

DRAMA

Paper 0411/01
Written Examination

General comments

Administration

The submission of scripts was in an appropriate format and in the vast majority of Centres the administration was effectively carried out. It is appreciated that Centres often have their own printed answer booklets but where this is not the case, the use of a treasury tag to attach sheets in the top left hand corner greatly facilitates the smooth running of the examination process.

The Examination

The paper was of a similar standard to previous years. Generally speaking, Centres' understanding of the paper has improved over recent sessions and candidates are showing greater knowledge of some of the technical aspects of performance. However, there remain significant gaps in knowledge in certain areas (see below) and some Centres appear to be disadvantaged by a lack of subject-specific knowledge.

The responses to the devised work continue to display a wide range of ability but this was slightly less apparent than in previous sessions. Once again, many candidates demonstrated the 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 carefully produced confident responses.

As in previous years there was a sense that, in some cases, practical work was not sufficiently realised or inadequately developed due to what seems to be insufficient time. A few Centres appear not to have completed all of the practical aspects of the syllabus and, in some cases, there is evidence that candidates simply lack an understanding of key dramatic ideas. 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 so that candidates had the opportunity to reflect critically on the actual experience of creating drama. The few Centres that seem to be trying to 'double up' – using one or two ideas to encompass all aspects of the paper – are doing their candidates a disservice.

There has been a marked improvement in the way candidates approach 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.

There are still many candidates who self-penalise simply because they have not read the question properly. Centres are encouraged to counsel candidates in this respect before they sit the examination.

Comments on individual questions

Section A

Questions 1 – 5 *An Inspector Calls*

Question 1

Nearly all candidates were able to suggest a suitable costume for the role of Mrs Birling and were able to substantiate their reasoning. There were a small number of candidates who misread the question and discussed Mr Birling's costume: this of course could not be credited. Since the play was set in a specific period, anachronistic suggestions were not allowed. The key points were, of course, wealth and social status but if a candidate was able to justify a choice using other criteria this was credited.

Question 2

Many candidates displayed an excellent understanding of the character of Arthur Birling and were able to state three characteristics. However, candidates were not always able to support this with suitable references to the text, and/or the discussion regarding how the actor should communicate the traits was often weak. Candidates who provided good textual references and linked these to characteristics did not always support this with advice to the actor.

Question 3

Generally this question was handled well and many candidates were able to display a mature understanding of Eric's role and the positioning of this particular sequence within the text. There was a wide-ranging set of responses but the better ones focused on Eric's insecurities and his drink problem, and explored how these could be communicated by the actor. Some candidates supplied very detailed and clearly justified advice covering a wide range of acting techniques.

Question 4

Many candidates offered over-complicated responses with numerous suggestions as to their choice of lighting and often confusing, unclear reasoning for their choices. The best responses were those that recognised the naturalistic elements of the scene involving the illumination of the dining table, fireplace, candles etc. Some elements of realism were introduced and some candidates introduced symbolism into their lighting concept. Interrogation spotlights or specials to illuminate the telephone when it rang were amongst these and were given credit.

Question 5

As in **Questions 2 and 3**, many candidates were able to display their understanding of the text and produced some good responses. Most candidates perceived the importance of this speech and the necessity for the Inspector to dominate the action during it, and many appreciated its universality, often suggesting that the actor should 'break the fourth wall' and speak directly to the audience. Fewer candidates, however, were able to highlight the socialist message behind the words.

Questions 6 – 8 *Devised work***Question 6**

'Dramatic contrast' was misunderstood by many candidates. Responses revealed a widespread ignorance of the ways in which this can be achieved, and those who did show some understanding tended to answer in simplistic terms using very obvious practical circumstances, e.g. 'good' and 'evil' at opposite sides of the stage, to illustrate it. Many candidates produced a narrative response which simply retold the story. Some candidates who did recognise the term only referred to one moment within their piece and therefore could not access the mark scheme.

