

DRAMA

Paper 0411/11
Written Paper

Key messages

A significant number of candidates continued answering questions into the space allotted to the following question making it impossible to view the complete answer within the online marking system. Answers to questions one and two were where this happened most frequently. Centres are requested to ensure that candidates who may need to exceed the allotted writing space for **any** question should request an extension booklet and clearly indicate which question is being continued. This applies to all material which will not fit into the specified writing sections of the examination paper.

Where an extension booklet was used there were instances of candidates not clearly labelling the question being addressed. This meant that examiners had to try and work this out, which was not always straightforward.

Centres should impress upon their candidates the importance of reading the question properly. Several candidates lost marks because their answers did not meet the question requirement.

General comments

Candidates should ensure that they focus their discussion primarily on the practical application of drama skills. Many marks are lost where candidates indulge in narrative description or character analysis.

Many candidates gave the impression that they felt that the more they wrote, the higher their mark would be. This is not the case. For longer answers, as required by question six onward, centres are requested to highlight the need for focused, precise writing. Answers that appear long and detailed often reveal themselves to be heavily 'padded' with irrelevant or repeated material.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This question was generally answered well. The vast majority of candidates were able to suggest a costume for one of MEL's sisters, although some only mentioned one item. Suggestions that one of the women would be in 'a dress' with no additional description, was credited. A suggestion for a single item of clothing such as a hat or shoes, were not. Several candidates omitted to give a reason why the choice would be appropriate and consequently forfeited the second mark.

Question 2

Most candidates were able to identify three different pieces of performance advice to the actor playing the role of VOICE OF ROGER KEATING. The question was generally well answered.

Question 3

The majority showed good awareness of the possibilities for playing the role of MEL to show his obsessive behaviour. Often this amounted to just a description of behaviour however. Some responses did not seem aware of how 'obsessive' may manifest itself in physical characteristics.

Question 4

Most answers showed some understanding of how the actors could emphasise their different views about MEL in this passage.

Occasionally, responses indicated that the candidates thought the question was looking for views *different from* Mel's views rather than difference in views between the siblings. Candidates often did not understand the humour which is a significant hallmark of the featured playwright.

Question 5

Generally, set design questions were not answered well. Many responses demonstrated a basic lack of understanding of the distinctive nature and function of set design as opposed to lighting, costume and props design and frequently lumped all these design disciplines together in a response which could not score above band two. The vast majority of responses were descriptive in nature, and from a purely visual perspective, omitting any sense of function in relation to the stage directions.

Question 6

Weaker responses tried to find examples of 'sadness' AND 'frustration' shown at the same time not realising that the question was asking for advice as to how to cover both, but separately. Others had a tendency to favour one emotional state over the other, thereby causing an imbalance in the answer presented and impacting on the marks available.

Section B

Question 7

The majority of answers were able to say how they would demonstrate the change in the character of MARY LENNOX. There was a good range of advice including a variety of vocal and physical suggestions related to specific lines. A minority of answers failed to relate their suggestions to the text and therefore could not score above band five.

Question 8

As with question five, this question was not always well answered. Candidates generally struggled to engage with the production realities presented by the text. For example, more than one response considered the major challenge to be the necessity to import enough soil to cover the stage and the planting of enough plants. Many responses relied exclusively on lighting without making it clear that this was how they would be creating a 'virtual' set. There were some inventive and original design suggestions, however, which seized on the challenges presented by the text and delivered some effective and practical suggestions.

Question 9

Some candidates tended to focus on the directing role rather than the process of actually recreating creatures on stage. Some weaker suggestions were lacking in practical application in terms of what methods they would use such as 'I would ask the audience or my teacher'. A few responses were insightful and very original, suggesting the use of actors, marionettes, projected, interactive images etc.

Section C

Question 10

Most responses identified some challenges they faced during the devising process, although weaker responses tended to focus on logistical or sociological issues such as absenteeism or failure to agree within the group. Those who identified practical production challenges generally fared well and were able to give a good account. Although some candidates, perhaps intuitively, discussed the devising process, the responses tended to be narrative in nature and as such could not score highly.

