

# DRAMA

---

Paper 0411/01

Written Paper

## General comments

This was the first examination session for the revised IGCSE syllabus. The total number of candidates entered for the examination was 356. The written paper was based on material released to Centres earlier in the year. This contained an extract from Athol Fugard's *No Good Friday* and three stimuli. Both were intended to be used by candidates to prepare, both academically and practically, for the written paper. Whilst there was ample evidence of extensive preparation of Fugard's text, a number of candidates appeared not to have produced any practical work at all in response to the stimuli. This meant that their responses to the questions on these stimuli were highly theoretical or speculative and in some cases were simply ignored, thereby skewing a candidate's overall marks for the paper.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

All questions in this section were compulsory: **Questions 1 – 5** were based on *No Good Friday* and were worth a total of 18 marks, **Questions 6 – 8** were based on the stimuli and were worth 12 marks. The mark allocations for individual questions were indicated on the question paper for candidates' reference although in this section there was a tendency for candidates to write less as they progressed through the questions.

Some questions required practical solutions, others required an understanding of the significance of character, plot, narrative in the extract; most required a combination of the two.

### **Question 1**

Watson is a weak character, a member of his own community whose work as a township politician appears to have no beneficial effect on the lives of those in the township. His response to the cry for political action is to suggest a solution that merely diffuses anger through committees but does not offend those in power and ultimately reaffirms the status quo.

Whilst the majority of candidates gave reference to specific details of how they would play the speech, very few based this on the sort of character Watson appears to be. Whilst there was plenty of detail about facial expression, posture, focus and positioning on stage, this was often based on the assumption that Watson was a strong character whose political speeches were likely to create social change.

### **Question 2**

Most candidates scored well on this question and there were many detailed outlines of approaches to playing the character of Tobias in the speech in lines 518 – 536. The significance of Tobias as the main character in the drama was generally recognised. Since Tobias is so central here, the best advice for a director to give is to ensure that the character is neutral and not overplayed or sentimental. As far as the other characters are concerned, Tobias is no worse off than they are and Father Higgins identifies him as being 'like so many of our people'.

As with the previous question, relatively few candidates related their advice to the character and, as a result, the effect produced would have been simply melodramatic. Some candidates suggested an astonishing roller-coaster of emotions, ranging from powerful declamation – eyes raised to heaven – to sudden tears, sobbing the name of his wife and whispered half lines in between. In broad terms, however, most responses were workable and consistent and credit was awarded for consistency even if the overall characterisation was not entirely sustainable.

### Question 3

This question did not seek practical approaches to how the relation between Guy and Willie was developed, simply an understanding of their role in the extract. There was no preferred answer for this question and Examiners allowed credit for identifying any short passage where the relationship between the two men was developed. It was difficult, however, to allow very much credit for identification of passages that did not involve both of the characters: a number of candidates referred to passages between lines 1 and 89 where Guy and Rebecca discuss Willie but which does not practically demonstrate their interaction.

The most popular passages selected were lines 131 – 141, lines 157 – 169, lines 220 – 223, lines 351 – 405 and lines 550 – 570. Any of these allowed scope for identifying a sense of friendship under strain and credit was awarded as appropriate with most candidates scoring well.

### Question 4

The role of the set designer was approached with enthusiasm by many candidates and developed in more detail in **Section B**. However, there was a tendency for the majority of candidates to centre their ideas on lighting rather than set design in **Question 4**. This was often in response to the word 'mood' in the question which was generally assumed to be best created through light. Whilst credit was allowed for appropriate suggestions about lighting, the majority of candidates did not mention props or use of space and therefore scored less than half marks for this question.

### Question 5

Where credit in **Question 4** for suggestions about lighting, no further credit was allowed for the same suggestion merely repeated in response to **Question 5**. A good number of candidates identified the obvious differences between the two points in the drama: the sense of laziness on Friday afternoon at the end of a week's work contrasted with the harsh reality of Shark collecting his protection money only hours later. Permutations of red light were almost always assumed to be best for the ending of scene two although more imaginative solutions involved more stark blues suggestive of the coldness of the scene. The use of a strobe was suggested by a surprisingly large number of candidates without any sense of the dislocation of mood this would be likely to create.

### Question 6

This produced some weak responses and it was not at all clear that some candidates had even attempted any practical work. Furthermore, the issues themselves were often either so trivial as to be of little dramatic impact or so general as to be impossible to dramatise. In reality these ranged from a character being laughed at to the folly of mankind with relatively little in between. Those that chose workable issues, such as the hypocrisy of a particular person/people found the title of the stimulus helpful in working through a dramatic sequence. The reasons given for the choice of subject matter, however, seldom had much relationship to dramatic considerations.

### Question 7

This question produced some better responses since almost all candidates who answered it focused on the opening section of their piece based on *The owner of a small factory sacks a worker*. This had strong cultural resonance in many pieces of work and there were some inspired openings of political performance. A small minority of responses focused once again on the melodramatic and were more akin to *Murder in the Red Barn* than the genuine social issues suggested by the stimulus.

### Question 8

This produced the weakest responses in **Section A** and was the question most commonly omitted in this section. The notion of dramatic possibilities was seemingly unfamiliar and many interpreted the question as asking them to identify alternative solutions to what they had actually produced. Credit was allowed for these where appropriate in addition to those which identified the ways in which the devising had proceeded from the stimulus.

