

DRAMA

Paper 0994/12
Written Paper

Key messages

To access the full range of marks that are available, it is important for candidates to respond directly and succinctly to the key words in the question. Weaker responses miss the focus of the question and are narrative in style.

Candidates should ensure they read questions carefully, understanding that some questions might be addressing more than one aspect of drama. For example, **Question 5** required candidates to consider how set and stage furniture might be used to create dramatic tension. Some candidates did not explore both, focusing on either set or furniture. Others considered set and furniture but not in relation to dramatic tension.

Valuable time can be lost when candidates provide a lengthy narrative description of their devised piece at the start of their answers in **section C**. Some candidates provide the same narrative response at the start of both **Questions 10** and **11**.

Many candidates addressed **Question 10** from the perspective of the performance and did not recognise the question was seeking to explore the devising process in relation to their development of physical contrast. Typically, candidates who understand the devising process cover aspects including intent, relevant research, sharing of and refining of ideas, drafting of material and practical experimentation leading to a working script or outline of the piece.

Candidates are demonstrating a much-improved understanding of evaluation. This was evident in **Question 11**. The strongest candidates were able to discuss what was and was not successful in their performance, often relating this back to what it was they were trying to achieve in terms of their use of a specific dramatic technique and/or design element. Often such responses are developed further, and candidates offer suggestions as to the reasons why ideas were not successful and explore what they might do differently next time. Less successful responses are overly reliant on feedback from the audience – comments that are rarely explored, analysed or discussed in any detail.

General comments

The texts were well received by most candidates and stimulated some interesting responses. However, most candidates appeared to find *Sorting out Rachel* more accessible than Hanjo. Candidates were more capable of theatrical playfulness and creativity when considering the earlier questions. Responses in relation to Hanjo were cogent, but more prosaic in terms of theatricality.

Some questions ask candidates to ‘make close reference to specific lines from the extract.’ Other questions might ask candidates to focus their response on a specific section of the extract. Candidates who fail to observe this will not access the mark scheme.

The answer booklet is designed to give candidates an idea of the length of response expected in each question, accepting that size of writing can differ. However, many candidates are using multiple additional answer booklets, writing far too much for questions in **Section A**, and then running out of time for the longer questions in **Section C**.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

There were many similar answers provided, including those who had observed the stage direction in relation to pushing the envelope of money across the table. Unsuccessful responses confused physical action with tone of voice suggesting ways in which lines could be delivered. Some cited sitting or posture without clear changes in it.

Question 2

A wide range of suggestions were offered covering physical actions, movements and vocal tones. Many candidates responded using bullet points, ensuring their suggestions were succinct. Other candidates provided overly lengthy responses fully explaining the reasons for the suggestions given. This was not asked for in this question and, often, led to candidates losing valuable time that would be better served in later questions.

Question 3

There were many strong responses that fully demonstrated a good understanding of Rachel. These included a clear understanding of Rachel's teenage angst, her feelings of being misunderstood, and the way Rachel related to the other characters. There were many ideas for different ways in which this could be shown through physical action, tone of voice, proxemics and facial expression. Less successful responses often listed various dramatic techniques but did not support them with any explanation or detail so the suggestions could have applied to any character in any scene. Other weaker responses summarised the scene but did not explore the character.

Question 4

Many candidates were able to demonstrate their understanding of the extract and showed this by highlighting moments of tension in the scene and providing a range of effective directorial approaches which would communicate the marital tensions to the audience. However, some candidates overlooked the tension, only addressing how they would direct the actors to show the couple's mutual love and support, thus evidencing their lack of understanding of the marital relationship. Some candidates fell into the trap of assuming they were playing one of the characters rather than directing both, and therefore only made suggestions for an approach to one character.

Question 5

Many candidates were able to identify the multiple demands of this question in discussing set and furniture and analysing how these elements contributed to providing dramatic tension. A small number of candidates failed to attempt the question. Others focused on one aspect, predominantly furniture, and failed to mention set. Some candidates focused on lighting, which was not required by the question.

Question 6

The strongest responses covered a range of directorial ideas relating to movement and space with a focus on showing the tense relationship between the three characters. Some weaker responses referenced Rachel, even though she did not appear in the section specified. Other responses were narrative and failed to focus on the key words in the question. It was common for candidates to focus on one or two aspects, with limited detail or justification, and only writing a similar amount to the 5-mark questions. Thus, some candidates did not successfully make the leap into extended answers. It was evident that many candidates answered each question in isolation, not acknowledging the context given elsewhere in the extract. In this case, candidates frequently ignored the existing tensions between Julie and Craig and presented them as a united force. A small number of candidates struggled with the meaning of movement and space in performance, concentrating on how to deliver lines vocally to demonstrate the tense relationships.