Question 11

Again, weaker responses were typically essentially narrative in nature, leading to simply an account of the action and the plot. Such responses were confined to the lower mark bands. The question also seeks an

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evaluative response. This proved the most challenging aspect in that many candidates would simply imply success or failure without clearly expressing why this was so. True evaluation requires a thorough consideration of intention, cause and effect and this proved too challenging for less able candidates. Responses with little or no true evaluative comment were confined to bands four and five.

DRAMA

Paper 0411/12
Written Paper

Key messages

Reading and Responding to Questions: Candidates are advised to read each question carefully to ensure they fully understand what is being asked. Marks are often lost when responses address only part of the question. For example, **Question 1** required candidates to suggest a costume and explain why it was appropriate. Some responses included a suggestion but did not provide any justification. Similarly, **Question 2** asked for three pieces of performance advice for the actor playing Oscar, but some candidates offered only one or two.

Demonstrating a Sense of Drama: Candidates are encouraged to show a stronger sense of drama in their responses, particularly when describing how actions communicate emotion or intent. In **Question 3**, while many candidates offered ideas on portraying Felix, they often did not explain how these choices would reflect his obsessive behaviour. For **Question 4**, candidates made thoughtful suggestions for how they might portray Felix and Oscar but did not always highlight the contrast between the two characters, as required.

Set Design and Technical Elements: Some candidates confused set design with other technical areas such as lighting or sound, focusing more on those aspects. While lighting and sound can enhance a set design and may be credited when used effectively, responses should remain focused on the set unless otherwise indicated.

Understanding the Director's Role: There was also some confusion between the role of a director and other production roles. When asked to explain how they might direct a particular aspect, some candidates focused on technical elements like costume, lighting, or sound. While directors may have input in these areas, questions about direction should primarily focus on how actors and the script are used to realise the intended vision.

Reflecting on the Devising Process: More candidates showed a better understanding this year of the devising process in **Question 10**. However, some moved too quickly from identifying an issue to describing their final performance. A stronger response would describe how the group addressed the problem, including the steps taken to develop and refine ideas.

Evaluation and Reflection: In **Question 11**, many candidates described their devised piece without any evaluation. Some focused on their initial intentions without considering what worked, what did not, and how they might improve these aspects in the future. Encouraging candidates to reflect critically on their own work will help develop stronger evaluative skills.

General comments

The texts used in the assessment prompted a range of interesting responses. Many candidates showed good understanding of dramatic techniques, particularly in the earlier questions.

It is important to note that some questions ask for close reference to specific lines or sections of the extract. Candidates who do not refer directly to these may find it difficult to access the full range of marks available.

Finally, candidates should be mindful of time and the expected length of answers. The layout of the answer booklet is intended to give a guide to appropriate response length. Some candidates wrote far too much for the shorter questions in **Section A**, which left them with insufficient time for more detailed responses required in **Section C**.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

There was scope for interpretation in this question, with many candidates basing their costume choices on either the character's age or the historical 1960s setting. Where candidates focused specifically on costume and justified their choices, responses were well-considered. However, some candidates did not fully address the requirements of the question, either by failing to provide a justification for their costume choice or by suggesting irrelevant items such as accessories (e.g., handkerchiefs), which were not credited.

Question 2

Candidates engaged positively with this question, suggesting a range of vocal and physical techniques such as facial expressions, timing, and gesture. Where candidates gave three distinct pieces of advice, responses were appropriately rewarded. However, common issues included offering fewer than three suggestions or repeating similar points. Some responses lacked clarity, making it difficult to interpret the advice intended. Candidates should ensure each suggestion is specific, distinct, and directly applicable to the character.