Question 7

Generally, this was dealt with quite well although the level of detail was variable. The term 'develop' was understood in two contexts: one in terms of character development, and the other in terms of creating the character through techniques such as hot seating etc. In the former case, most candidates were able to discuss at least basic examples of how a character changed throughout the development of the piece. Characterisation was given credit both in terms of its emerging from the action, and where it was appropriately linked to the devising process. Weaker candidates again relied upon a narrative account of each character's role in the story and failed to show any understanding of the concept of development.

Question 8

This was probably the least successfully answered question in the paper. The term 'structure' was not understood by many candidates and this question therefore produced poor results. The majority of candidates produced a narrative account of the plot. Such responses could not access the mid to higher assessment criteria. A few were able to apply key concepts such as 'climax' but on the whole knowledge was scant. A question on structure is not new to the syllabus and has appeared on previous occasions, including 2007. A significant number of candidates chose to cite dramatic techniques rather than focus on the actual structure.

Section B

Questions 9 – 11 *An Inspector Calls*

Question 9

One of the developments in the syllabus over recent sessions is the ability of Centres to prepare candidates in terms of their understanding of themes and characters, as was seen in **Questions 2, 3 and 5**. Candidates had a good knowledge of the role of the Inspector and therefore many candidates were able to respond with confidence to this question. Candidates were less confident when it came to suggesting how these traits might be achieved. It should be remembered that the identification of characteristics alone is not sufficient to access the higher mark bands. Furthermore, the question specified that **four** points in the extract should be identified; candidates who failed to follow this instruction disadvantaged themselves needlessly.

Question 10

This was not an overwhelmingly popular question. Of those candidates who attempted it a few managed to produce well focused and mature responses with workable directorial/acting solutions. The biggest problem with responses was that many candidates ignored the discriminatory 'either' in the question and attempted to discuss *An Inspector Calls* as *both* a detective story *and* a morality play. The consequence of this was that insufficient focus was applied to both aspects and hence marks were affected. Nevertheless, there was a significant number of responses that showed a sophisticated understanding of the question.

Question 11

Undoubtedly this was the most popular of all the questions in this section. The best responses were those that went beyond the simplistic listing of possible furniture. Many candidates were able to substantiate their reasoning and discussed sensible and realistic suggestions. Those that relied solely on diagrams did not give themselves any chance to access the mark scheme as the level of detail that was needed was not in evidence.

The most successful candidates were those who also recognised the significance of features that were key to the action, such as the telephone or the drinks cabinet, and who clearly justified their design with consideration of the demands of the text, as well as the needs of both actors and audience. In their enthusiasm to describe the visual appearance of the set, some candidates failed to consider its practicalities and omitted to consider entrances and exits. Some very unusual and highly original ideas were proposed and, where these were workable, they were given credit.

Section C

Questions 12 – 14 *Devised work*

Question 12

Discussion of a single design aspect was desirable here, but candidates who covered a number of different aspects and who also demonstrated understanding as to how they were linked and evaluated their relative importance, were also given credit. Although there were a few highly sophisticated responses to this question, most candidates discussed all the design aspects listed without linking them and consequently failed to include the level of analysis that was needed. As a result, responses to this question rarely accessed the upper bands of the mark scheme.

Question 13

This produced some pleasing results although there were some candidates who had obviously misread the question and did not refer to dialogue at all. A few candidates had produced pieces that contained solely mime or dance (no dialogue) and had interpreted the word 'communication' for dialogue. Credit was given for this but Centres are reminded that candidates need to be given maximum opportunities to explore all aspects of the drama. Where mime is considered an important part of a particular piece candidates need to be advised about choosing appropriate questions. There were one or two rather strange and disturbing responses to this question. Centres should ensure that the material enables a full exploration of dramatic techniques and does not permit the idea to dominate the methodology.

Question 14

Overall, this question was handled very well. Many candidates were able to discuss atmosphere, clearly stating their intentions and explaining how they used a range of techniques, both in terms of design and performance approaches, for the creation of atmosphere. Some candidates forgot to mention how successful they were in their approaches.

DRAMA

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

The quality of the performance work submitted was broadly comparable with that of previous sessions, and it was heartening once more to witness the range and diversity of the practical work undertaken for IGCSE Drama.

