choices.

Question 1-8 (b) (i)

In terms of the stepped structure of the paper, Q (b) (i) is of medium demand requiring a more developed response than to Q (a) (i) and Q (a) (ii). The maximum mark for this question is 9 and the question is assessed using a level-based mark scheme, made up of three levels.

Candidates were asked to write as a director of the chosen extract, showing knowledge and understanding of how one production element could be used to realise this extract in performance. There is also a requirement within this question for candidates to make reference to the performance context: the time when the play was created and performed. In the 2011 series, the named elements were, respectively: *sound; staging and set*.

The most successful choice was set, with fewer candidates choosing to write about sound, and staging proving the most problematic choice for candidates. Largely responses were secure and effective although some candidates struggled to refer to the performance context to the play. Please refer to the FAQ and Glossary documents for more details about performance context and about staging as a production element.

Question 1-8 (b) (ii)

In terms of the stepped structure of the paper, Q (b) (ii) is of high demand requiring extended and developed responses with the candidate writing as a director. There is also a requirement within this question for candidates to make reference to the complete text. The maximum mark for this question is 12 marks and the question is assessed using a level-based mark scheme, made up of three levels. Candidates were offered a short statement about a third named character. In the 2011 series, the named characters were, respectively:

The Guide (Q1 – 100), Winston (Q2 – 1984), The Inspector (Q3 – An Inspector Calls), Lloyd (Q4 – Blue Stockings), Tituba (Q5 – The Crucible), Leah (Q6 – DNA), Anna (Q7 – Government Inspector), Duke Orsino (Q8 – Twelfth Night)

Candidates were largely confident in response to this question, demonstrating a secure, well-prepared grasp of how the chosen character might be realised in performance, making use of the bullet-points to structure their responses, and using the viewpoint of view of the director, although there were some candidates who did not refer to the complete text. Please refer to the FAQ documents for more details about referencing the complete text.

Question 1-8 (c)

Q (c) is the highest demand question on the paper, requiring extended and developed responses, with the candidate writing as a designer and offering detailed design ideas for realising the extract practically. The maximum mark for this question is 14 marks and the question is assessed using a level-based mark scheme, made up of four levels,

with this additional level reflecting the additional demand built into this question. Candidates were asked to write as a designer of the chosen extract, showing knowledge and understanding how one design element could be used to realise this extract in performance. In the 2011 series, the named elements were, respectively: *Costume, props and stage furniture and lighting*.

Costume was the most popular choice for this question, with fewer candidates choosing to respond in relation to lighting or props and stage furniture. Candidates were generally less confident in response to this question, perhaps due in part to timing across the whole paper and/ or to the level of demand required by the question. This is generally in line with achievement from previous cohorts. However, there were some confident responses to the question, showing well-prepared candidates with an understanding of both extract and chosen design element.

Section B: Live Theatre Evaluation

For this section, candidates evaluate a production that they have seen 'live' although streamed and recorded performances are always permitted under special circumstances and the lockdown was deemed such a circumstance due to the closure of the theatres etc. In 2020, candidates wrote about a mixture of productions that they had actually seen live, (before lockdown in March 2020) and those they had seen via a streamed performance or a recording. Unfortunately, one candidate failed to respond as evidently, they had not seen a production and perhaps was not aware that a recorded or streamed production could have been used instead.

Centres have a free choice of production for this section of the examination, this was evident in the range of productions chosen, even across this tiny cohort. These ranged from live performances of 'War Horse', 'The Woman in Black' and Frantic Assembly's 'I Think We are Alone' to streamed work broadcast over the lockdown such as 'Frankenstein' and Frantic's 'Things I Know to be True'. There were also some Christmas performances seen such 'Cinderella' and 'Little baby Jesus' as well as one Shakespeare play ('Macbeth'). The notes that candidates are allowed to use during the examination largely supported the work and resulted in some in detailed, personal responses that allowed almost all candidates to analyse and evaluate what they had seen.

Section B has only one question to which all candidates should respond: Question 9. which is broken down into 2 parts, a) and b).

Question 9 - sub-question (a)

This question is of low to medium demand, offering candidates a 'breather' after the high demand question at the end of Section A. The maximum mark for this question is 6 and the question is assessed using a level-based mark scheme, made up of three levels. Q 9 (a) asks the candidate to respond analytically as a member of the audience and in the 2011 series, the focus of the question was on the use of lighting at one key moment within the production seen. A moment was deemed to be a continuous section of stage time and candidates wrote about moments of varying length from those that lasted a few beats to moments that encompassed an entire scene. There were responses which offered examples from two or more key moments from the production rather than staying focussed on a single moment as required by the question. However, there were a number of clear, focused responses, with a wide range of detailed analysis offered, making this the most successful question in Section B in the 2011 series.

Question 9 - sub-question (b)

This question is of medium demand, providing a slight step up from 9 (a) for the final question on the paper. The maximum mark for this question is 9 and the question is assessed using a level-based mark scheme, made up of three levels. Q 9 (b) asks the candidate to respond analytically and evaluatively as a member of the audience and for the 2011 series, the focus of the question was on how one performer used vocal skills to engage the audience within the production seen. This allowed candidates to write about the use of vocal skills in one or more moments, and any performer making use of multi-role, and appeared largely accessible to the majority of candidates. This question was often answered with confidence although a number of candidates were evidently affected by timing issues. This was the question most likely to be un-finished or unanswered across the paper, suggesting that despite the additional 15 minutes, timing needs careful consideration when approaching the paper as a whole.

Paper Summary

This has been an exceptionally challenging year for teachers and students of GCSE Drama, and the unprecedented times make it very difficult to offer advice and suggestions for the future. However, in preparation for the next examination series, whenever that may be, best practice for Component 3 would be for centres to:

- select a set text which fully supports the widest range of candidates within the cohort
- explore a range of characters and scenes within the text

- focus teaching on the roles of theatre-makers from Section A: performers, directors and designers
- consider the demands of specific questions e.g. performance context for Q (b) (i) and the complete text for Q (b) (ii)
- make use of the widely available free streamed performances to build opportunities to analyse and evaluate of 'live' theatre
- develop a wide subject-specific vocabulary for candidates
- focus candidates on reading and responding to the key words in each question
- clarify the mark available for each sub-question so that candidates are able to make best use of the time available
- provide regular opportunities for candidates to practise writing under timed conditions
- offer candidates access to previous versions of the question paper and answer booklet

It seems only right to finish by thanking all the teachers and students of GCSE Drama who have battled to sustain the study of Drama in an exceptionally challenging year and to wish all well in the future.