Question 3

Many candidates provided a range of ideas regarding how to perform the role of Oscar and referenced relevant techniques. However, fewer were able to clearly link these choices to Oscar's obsessive and neurotic nature. To access the top band, candidates needed to make explicit how proposed performance choices would communicate these personality traits. Responses that remained general or descriptive struggled to reach the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Question 4

Candidates approached this question with enthusiasm, often suggesting how they might interpret both characters. Those who considered the contrast between Felix and Oscar, as required by the question, were able to access higher bands. However, many responses lacked clear analysis of how these differences could be demonstrated through contrasting performance choices. Closer attention to each element of the question will support candidates in structuring more precise answers.

Question 5

The text provides minimal stage directions beyond the apartment's new cleanliness, allowing for creative interpretation. Most candidates responded positively and considered how to design the physical space. Strong responses discussed how the set would accommodate the action and how actors might interact within that space, reflecting the thought process of a designer. Some candidates focused instead on props, lighting, or sound; these were credited only when such elements further enhanced set design choices. Responses that simply described the visual appearance of the apartment without reference to practical staging were typically limited to Band 2.

Question 6

This 10-mark question proved effective in differentiating candidate performance. Most candidates recognised the need to explore both emotions but found it easier to make suggestions for sadness than for humour. Several candidates responded from an actor's perspective rather than from that of a director, missing the focus of the question. Higher-level responses showed insight into the emotional nuance of the scene and made thoughtful directorial choices to highlight the interplay between humour and sadness.

Section B

Question 7

Candidates responded to this question with varying levels of detail. Most were able to identify moments for performance choices and offer a suitable range of techniques. To access higher bands, candidates were expected to go beyond surface-level suggestions and consider how to express Alice's confusion throughout the scene. Stronger responses provided detailed examples and demonstrated a clear understanding of how performance techniques can evoke emotion and character.

Question 8

Candidates needed to interpret the practical staging challenges of this outdoor setting, particularly the large space required and the need for removable set elements. While several candidates recognised this from the extract, responses were often general. A few candidates focused too heavily on lighting or sound and demonstrated limited understanding of set design. These candidates may have been better served by choosing **Question 9**. Candidates should be reminded to choose questions that best reflect their strengths and knowledge.

Question 9

Many candidates demonstrated creative thinking, offering ideas for building dramatic impact through ensemble performance. Techniques such as pacing, proximity, and gesture were commonly (and appropriately) suggested. However, some responses lacked close reference to specific lines or moments in the extract, limiting their ability to access the full range of marks. Additionally, not all candidates considered the dramatic purpose of their choices (e.g., to create tension, provoke laughter, or engage the audience emotionally), which is essential for higher-level analysis.

Section C

Question 10

This question was well-attempted, with many candidates demonstrating increased understanding of the devising process. Strong responses clearly identified a challenge, outlined how it was addressed and showed how ideas developed over time. Weaker responses tended to move quickly from problem to solution without discussing the creative or collaborative processes involved. The best responses included references to stimuli, rehearsal experimentation, research, refining of ideas, and group discussion – echoing the iterative nature of devising work.

Question 11

This evaluation question proved challenging for many candidates. Often, responses took the form of a narrative recount of what was performed, focusing on what was intended rather than critically evaluating the actual outcome. High-level responses were analytical, recognising areas that fell short of intention and proposing specific improvements. Candidates should be reminded that evaluation involves reflecting on effectiveness: not just explaining why a choice was made but assessing whether it worked and considering alternative approaches.

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Paper 0411/13
Written Paper

Key messages

- As in previous sessions the most important key message is that candidates must ensure that they read the full question carefully and ensure that they have responded to all the elements of the question. Too often candidates answered the question that they thought was being asked rather than what was actually being asked of them. This meant that candidates were responding to the first part of a question but failed to respond to the part of the question which asked for specific responses such as a justification of the creative choices made or what dramatic effect they would want to achieve. This meant that they could not access the higher bands as they were only responding to half of the question.
- It is crucial that the candidates need to be absolutely clear on whether the question is a directing, acting or design question and ensure that they respond accordingly.
- It is still the case that some candidates tend to write narrative accounts of the action of the extracts or of the performance of their own devised piece and do not evaluate the work in any real depth. All ideas should be illustrated using practical examples from the extracts and the devised piece and creative choices should be fully justified using evidence from the extracts or the devised piece.
- Again, it must be reiterated that **Section C** focuses on the evolution and performance of the devised piece. Candidates are required to evaluate the creative development of the piece and to identify what their dramatic intentions were and how successful they were in achieving those intentions in the final performance.