Administration

The session proved rather more problematic than in previous years in terms of administration, and this was a result of two specific factors: the change in design of the documentation required for each candidate, and the quality of the video/DVD recordings of the practical work. The impact on the moderation process was significant.

1 Working Mark Sheets

In previous sessions, each candidate was required to have a separate form completed for each of his or her three performances, together with a separate cover sheet. For the June 2008 and subsequent sessions, this has been streamlined into a single form, which allows each candidate's entire coursework submission to appear on one sheet. Moderators reported that this format was extremely useful in obtaining an overview of each candidate's profile. However, it also allowed a number of arithmetical errors to creep in, and these were almost entirely a result of rounding up total marks for each objective before the overall total mark was arrived at. For example, in Objective C, candidates will have been awarded a mark for each of their three performances. If the marks awarded for these were, for example, 15, 17 and 21, this would give an average mark of 17.7 for that objective. Marks for each objective should stand as a decimal on the mark sheet, since if they are rounded up or down the overall total mark could be one mark higher or lower than it should be. Around a third of Centres had to have their marks adjusted as a result of this error, and Centres are requested to ensure that this does not recur in future sessions. Only the overall 'Total mark' should be rounded to a whole number. Moderators reported spending many hours checking and correcting Centres' arithmetic before they could begin the moderation process.

2 Quality of recordings

Whilst the overall quality of video or DVD recordings was generally acceptable, it was somewhat lower than in previous sessions. This was a result of one or more of the following:

- Poorly packed videos, which had been damaged in transit
- DVDs that were recorded in a format unplayable on a standard DVD player
- DVDs that were un-chaptered, making it very difficult to isolate specific performances
- Mini-DVDs taken directly from cameras, rather than standard sized DVDs
- Recordings where the camera had been placed on the floor
- Analogue recording in non-VHS format

Too often there was 'rollback' in which the beginning of the second piece cut off the end of the first one, or a beginning which is cut off presumably because of the time delay on some equipment in recording after the record button has been pressed. It should go without saying that whoever is recording should be fully familiar with the operational features of the equipment used. Some still needed to ensure that each candidate says his or her name and candidate number to the camera first, not just chaptered to the DVD or on a running order form. Some pieces began too quickly to have a sense of setting and atmosphere.

Annotation of documentation

In addition to the above points, the quality of information provided to accompany the recorded performances was also variable. For each performance, it would be helpful if the following information was supplied:

- The title and playwright of the extract (text-based) **or** the category of dramatic stimulus chosen (devised)
- The point in the play from where the extract is taken (text-based)
- The character(s) played by each candidate
- A recent photograph of each candidate, and a description of what he or she is wearing
- In the case of work by local playwrights, which may not be readily available in the UK, a copy of the script

Other administration issues

- The sample of six candidates should be selected by the teacher. A few Centres sent the recorded performances for the entire cohort, often with the excuse that they did not feel qualified to select the sample themselves. Centres are reminded that once accredited as assessors for the syllabus, teachers are considered fully equipped to select the moderation sample.
- The moderation sample should cover the full mark range and should be spaced as evenly as possible from the very top mark to the very lowest mark. Where the work of the candidates with the highest and lowest marks was not included Centres were contacted to request additional material.
- The best submissions were where the individual performances were on one DVD or video, the Group text-based pieces on another, and the Group devised work after that, with the sample candidates performing in the same group or two groups at most. Whilst it is obviously not possible to plan this in advance, in selecting the candidates for the sample it made the moderation process much easier.

General performance issues

There was some extremely strong performance work, but there was also considerable variety in the work seen.

The length of pieces submitted varied significantly, and, in extreme cases, Group pieces ranged from 70 seconds to about 45 minutes. Individual pieces were more consistent but still some monologues were a minute or so while others were five times that length. Centres are reminded that Individual pieces must last no more than 5 minutes, and Group pieces no more than 15 minutes.

