

DRAMA

Paper 0411/01
Written Examination

General comments

Administration

The submission of work was timely and in the vast majority of Centres the administration was effectively carried out. Centres are to be commended for their assistance in this matter as it greatly facilitates the smooth running of the examination process. There are one or two Centres still neglecting the preferred format for scripts, i.e. on paper with a right hand margin, tag tied at the corner. This facilitates easy manipulation of and access to the script during the marking process.

The Examination

The difficulty of the question paper was in line with previous sessions and candidates demonstrated a similar range of achievement. One question seemed to have caused some difficulty, however, and this will be discussed below. Overall it is felt that the paper was highly appropriate for the level at which it was directed and it is gratifying to record that many Centres are showing an increased awareness of the demands of the syllabus overall. The study text, *The Government Inspector*, appears to have been a popular choice and in many cases there was a clear sense of imagination from the candidates and a good understanding of the issues raised. Candidates seemed to engage with the characters and were universally in tune with the humour, revealing a surprising degree of resonance between a 19th century Russian playwright and young people of today from a variety of countries.

In the responses to the devised work a wide range of ability still exists but was slightly less apparent than in previous sessions. Once again, many candidates demonstrated ability to link theory to practice but there were still examples of candidates who are reliant on narrative or anecdotal content. As always, candidates who planned their time and strategy emerged with confidence. Several Centres seem to be encouraging candidates to attempt the essay questions first, which, given that the majority of the marks are allocated therein, represents sound practice.

Once again there was a sense that in some cases practical work was not sufficiently realised or inadequately developed due to what appears to be insufficient time. There is no doubt that in the case of questions relating to the devised work the strongest responses came from those Centres where the ideas had been explored fully in performance.

There has been a marked improvement in the way candidates approached the discussion of technical issues although there continues to be evidence of inadequate understanding about the nature of lighting and how it is actually used in the theatre.

In **Section A, Question 7** proved to be a stumbling block for many. A number of candidates misunderstood the meaning of 'role' and instead of discussing it in terms of character, took it to mean 'purpose'. In this case a specific part was ignored in favour of a discussion of themes and ideas contained within the piece overall.

Section A

Questions 1 – 5: *The Government Inspector*

Question 1

This question is designed to give candidates a relatively gentle start. Unfortunately, a significant minority of candidates did not make the most of it. Whilst the majority were able to suggest a relevant costume and link this with the comic values of the characters, there were many who provided only half an answer (i.e. either a suggestion or a justification). In some cases, the suggestions given were too vague and consequently insufficient to score marks.

Question 2

Many candidates gave extensive details about the relationship between ANNA and MARYA. However there were many occasions where they failed to make clear reference to what they considered to be the most important feature of each. This meant that candidates did not always secure full marks in this question.

Question 3

A difficult question for a lot of candidates who provided simple stage directions for OSIP without really taking into account his character. Whilst many had studied the given stage directions, the suggestions made were very basic and referred mainly to blocking. There was a lack of creativity in this question with many candidates failing to secure the full 4 marks.

Question 4

A very successful question for many. A variety of suggestions were given for the change in lighting including BOBCHINSKY falling through the skylight thus providing a cue for an increase in light intensity. The entrance of the GOVERNOR, and the change in mood amongst other characters were other valid suggestions. Answers were usually supported with sound reasoning from the text and were therefore given credit. A few candidates seemed to take the reference to an 'earthquake' in the bed quite literally and had elements of the set disintegrating around the performers!

Question 5

Many candidates were able to understand the relevance of the GOVERNOR's speech and grasped the frenetic nature of it. However, while able to discuss the mood, many candidates found it harder to suggest innovative and imaginative methods to create this. A lack of knowledge of dramatic techniques was apparent.

Questions 6 – 8: *Devised Work*

Question 6

Candidates were ready in most cases to provide a clear statement of message but a discussion of audience reaction was the discriminating factor here. Many candidates did not refer to the audience at all or found it difficult to express how audience reaction could be gauged.

Question 7

There was a danger of adopting a too narrative approach here and in doing so, missing the point of the question completely. However, many candidates were able to discuss maturely and concisely points about their character making specific reference to their piece. As mentioned above, a number misunderstood the word 'role' and ascribed to it a sense of 'purpose'.

Question 8

Again, some answers missed the point and simply told the story. In some Centres there was a lack of understanding about the term 'dramatic techniques'. There was a common inclination to discuss only lighting or sound for example. 'Dramatic techniques' i.e. methods of creating 'drama' should not focus exclusively on technical issues and if candidates do so they cannot access the full range of marks available.

Section B

Questions 9 – 11: *The Government Inspector*

Question 9

There was an improved response to this type of question. Few candidates relied solely on diagrams and this suggests that Centres are now aware that this is unacceptable. A number of candidates omitted to engage with the second part of the question, which required a suggestion for a smooth transition between scenes.