General comments

The extracts 'The Sunshine Boys' by Neil Simon and 'The Adventures of Robin Hood' by Oliver Emanuel both seemed popular although examiners noted that the responses to 'The Adventures of Robin Hood' seemed to show more understanding of the multi-role, multi-location, non-naturalistic style of the extract

Stronger candidates recognised the dramatic potential of the extracts in performance and were able to convey a real sense of what the presentation of the extracts would look like in performance.

Additional pages were not used a lot but when they were used effectively to further elaborate on ideas. Additional pages were mostly used for **Section B** and **C** questions. It is worth noting again that some questions only require shorter responses and candidates who spent a lot of time on the question which carried fewest marks did not allow themselves the opportunity to fully explore the questions that carried more marks.

Again, weaker candidates tended to write narrative responses focused on content rather than on why that content was used and to what effect.

Some phrases and terms were misunderstood or ignored by candidates and a significant number of candidates only answered part of the questions, ignoring the part of the question that asked for justification. This meant that they had not fully answered all aspects of the question and therefore could not access the higher marks.

Examiners noted that there were some issues with legibility which sometimes made it difficult to decipher what the candidate was saying. Centres are urged to ensure that candidates make sure that they label their answers with the right question number and also label the question number clearly on additional pages.

Examiners commented that the strongest answers reflected a clear sense of practical engagement with the extracts and evidence of experimentation of various dramatic techniques over time. Such candidates clearly had a real understanding of the relationship between the text and the realisation of ideas on stage.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This question was generally well answered although some candidates only mentioned one item. Strong responses listed a whole costume, often a suit as well as shoes and accessories. The question asked candidates to identify why their chosen costume would be appropriate and the best answers included a full explanation of their choices, going beyond merely repeating that BEN SILVERMAN is a 'well dressed man'. Strongest candidates were able to link the choice of costume to the era or style of the production.

Question 2

This question was generally well answered. The question asked candidates to identify three different pieces of advice to the actor playing the role of WILLIE CLARK. Candidates could get full marks for clear bullet pointed answers. Strongest answers offered detailed performance advice in relation to performance skills such as voice, movement and facial expressions. Such advice was practical and focused on acting skills. Weaker answers were vague and did not offer three ideas or relied on emotions e.g. 'I would tell WILLIE to be angry' without providing specific physical practical suggestions.

Question 3

The question asked how the candidate would play the role of BEN SILVERMAN to show his nervousness in the presence of AL LEWIS. Weaker answers were often vague and although some were able to identify basic acting techniques which could be used to convey anxiousness, they did not identify why this nervousness was provoked by the relationship between BEN SILVERMAN and AL LEWIS. Strong answers referenced lines of dialogue and gave solid reasons for BEN's demeanour and how they would play the role of BEN to convey that nervousness. Best responses were detailed and used the correct terminology to identify acting techniques that they would use to portray the character of BEN.

Question 4

The question asked the candidate to show how the actors playing WILLIE CLARK and BEN SILVERMAN could emphasise their different views about WILLIE working again with AL LEWIS. Weaker answers missed the point of the question and did not explore the two roles and how the characters were expressing differing views regarding working again with AL LEWIS. Such answers often became narrative accounts of the action of the chosen passage rather than a detailed explanation of possible approaches to acting the roles. Strong answers offered a detailed explanation of both roles and their differing views and how the actors might use various acting techniques to highlight those differences.