Question 7

The strongest responses offered detailed practical understanding with meaningful references to the extract. Some compared each practical suggestion, whilst others addressed Jitsuko's attitude to Hanako before moving onto Yoshio. However, many candidates misread the question and addressed the contrasting attitudes of Hanako, Jitsuko and Yoshio as separate individuals in the script. Some gave a variety of general directorial suggestions without clearly linking them to contrasting attitudes or to specific, relevant lines from the extract.

Section B

Question 8

Candidates who selected this question were able to recognise the status of Jitsuko and were able to chart how, as an actor, they would change pitch, tone and pacing, coupled with posture, movement and facial expression to show how power was held over Hanako. Stronger responses might discuss how the stage directions were interpreted by the actor. Less successful answers simply reiterated the stage directions. Some stronger candidates talked about the use of lighting and shadow, albeit such descriptions were rare. Whilst many candidates described and even explained the power Jitsuko had over Hanako, not all were able to discuss how to show it. Weaker responses failed to recognise Jitsuko's dominance, and many did not reference specific lines, instead offering generalised explanations.

Question 9

This question saw some highly creative responses, accompanied by some excellent annotated diagrams to support the points being made. It is acknowledged that some centres have more in the way of technical facilities, but this did not inhibit candidates from tackling this question effectively. Typically, strong responses covered all aspects of set and lighting design, which gave a nod to Noh theatre tradition while modernising the concept. Many candidates enjoyed the opportunity to demonstrate their design knowledge and expertise, although some ideas may have been unworkable in practice. Interestingly some candidates wrote very impressively about Noh history and technical lighting, often using birds as an example, but often did not cover the purpose, intention and impact of the designs equally effectively. Some candidates concentrated on one aspect, usually lighting, and ignored set. Some of the weaker lighting suggestions tend to focus on using many different lighting states, especially colours, to symbolise different emotions that would not be evident to an audience.

Section C

Question 10

Many candidates did not access the full range of marks available because their answers focused on physical contrast in the performance, and the devising process was ignored. A few candidates evidenced their understanding of contrast but were confused about what constitutes a physical contrast. Although such responses were rare, the strongest responses discussed how physical contrast was developed over time, discussing the link to the stimuli, intent, any research that was undertaken, the sharing and refining of ideas, the drafting of material and practical experimentation of their ideas.

Question 11

This question provided candidates with a good chance of picking up high marks. The majority of candidates were able to access the question. Where candidates were less effective at evaluation, candidates were able to describe how their devised piece looked and sounded. Stronger responses included effective evaluations, analysing the intent and effect of design choices. There were some excessively long answers and a tendency to include all design elements. Stronger responses focused on two or three design elements and followed them through with effective evaluation, making clear reference to successes, weaker points, and also being able to analyse the difference between dramatic intent and final result.

DRAMA

Paper 0994/02

Coursework

Key messages

- 1 A fundamental teaching point for monologues is to ask: 'who are you speaking to?' Candidates need to be clear about that, whether it be a person on stage or the audience.
- 2 In group performances, the most important thing is that the candidate is suited to the role they are going to play and that this role allows them to demonstrate their skills to best effect. There should be no such thing as a 'big part' in an exam piece – everyone needs to have opportunity to show their best work.
- 3 Devised work needs to be authentic and consistent, with interesting and varied characters who live, breathe, interact and feel emotion. This is no place for table-and-chairs drama, where nothing much happens, or the characters lack credibility.

Administration

Moderators were grateful to centres for the considerable time and effort that had gone into the thorough marking of candidates' work. Most submissions were very well organised and the Internal Candidate Mark Sheet (ICMS) contained detailed, personalised comments that fully justified the marks awarded. Most ICMS forms were completed in detail with excellent justifications and personalised comments regarding the individual candidate's performance. In fact, some ICMS forms offered so much detail that they overflowed the boxes, which was not required.

However, there was a significant minority of centres where the moderation submission was very poorly organised and offered scant level of detail about any aspect of the work. The ICMS forms contained minimal detail as to what the candidates were performing, why marks had been awarded and – in some cases – contained arithmetical errors. In such instances, where anything at all had been written, ICMS forms and comments were generic reiterations of the assessment criteria that did not relate to an individual candidate's performance. Occasionally, the same or similar comments were included on the ICMS forms for a number of candidates, suggesting that the comments had been cut and pasted between documents. These were of very limited help to the Moderator. Centres are reminded that the ICMS forms are the key documents relied upon by the Moderator to understand the centre's rationale in awarding marks.

Centres are also reminded of the requirement to upload the ICMS forms for all candidates as some centres wrongly uploaded only the forms for those in the sample. A small number of centres wrongly uploaded the ICMS forms as separate PDFs, which is very unhelpful to the moderation process as each form would need to be downloaded individually. Centres are reminded that all ICMS forms should be uploaded as **a single pdf file** on Submit for Assessment. Finally, centres are reminded of the need to ensure that the marks on each ICMS form are correctly totalled up and then transferred accurately into Submit for Assessment.