Question 10

This was well answered in most cases. Many candidates identified three appropriate scenes and were able to extract the possible humour.

Question 11

It was gratifying to note how many candidates demonstrated an excellent understanding of the character. However, in many cases they did not capitalise on this: they did not develop their ideas and failed to suggest ways of conveying their reasoning. Where candidates did answer the whole question, many showed a lack of creativity. This again highlights a problem with candidates' knowledge of dramatic techniques.

Section C

Questions 12 – 14: *Devised Work – Production*

Question 12

This caused difficulties for some who did not understand fully the term 'dramatic structure'. Whilst they could retell the story from scene to scene, they were unable to highlight contrasts, characterisation, pacing, climax etc. Responses that confine themselves to narrative accounts of the plot cannot access the mid to higher assessment criteria. A significant number of candidates chose to cite dramatic techniques rather than focus on the actual structure.

Question 13

Many candidates simply did not understand the term 'staged' and therefore were unable to discuss such concepts as style, layout, transitions etc.

Question 14

In a large sample of candidates answers tended toward the shallow and superficial. Having identified the aspect that they intended to discuss, responses often verged on narrative, lacking both reference to the methodology and working processes and evaluation as to their relative success.

DRAMA

<p>Paper 0411/02 Coursework</p>

General comments

The syllabus continues to grow in popularity and candidate entries have increased again this year. As in previous years, Moderators reported that it was wonderful to see candidates from all over the world working with such conviction and enthusiasm in their practical drama work. Whilst the overall standard of work was similar to that of previous sessions, it was a pleasure to note the way in which candidates appeared to be more and more innovative and creative in their scope and ambition.

Moderators approached the work with the intention of looking to confirm the marks awarded by the Centre and this was the case with the majority of submissions. There were, as anticipated, a smaller number of Centres whose marks were adjusted to bring them into line with the agreed standard, often where Centres were working in isolation or without ready access to professional theatre work. This no doubt accounted also for the candidates, though fewer in number this session, whose work was obviously inspired by the cinema rather than the stage. As in previous years, Moderators were emphatic in making the point that, in accordance with the syllabus, text-based pieces must be taken from stage plays and that devised pieces should be inspired by techniques that work in live, not filmed, performance.

Administration

It was pleasing to see that most Centres submitted coursework documentation that was exemplary in its layout, clarity and organisation. Although not officially introduced until next session, many Centres used the 2008 coursework assessment forms, as recommended in last year's Principal Moderator's Report. Since this brought together the work of each candidate onto a single form, it allowed teachers to build up a better sense of the candidate's *overall* achievement and to locate this within the Centre's overall rank order of merit. Many Centres had annotated the working mark sheets in meticulous detail, which was very helpful in showing how the marks had been awarded.

A few Centres misunderstood the requirements of which paperwork to send to the Moderator. Most significantly, where the Moderator's copy of form MS1 was missing, it meant that it was not always possible to tell whether the moderation sample had been correctly selected. The selection of the sample itself should always include the candidates with the highest and lowest marks respectively. Additionally, there should be a consistent spread of marks in order to demonstrate a consistent rank order.

There were some, thankfully isolated, examples this session where it was impossible for Moderators to proceed with their work since effective internal moderation had not been undertaken at the Centre. In these instances, Moderators pointed to the absolute need for one person to take responsibility for ensuring that the final rank order is consistent and accurate and that, where more than one teacher has been involved in the marking process, they have all taken the same standard.

Forms and commentaries

As has already been noted above, the coursework forms have been redesigned for 2008. In the current session, the majority of Centres handled the documentation well, but a few appeared bewildered by the process. One issue concerns the principle of rounding-up marks. Rounding-up should only occur at the **end** of the process and careful attention needs to be paid when adding averages of marks. For example, if the mark average for Objective A is 12.5, the mark for Objective B is 14 and the mark average for Objective C is 23.66, then the total is $12.5 + 14 + 23.66$ which equals 50.16. This is then rounded down to 50. However, this would have been wrongly totalled to 51 if the marks for Objectives A and C had been rounded up beforehand (i.e. $13 + 14 + 24 = 51$).

There was in some cases a discrepancy between the marks awarded for a particular piece and the remarks made about it by the teacher. A piece awarded 27 out of 30 for Objective C was described as a 'brave but faltering attempt'; another piece awarded 29 out of 30 was described as 'excellent in all aspects apart from forgetting a few entries'. This mismatch inevitably led to Moderators making adjustments to Centres' marks. At the other extreme, some comments consisted simply of a repeat wording of the assessment criteria in the syllabus.

Video recordings

It was disturbing that so many videos were damaged in transit. In most cases this was as a result of flimsy packaging by the Centre. Additionally, some DVDs had been recorded in a format that was not readily playable on a standard DVD player. Centres must ensure that the format used is playable thus and does not depend on using a PC to play them. Please note that **only full-sized DVDs are acceptable**.