Question 5

The candidate was asked to describe their set design for the opening of the extract and to justify their creative choices with reference to the extract. Many candidates confused set with props and detailed the props that were on stage without any sense of the space or environment of the stage area. Many ignored the second half of the question and did not justify their creative ideas using references from the extract. Many candidates discussed lighting or sound in great detail, but these are separate design elements which enhance the set design, unless they are specifically used to define spaces in the absence of a physical set.

Stronger responses referenced evidence in the extract but added text-supported detail to elevate their design ideas. Some responses reflected an excellent sense of style and era. The best responses identified staging types and how they were used to create the appropriate environment.

Any set design description which could be supported from the passage was acceptable and annotated diagrams were credited, if appropriate.

Question 6

This question asked the candidate to adopt a directorial approach and to show how they would direct from line 350 to line 466 to reveal both the tension and the humour of the situation? Lower scoring responses

missed the opportunities to explore a range of ideas and instead focused on just one or two ideas or focused on either tension or humour rather than on both. Such responses often ignored the wording of the question and either stated how to direct the passage without linking that approach to the humour and the tension in the passage or responded to the question from an actor's perspective. The question states that there is humour and tension in the passage and therefore the director's task is to bring out both of these elements and to convey them to the audience effectively.

The strongest responses were very perceptive in terms of directorial vision and were able to identify the type of tension and humour within the passage and to discuss what impact the directorial decisions would have on the performance of the passage. Such responses showed an understanding of the director's role and were able to reference specific moments within the passage to illustrate their ideas.

Section B

Question 7

The question asked candidates to imagine that they were playing the role of ROBIN HOOD and to show how they would make their performance stand out in a multi-role drama. It was important that candidates should recognise the challenges of playing a central character in a multi-role drama. Some candidates focused heavily on how to play other characters rather than focusing on ROBIN. Too much emphasis was placed on costume or lighting rather than on how to play the role to achieve impact. Most candidates retold the narrative story of the character's scenes and identified how he might stand out in certain moments without appreciating that the question was about characterisation and the challenges for the actor of creating a stand-out character in a multi-role drama.

Strongest answers understood that the actor playing ROBIN HOOD would need to play other characters and could identify how the multi-role would differ across characters without losing focus on the role of ROBIN HOOD. Such answers gave clear detail on how the portrayal of ROBIN would impact the audience by identifying characteristics such as 'heroic', 'cheeky' or 'mischiefous' which would endear him to the audience and therefore make the performance stand out.

Question 8

This seemed to be a very challenging question for most candidates and examiners reported the same issues as those reported for **Question 5**. The question asked what challenges the candidate would face in creating a set design for a production of the extract from 'The Adventures of Robin Hood' and how they would address them. The function of the set design is to create the overall visual and auditory environment of the performance. The lighting, sound and special effects should enhance that environment and the mood and atmosphere created to reinforce the overall storytelling.

The examiners noted that many candidates focused on lighting which was often expressed in very simple terms. It would be possible to gain good marks even if there is no fixed physical set structure which frames the performance. Credit was given for creative set design ideas such as use of projection to create set and responses with detail on staging types, flats, trucks, cyclorama use etc. were also credited.

Examiners felt that the strongest candidates showed an excellent understanding of the challenges of creating a set design for this extract. They recognised that the set would have to be adaptable for multiple locations, and that the scenes were short which meant that there were many set changes. The extract does not necessarily require an elaborate set design but candidates who were creative in finding solutions to the many challenges were credited for their innovative ideas. There were some very interesting responses that explored the extract as a Theatre in Education project. They were able to offer creative ideas in relation to creating an effective design for a younger target audience.

Question 9

This question asked the candidate to adopt a directorial approach and to show how they would direct the actors playing the roles of NARRATOR 1 and NARRATOR 2 and what dramatic effect they would want to achieve. The NARRATORS are a very important dramatic device as a means of commenting on the action and moving the action forward. They act as a bridge between the actors and the audience. They are the only characters who do not multi-role, which gives them a freedom to be fluid in their contributions. They are not fixed at any point on stage so the question is open to interpretation as the candidate explores how they would encourage the NARRATORS to portray their roles and to interact with each other, with the other

actors and with the audience. All workable suggestions are acceptable if they can be justified using evidence from the extract.