Performance values and the technical dimension of performance were strongly evident at some Centres. Some were very inventive in the action using light and staging to strong effect, with an appreciative audience that added excitement to the work. In others, the staging and audience were a distraction. Some did bring real feeling into a space with the bare minimum of technical action. It was surprising though, how many had a school bell/buzzer/siren crossing the performance, often in monologues. Centres are advised to produce recording schedules for performances with this in mind.

Text-based performances

As in previous sessions, there were some imaginative and well-crafted text-based performances. There was a pleasing range and diversity of repertoire and Moderators were enthusiastic in their endorsement of such a broad approach. A selection of repertoire used has been included in this report in recent years, and a further representative selection is included at the end of this section.

Whilst the majority of candidates were realistic in their choice of pieces to be performed, there were some whose performance aspirations were clearly not matched by their performance skills. The most common problem was where the language used by the playwright was far removed from the candidate's experience of English usage, the result being that the dialogue sounded very little like real people talking to each other. This was a particular problem with some extracts from Shakespeare, which were performed as if they were in a foreign language such that most audiences would have been at a loss to understand what was being said by the characters. In addition, the pauses, inflexions and cadences of spoken English needed to be conveyed, even where this was in the context of a strong local accent. Quality of diction remains a vital component in the performance of dramatic works for the stage.

Examples of text-based extracts performed in 2008

Albee, Edward	<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i>
Ayckbourn, Alan	<i>Confusions, Invisible Friends</i>
Bertolt Brecht	<i>He Who Says Yes</i>
Chekhov, Anton	<i>The Cherry Orchard</i>
Coward, Noel	<i>Blithe Spirit</i>
Dinsdale, Stephen	<i>Anorak of Fire</i>
Dunn, Nell	<i>Steaming</i>
Godber, John	<i>Shakers</i>
Gogol	<i>The Government Inspector</i>
Hamilton, Andy	<i>The Exam</i>
Henley, Beth	<i>Crimes of the Heart</i>
Houghton, Stanley	<i>Hindle Wakes</i>
Joucla, Peter	<i>Seeking Help</i>
Mhlophe, Gcina	<i>Have You Seen Zandile?</i>
Miller, Arthur	<i>Death of a Salesman; The Crucible</i>
Murdoch, Iris	<i>The Black Prince</i>
Russell, Willy	<i>Blood Brothers</i>
Shakespeare, William	<i>Macbeth; The Merchant of Venice; The Tempest; Romeo and Juliet; Twelfth Night</i>
Shaw, George Bernard	<i>Saint Joan</i>
Tremblay, Michel	<i>Albertine in Five Times</i>
Wilde, Oscar	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>
Williams, Tennessee	<i>The Glass Menagerie; A Street Car Named Desire</i>
Mark Wheeler	<i>Too Much Punch for Judy</i>
Marcel Wilde	<i>Freezing in Ibiza</i>

Devised performances

As mentioned in previous reports, Centres are reminded that the dramatic stimuli on the Pre-release material for Paper 1 must **not** be used as the basis of the practical submission for Paper 2. CIE reserves the right to refuse to moderate coursework that duplicates a task set for the written paper.

Moderators reported that, as a general rule, the original devised pieces did not demonstrate the same level of performance skills as those evidenced in the text-based pieces. This may be because candidates spent a disproportionate amount of time on the creation of the piece, and a consequently reduced amount of time on its rehearsal. It was certainly the case that good performance ideas on their own did not produce a well-rounded performance; the most successful pieces were those that demonstrated thorough engagement with a structured rehearsal process.

Most devised pieces were genuinely original, but in some instances the work related very directly to a text-based piece studied by the candidates. In some cases this produced limited, rather than liberated performances.

There were also some bizarre and quite inappropriate attempts at originality. Some candidates breached the bounds of taste and decency, either through gratuitous swearing or material that did not extend beyond the candidates' attempts at self-indulgence.

As in previous sessions, there were several pieces that took approaches more common to film or television. These relied heavily on techniques that would be completely lost on stage: the meaningful stare, the raised eyebrow, the subdued voice, all of them more akin to something between a motion picture and a soap opera.

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