Almost all centres submitted the correct sample of work on Submit for Assessment. There were occasional issues when centres failed to submit the top and bottom candidate or failed to present a spread of marks in their sample. It is essential that both the highest and lowest-marked candidate are included in the sample.

Some centres did not upload the DVD cover sheet, which delayed the process as Moderators had to work out which candidates were in each piece.

Recordings

The quality of sound and picture is vital to ensuring the moderation process runs smoothly. There were many excellent recordings, where the centre had taken time to ensure that the filming was well done, and where the end result was appropriate for the Moderator to see and hear all aspects of the performance.

There were, however, many recordings that did not do justice to candidates' performances. The camera was often placed so far away from the performance that the sound quality was faint and/or the image quality blurred. In other instances, the camera operator had attempted to follow the action by moving the camera angle to follow candidates and/or zooming in and out. This was generally unhelpful and in extreme instances imbued the resulting video with a slightly wild quality, which was not helpful to understanding the nature of the performance. In other instances, the microphone was placed a very long way from the performance space, which meant that the sound quality was poor, often exacerbated when the performance space was large and echoey.

Most videos were uploaded in standard, easily playable formats. Some, however, were not uploaded as video files, but in entirely different formats that proved unplayable, thus causing a delay in the process while the centre created another file in a standard format.

Candidate identification

Moderators drew attention to the varying quality of **candidate identification**. It should be noted that every candidate is required to identify themselves before each of their three pieces. Notes on the ICMS forms such as 'fourth to enter' or 'second to sit on the left' were of little help. Even where candidates identified themselves to camera in the line-up at the start, it was often difficult to catch their names as so many rushed through in a rather embarrassed fashion. There is an expectation in a drama assessment that candidates are able to deliver their name and candidate number clearly, accurately and without embarrassment. It is also essential that when they announce their names, they are dressed in whatever costume they will be wearing in the performance itself.

Quality of marking

The majority of centres awarded marks in accordance with the assessment criteria in the syllabus and were therefore closely in line with the Cambridge standard.

Where Moderators made scaling recommendations, it was most often because AO3 (Performance Skills) had been overmarked across all three pieces. However, there were many examples of considerable overmarking in AO2, devising original drama. There was a tendency to reward candidates for effort and attendance rather than their contribution to the devising process. It should be noted, though, that simply turning up is not worthy of marks.

Use of performance space

Most pieces were staged in school halls, studios or large classrooms and were usually performed to a small audience, such as the candidates' peers or an invited audience. Very few performances had no audiences. There were a few that were filmed on mobile phones and appeared to have been recorded in people's houses rather than in the school; this was not good practice.

Use of music in performances

There was some eccentric use of backing track music by a number of centres where music was played throughout all of the performances as a kind of cinematic soundtrack, often of a style that was at odds with the performance itself. This did not enhance the performances, nor did it add to the atmosphere of those performances. More often than not, it meant that performers were fighting to be heard over the music when their performances would easily have been strong enough to be performed without the backing track. Film soundtracks are created specifically for a film to enhance the emotional impact and the use of backing tracks for IGCSE Drama is inappropriate as it not only affects acting skills but also dilutes the impact of any sound effects which need to be there to enhance the piece. Candidates need to give thought to their use of music during pieces, both diegetic and non-diegetic, and need to decide their purpose in using music at all.

Length of pieces

Centres adhered to the time requirements well and it was rare for candidates to present overly short/long performances. However, centres are reminded that on the very rare occasion this does occur, it disadvantages candidates as it seldom gives each candidate the focus or exposure required.

Scripted Pieces: Individual Pieces

Moderators reported that the standard of individual performance work was high and there was a commendable level of acting skills and communication on display. Strong candidates had prepared thoroughly, taken account of stage space, characteristics, relationships with others and the fact that an audience was present. Such candidates delivered performances that were totally engaging and convincing but even the weakest candidates often performed with discipline and focus. Breakdowns were very rare and the worst that could be said is that the weakest performances were lifeless and lacked differentiation.

Most centres proved adept at choosing scripted material with care to suit their candidates' individual abilities and interests, while continuing to stretch and challenge. There were some excellent examples of centres where teachers had really considered the relevance of the chosen texts to their candidates, and it was evident that the candidates were invested in these texts. Although there was a considerable amount of (for example) William Shakespeare, John Godber and Evan Placey, there was also evidence of centres selecting performance texts that were both culturally relevant to their own country and that were also challenging and innovative.