Weaker answers did not mention the intended dramatic effect, nor did they identify specific moments or lines in the performance to illustrate their ideas. Some candidates limited their responses by stating that the NARRATORS were distanced from the action and just sat at the side. This meant that they missed creative opportunities to explore the audience/NARRATORS' relationship. Other candidates only spoke from an actor's perspective and not from a director's perspective. This meant that they were able to mention some good ideas for characterisation but there was no insight into the directorial approach.

Strong responses gave the NARRATORS many opportunities to interact with the audience and also allowed them to be part of the normal action of the performance during ensemble sections. These responses also built on the relationship between the NARRATORS and gave them a lot of interactions and highlighted their playful nature. Best answers clearly stated how they, as the director, would encourage the NARRATORS and how they would use all of the NARRATORS' acting skills and techniques to convey their relationship and to successfully create a dramatic effect.

Section A

Question 10

This question asked the candidate to identify the challenges that they faced in the process of creating dialogue for their devised piece and to show how they addressed those challenges. The candidates were expected to understand the functions of dialogue in advancing the plot, in revealing something about the character(s) or to reflect the theme/s of the drama. The question is focused on the devising process and candidates should appreciate the challenges they faced in creating dialogue and how they overcame them. Some candidates were able to write effectively about how they had made positive decisions not to use dialogue at certain moments in the drama.

Weakest answers focused on use of the voice alone and some were unable to identify any dialogue or any challenges. Some candidates highlighted challenges in terms of differing personalities and opinions and did not focus on dialogue. Candidates should be able to show the evolution of the work during the devising process and to identify what they chose to retain and use, what they chose to reject and, in all cases, to justify those choices

Strong answers showed a good overview of the piece and were able to link the work to the stimulus and identify what they were trying to achieve through the created dialogue, what the dialogue revealed about their character(s) and why that was important. They showed how they dealt with the challenges and made changes and what impact that had overall on the piece. Best responses detailed how they used different activities throughout the devising process to experiment with ideas. These included hot seating, verbatim, improvisation, forum, recording and rewatching and asking for audience feedback at different points in the process. Examiners commented that best responses included ideas taken from the study of particular practitioners and styles, and showed how they had integrated those ideas into their devised piece. They also clearly identified the challenges that they had faced and then explained in detail how they had overcome them.

Question 11

The question asked the candidate to evaluate how effectively they communicated their intentions to the audience when they performed their devised piece. Candidates should be clear on what they intended to communicate in their piece, both in terms of message and delivery. There should be a recognition of the importance of audience response during the performance or audience feedback later. The focus of this question is on the performance of the devised piece.

Examiners felt that centres should encourage their candidates to be reflective of their own work and to have discussions with audience members post-performance in order to obtain authentic audience responses which would help in evaluating how successful they were in achieving their intentions.

Candidates who were very clear on what their intentions were and stated them from the start were then able to identify the effects created and to use clear examples from their performance to illustrate how these were achieved. Weaker answers tended to be narrative in approach and in many cases did not refer to the audience and their reactions/feedback at all. Some candidates recounted the 'story' of the action of the piece

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without including any evaluation or reflection on how that affected the success of the performance in terms of communicating their intentions.

Strongest responses could state what they did, why they did it and how successful it was in conveying their intentions. Many used quotes from audience members to prove their level of success. They maintained a connection to the performance by using specific moments in the performance to show effective communication of their intention to their audience.

DRAMA

Paper 0411/02

Coursework

Administration

In most cases, the administration of the coursework component ran smoothly with few issues. Most centres completed the Individual Candidate Mark Sheet (ICMS) accurately and helpfully although comments on the mark sheets were variable in quality. The most helpful gave valuable insights into the rationale for the award of marks; the least helpful said almost nothing, leaving the Moderator to infer why credit had been given. Several centres mistakenly thought that copying phrases from the mark scheme was sufficient justification for awarding marks, whereas what was needed were comments that linked these criteria with specific aspects of the work.