That said, most videos and DVDs were of a high quality. The majority of video presentations aided the clear presentation of the candidates and their work. If videos are used, please record the individual performances at the beginning of the video followed by the group pieces. Please also ensure that each candidate says his or her name and candidate number to the camera first, perhaps also holding a piece of card displaying their name and number clearly. Running orders for tapes or DVDs must be on a separate piece of paper, not stuck to the outside of the video cassette/disc. The camera should be held still or placed on a tripod if there is one available. If possible, the camera should show the whole stage and be fixed.

Devised pieces

This point was included in both the June 2005 and June 2006 reports and is reproduced here since a few Centres appeared still to be unaware of it.

Centres are reminded that the dramatic stimuli on the Pre-released Material for Paper 1 must not be used as the basis of the practical submission in Paper 2. CIE reserves the right to refuse to award marks to coursework which duplicates a task set for the written paper.

The overall quality of devised work was similar to that produced in previous sessions. At best, it was well crafted, clearly conceived with a purpose and intention. At worst, it was self-indulgent, designed more for television than stage, and relied on slow-moving meaningful looks to camera. Most importantly, it is essential that Centres identify which of the options on the syllabus each piece of devised work is supposed to be an example of. There were instances where it was unclear what a particular piece was intended to be, which of course is essential to know in considering an appropriate mark for Objective B.

Group devised pieces were often less focused than individual ones. At times it was evident that this was because of the range of abilities (and probably personalities) in the group. Groups had rightly been encouraged to be generous and to incorporate different approaches. However, there was a need for teachers to feel empowered to intervene and pull diverse strands together so that the piece had coherence and meaning. The same was also true where individual candidates had devised highly insular roles, often framed by cliché: teachers are fully empowered to challenge these roles and encourage candidates to take a more outward-looking approach.

Many of the most successful pieces used a wide range of non-naturalistic techniques and were not tied to narrative forms of drama. Whilst there is certainly no prohibition on narrative, techniques such as physical theatre, multi-roles and the use of dance and/or music enabled candidates to move away from simply telling a story in favour of something innovative and fresh. Others had become embroiled in production values, especially costume, to the extent that these dominated the work. In some cases this added value to the piece, in others it had tied up a lot of time and energy that would arguably have been better spent in rehearsal. Technical skills are not credited *per se*: they are only useful if they bring out some aspect of the drama that might otherwise be veiled. At worst, highly elaborate costumes and sets had sought to create a form of television drama that was unsuited to a study of drama for the stage, as is the case in this syllabus. Even forms of drama that lent themselves to a live audience – most notably comedy – also fell victim to the fixation with television. It also meant that more performances than expected were delivered sitting at a table, an approach guaranteed to reduce the physicality of a piece. Candidates should be encouraged to use physicality where appropriate and not remain seated in a chair throughout their performance. Candidates who adopted this approach had little opportunity to use their physical skills.

Text-based pieces

There were some very creditable performances of pieces of repertoire this session although there was still a number resistant to delivering lines in a manner that sounded as if the candidates believed it to be genuine dialogue. The cultural range of the material chosen was as broad as in previous sessions and there was clearly a desire on the part of Centres to select material that engaged the candidates in cultural as well as dramatic diversity.

As has already been mentioned, the pieces must be selected from stage plays and not from films, television programmes, poems or novels. There were fewer candidates this session who produced work from sources other than stage plays but there was still a significant minority who did so. In future sessions, CIE reserves the right to not credit work if it is from inappropriate sources.

As in previous sessions, Moderators expressed concern about the quality of diction of some candidates. Whilst diversity of accent was to be encouraged, some candidates were clearly so ill at ease in speaking English that their drama was at points bordering on the incomprehensible which was frustrating for all concerned. The problem was further exacerbated in instances where the repertoire chosen was linguistically challenging.

It was good that cultural values were frequently embodied within the realisation of the text. In one or two instances, however, these needed to be considered as to their appropriateness. For example, the use of hand gestures whilst speaking is a common feature in some parts of the world and less so in others. There are certainly roles that benefit from such usage and others that do not and candidates should consider carefully what the chosen intention of the performance is.

It is helpful to share good practice as to the extent of the repertoire used. The following list should be considered alongside lists included in this report for the previous two sessions.

Alan Ayckbourn	Absent Friends
Dario Fo	The Virtuous Burglar
John Godber	Bouncers
David Leyland	Made in Britain
Andrew McCaldon	Hard Lies
Peter Nichols	A Day in the Life of Joe Egg
August Strindberg	Miss Julie
Oscar Wilde	An Ideal Husband
Olwen Wymark	Find Me

As always, this report is intended to be read alongside the range of documents for this syllabus on the Teacher Support area of the CIE website. Additionally, Centres may find it helpful to work through CIE's IGCSE Drama Coursework Training Handbook and accompanying DVD which were published in 2006.