### Section B

All three questions in **Section B** were based on *No Good Friday*. Candidates were required to answer one question from this section; each question received broadly similar numbers of responses with a slight preference of candidates for **Question 9**.

### Question 9

Most candidates achieved an appropriate balance between sketches of their proposed set for each scene and credit was awarded for imaginative solutions in setting the drama. Most responses were able to identify the relationship between the mood of the extract and their design. However, some candidates relied too heavily on detailed diagrams with insufficient commentary of their proposed. Since the sketches had inevitably been completed in a short amount of time under examination conditions, it was unwise for candidates to rely entirely on sketches to reveal the full detail of their solutions and the best responses combined diagrammatic representation with prose commentary.

### Question 10

The character of Willie was explored in some detail although a disappointingly large number of candidates did not offer any suggestions as to how this textual knowledge could be realised. Whilst the reverse was hardly ever the case – practical solutions divorced from the text – it was rare for candidates to achieve the highest marks available since these were awarded to solutions for how the characters could be shown based on an analytical reading of the text.

Within this general approach, the relationship between Willie and Rebecca was dealt with in greater detail than Willie's reaction to the arrival of Tobias. The complexity of portraying a four-year long relationship outside of marriage in the late 1950s stimulated considerable imaginative thought. The arrival of Tobias was generally assumed simply to irritate Willie and, whilst the candidates did not have access to the rest of the play in which Willie's response develops and deepens, some clues within the extract (such as his attempt to fend off Shark from Tobias) were frequently overlooked.

### Question 11

The same problems beset candidates in this question as in the previous one: the need to link understanding of the characters under consideration with practical solutions as to how they are portrayed on stage. In addition, there was often an imbalance in the amount of time devoted to each of the characters: Rebecca was almost always treated sympathetically and with considerable nuance of character identified whereas the approach to Shark and Father Higgins was often one-dimensional. Shark was generally seen as a Chicago gangster in a manner that would have been out of keeping with Fugard's dramatic intentions. More disturbingly, Fugard's sympathetic treatment of Father Higgins as a white, anti-apartheid campaigner was often overlooked in favour of suggestions that he was simply an ineffectual priest and quite possibly a hypocrite to boot. Very few candidates were able to see the significance of Higgins' involvement and most chose to highlight his leaving rather than the fact that he had come to Sophiatown at all.

### Section C

All three questions in **Section C** were based on the three stimuli. Candidates were required to answer one question from this section; each question received broadly similar numbers of responses.

### Question 12

This question required a detailed response of how the devised piece based on *All the world's a stage* was intended to work its audience. A few responses were detailed and thorough and moved through the piece of devised drama in a structured and helpful manner. The majority, however, concentrated on the generic response of the audience and there were a few very weak answers which simply identified that the audience was intended to laugh, or clap, or both.

### Question 13

Although the pieces produced in response to the stimulus had integrity and generally appeared to work well, there was a lack of detail as to how the issues had been dramatised. The majority of answers simply outlined the storyline of the devised piece. This was credited where there was indication of dramatic considerations rather than simply the telling of a story. A significant number of responses, however, did not move beyond this level of narrative.

## Question 14

This produced better answers than the corresponding question in **Section A** since most candidates found writing about the structure of their piece to provide helpful guidance. The link between the starting point and the subject matter chosen was not always clear. Discussions of some very bizarre 'celebrations' emerged and some which were so inappropriate a cause of celebration as to merit no marks whatsoever. Examiners pointed out that racist pieces or dictatorial re-enactments are not appropriate in any circumstances but the notion that they were causes of celebration was disturbing in the extreme. The majority of celebrations, however, were well intentioned and there was ample evidence of good linkage between the candidates' own social and cultural situation and the drama they had created, both here and throughout the paper.

**Paper 0411/02**

**Coursework**

### General comments

The majority of Centres had marked coursework in line with CIE agreed standards. In cases where the candidates were clearly identified, the moderation process was straightforward. However, in some cases, the quality of the video (sound and/or picture) was poor and the identification of candidates difficult. Some Centres asked candidates to speak their names to the camera before the extract and this practice was most helpful. Photographs of candidates attached to their summary sheets aided the moderation process but only when they were a true likeness of the candidate as they appeared on video. A running order sheet placed with the video was useful to allow the moderator to follow the work. Centres are reminded that all videos must be submitted with clear labels containing full candidate names, numbers and Centre name and number.

Some Centres submitted videos in USA format which led to a delay in the moderation process. Centres are also reminded that the videos should be produced on standard British VHS format.

For Centres with six or fewer candidates, it was helpful when the monologues were placed at the beginning of the tape. This allowed moderators to identify candidates as individuals before the group pieces. For Centres with more than six candidates, all the individual tasks are to be submitted on one video and all the group tasks on a separate video. Centres are also reminded that if there is only one group (six or fewer candidates) **all** the work for the Centre should be submitted. For Centres with more than six candidates, a sample of six candidates' coursework should be submitted.

Generally, Centres offered clear evidence to justify the marks awarded. In the best cases, the evidence recorded was specific and related to the assessment criteria. The nature of the tasks set reflected the wide range of work from many different countries. In the best Centres, candidates had been challenged by their Teachers to reflect on the work in progress that culminated in some excellent performance work.