A more common error was where centres failed to upload the whole set of ICMS for all their candidates, uploading instead only the forms for those candidates in the moderation sample. Additionally, Moderators are required to check the transcription of marks for all candidates as moderation cannot take place unless the Moderator has all the forms. Finally, all ICMS forms need to be uploaded as one file, grouped in candidate number order, rather than as individual forms.

Recordings

Most of the recordings were of good quality and it was felt generally by the Moderators' Panel that the recordings were a little better this year with fewer interruptions from background noise. There were some recordings that were of low quality. This included instances where the camera was set too far away from the action to capture it adequately, or where the stage lighting had the unintended effect of preventing the camera from picking up the candidates' use of facial expression. Monologues were often filmed from too great a distance, so that facial expressions could not be seen properly; a few centres zoomed in and out on the actors and the action, which was distracting.

Most centres provided a line-up of candidates at the start of each performance and supplemented this with a description of their clothing/hair colour on the ICMS forms, which was generally sufficient for moderation purposes. Good practice was when a candidate said their name and candidate number and had this written on a large card in front of them. Some centres also very kindly put names and/or numbers above each candidate for group pieces in a still at the start of the piece.

Audience

The presence of an audience is a requirement, and communication with the audience is one of three criteria in the AO3 mark scheme, but there were several centres that recorded performances without an audience. A live audience gives greater purpose to the performances, and avoids the danger of playing to the camera, which is a common problem in the monologues.

Quality of marking

Most centres assessed their candidates' work accurately, in line with the Cambridge standard. There was evidence that the support materials provided by Cambridge in the Teacher Support Hub had been helpful in fixing the standard for teachers in Cambridge centres. The most common area of over-marking was in the assessment of AO3, where some centres awarded marks several bands higher than the performances merited. These was particularly the case where pacing, levels of emotional intensity and engagement with the audience were over-estimated.

Scripted: Individual Pieces

The marks awarded for the monologue were almost always the most accurate and the strongest performers had clear diction, appropriate volume, well considered characterisation, good use of physicality and facial expression. Choosing costumes that suit the play is also important, and wearing school uniform should be avoided, unless it is appropriate for the chosen play.

Moderators commented favourably on the wide and varied range of repertoire selected, examples of which are provided at the end of this report. Candidates used a variety of performance texts that were for the most part well suited to their age and experience. Much of the material challenged the candidates and gave them the opportunity to work systematically to give a high level of performance. There were also some candidates who tackled pieces that were much too difficult for them and required a level of depth and maturity they did not have. The lengths of solo pieces varied, and centres are reminded of the timing advice given in the Handbook and remember that a piece lasting about three minutes gives candidates a better chance to develop a character than one lasting just over a minute.

Scripted: Group Pieces

There was some outstanding work this session, which showed a real maturity of understanding of how to realise an extract from a play. Finding the best play for a group remains a fundamental element for success and Moderators reported that, as in previous sessions, the most impactful performances were aided by the choice of an appropriate performance text. A related success factor was where there had been thorough research and preparation into the chosen play, including stylistic approaches of the playwright and the social, cultural and historical context of the play. Some weaker performances paid little or no heed to historical context and often ended up creating an absurd performance of a period piece. It was noted that where a group had used the work of a local playwright, candidates' clear understanding of local culture and context enabled them to give a very strong performance.

While a few performances achieved high marks using a bare performance space and wearing rehearsal blacks, most candidates made a good attempt at costume, set, props and lighting, which enhanced their work significantly. Failure to provide even the most rudimentary of sets tended to produce unfocused entries and exits and a good deal of aimless wandering about the stage. Excessive blackouts/scene changes during pieces were unhelpful to the flow of the performance, and the weaker performances were often those with slow transitions and long blackouts, which hindered fluency. There were also some very static performances with actors sat on chairs/sofas for long periods, which produced low energy levels that were likely to create extreme boredom for an audience.

Devised: Group Pieces

There were some excellent pieces that had clear structures, smooth transitions and made sound use of dramatic devices. The strongest devised work experimented with different styles and genres, used space and staging in interesting ways and allowed characters to be explored.

In most cases, the choice of stimuli for the devised work was well researched and executed. The pieces that worked best were often clearly inspired by a specific style of theatre, which the candidates clearly understood and were able to work within. Pieces that used music and dance/movement and physical theatre to enhance the performance were often some of the most creative. There was quite a chasm between this and the worryingly high number of weaker pieces that were stylistically flaccid, the performers stumbling through static characterisation and mundane dialogue to discover ultimately that they had succeeded in communicating no particular message to their audience. These tended to be fragmentary with many slow scene changes and long blackouts.

As with the scripted work, however, a well-crafted piece could never make up for weak performance skills. Performers in the most effective pieces showed mastery of skills such as eye focus, facial expressions, physicality, diction, projection, communication to audience and characterisation. Weak performances lacked commitment, were often inaudible or lacked variety of tone, were physically unvarying and conveyed little sense of characterisation. In many cases, lighting and costume were used imaginatively and the ensemble work was excellent. In others, next to no consideration had been given to costume and the performers were wearing clothes that contributed nothing to the building of the character or even undermined the candidate's performance intentions.

Indicative repertoire list

Playwright	Play
Edward Albee	<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i>
David Auburn	<i>Proof</i>
Alan Ayckbourn	<i>Absurd Person Singular</i>
Richard Bean	<i>One Man, Two Guvnors</i>
Sonali Bhattacharyya	<i>Two Billion Beats</i>
Andrew Bovell	<i>Things I Know to be True</i>
Ryan M Bultrowicz	<i>Three Women and an Onion</i>
Jez Butterworth	<i>The River</i>
David Campton	<i>Street Birds</i>
Caryl Churchill	<i>Cloud Nine</i> <i>Top Girls</i>
Lolita Chakrabarti	<i>The Life of Pi</i>
Denise Deegan	<i>Daisy Pulls it off</i>
Dario Fo	<i>Accidental Death of an Anarchist</i> <i>Can not Pay, Would not Pay</i>
John Godber	<i>Bouncers</i> <i>Shakers</i> <i>Teachers</i>
Simon Gray	<i>The Late Middle Class</i>
Dennis Kelly	<i>DNA</i> <i>Matilda</i>
Duncan Macmillan	<i>People, Places and Things</i>
Morgan Lloyd Malcolm	<i>The Wasp</i>
Martin McDonagh	<i>Pillowman</i>
Sharman Macdonald	<i>After Juliet</i>
Anthony Minghella	<i>Cigarettes and Chocolate</i>
Arthur Miller	<i>The Crucible</i> <i>Death of a Salesman</i>
Kate Mulvaney	<i>The Seed</i>
Norman, M	<i>Night Mother</i>
John Pielmeier	<i>Agnes of God</i>
Harold Pinter	<i>The Birthday Party</i> <i>The Dumb Waiter</i>

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Evan Placey	<i>Jekyll and Hyde</i>
Phil Porter	<i>Stealing Sweets and Punching People</i>
Yazmina Reza	<i>Art</i>
Neil Simon	<i>The Good Doctor</i>
Peter Shaffer	<i>Amadeus</i>
William Shakespeare	<i>Hamlet</i> <i>Othello</i> <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> <i>Twelfth Night</i>
Shelagh Stephenson	<i>Five Kinds of Silence</i>
Simon Stephens	<i>Punk Rock</i>
Jessica Swale	<i>Blue Stockings</i> <i>Home, I'm Darling</i>
Jack Thorne	<i>Burying Your Brother in the Pavement</i>
Debbie Tucker Green	<i>Hang</i>
Oscar Wilde	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>
August Wilson	<i>Fences</i>