The strongest candidates focused on their performance, rather than props and set. There were several monologues, however, which suffered from over-reliance on furniture, with the candidate being rooted to a desk and chair and (often) mumbling to camera. In the weakest monologues, candidates even gave the impression of having the script on the table in front of them. Those who performed from behind a table or a settee, a pile of clothes or shopping or similar, made their tasks of relating to an audience much harder. Some performers used other candidates as silent partners on stage for their monologues. This was helpful as it provided a focus for addressing comments or asking questions and showed an understanding of the performer's relationship with the audience.

A few candidates had chosen – wrongly – to present the same individual text and the same group scripted text for all their candidates, which did not allow candidates the opportunity to tackle a range of styles and texts and created an unnecessary and unhelpful comparison between candidates. The 2024 syllabus states explicitly that 'candidates should not perform material taken from the same play for both their individual and group performances' (p.18). Centres are reminded to advise candidates of this and prevent it from occurring in future sessions.

Scripted Pieces: Group Pieces

To some extent, the comments on individual pieces relating to choice of texts apply equal well to the group scripted performances.

Centres often selected texts from the annual list included in the Principal Examiner's Report. The best performances came where there had been thorough research and preparation, including stylistic approaches from key practitioners and consideration of the contexts of the plays.

Most candidates were comfortable with the group scripted pieces and there were some excellent examples of good work with natural rapport between the performers and an excellent flow to the piece. Although there was a range of success in performance terms, in most pieces there was a good understanding of the art of acting and effective use of techniques such as vocals, physicality, gesture and communication with an audience. The strengths and weaknesses of individual candidate's acting skills did not vary greatly from those seen in their individual performances. However, the impact of performing as an ensemble was a key differentiator. Candidates who delivered a strong individual performance sometimes struggled to understand the changing dynamics of an ensemble or they did not know what to do when they had no lines.

Few groups dressed in appropriate and relevant costumes. While it was not specifically required, it was effective when used and added a sense of period, status and context to performances. Dressing in a school uniform (unless required by the text) is **not** appropriate and does not help the candidate portray their character effectively.

Devised pieces

The quality of devised work continues to improve each session and there were far fewer melodrama/soap style pieces than in previous years although there were many mid-band dystopian, post-apocalyptic pieces and a smattering of pieces about post-pandemic life.

The strongest pieces were where candidates had chosen an issue/theme or story which they were totally interested in and created innovative pieces which fully showcased styles, practitioners and techniques which they had explored during their course. This work reflected what had been studied throughout the course in terms of different practitioners and different theatrical styles. The pieces were often innovative, creative and exciting with sound, movement, physicality and judicious use of appropriate props/effects and pushing at boundaries of expression. The more Physical Theatre and abstract work, showed a real consideration of the performance imagery candidates were presenting and sought to engage the audience fully.

Weaker examples tend to be naturalistic examples where there is no sense of 'character' or of shape of the piece. This type of work was often predictable and, in most cases, very narrative, tending to spell out every detail of the plot. At its worst, this approach looked more like a workshop or classroom lesson than a piece of drama for the stage.

A number of features emerged as typical of weaker pieces. There were several examples of over-wordy pieces, mini soap operas, and hackneyed scenarios. In such cases, scenes sometimes needed editing, either because they were too long or too short. Over-use of entrances and exits with or without blackouts served no useful purpose. The handling of phones or cups of drinks was poor, and in the weakest work the performers were often rooted to the chairs around the table.

IGCSE Coursework texts 2024

The following performance texts provide examples of what was seen by Moderators in the June 2024. They are provided for information and there is no requirement for centres to use any of them for their own work, although they may consider these if they wish.

Playwright	Play
Alan Ayckbourn	<i>A Walk in the Park</i> <i>Invisible Friends</i>
Aeschylus	<i>Agamemnon</i> <i>The Watchman</i>
Edward Albee	<i>Zoo story</i>
Richard Bean	<i>One Man Two Gov'nors</i>
Samuel Beckett	<i>Waiting for Godot</i>
Steven Berkoff	<i>Metamorphosis</i>
Edward Bond	<i>The Sea</i>
Andrew Bovell	<i>Things I know to be True</i>
Jim Cartwright	<i>Road</i>
Anton Chekhov	<i>The Cherry Orchard</i>
Caryl Churchill	<i>Cloud Nine</i> <i>Top Girls</i>
Gabriel Davis	<i>Goodbye Charles</i>
Christopher Durang	<i>Baby with the bathwater</i>
Euripides	<i>Hecuba</i> <i>Medea</i>
Dario Fo	<i>Accidental Death of an Anarchist</i>
John Godber	<i>Bouncers</i> <i>Shakers</i> <i>Teechers</i>
Henrik Ibsen	<i>A Doll's House</i>
Debbie Isitt	<i>The Woman who cooked her husband</i>
Charlotte Keatley	<i>My mother said I never should</i>
Dennis Kelly	<i>DNA</i>
Neil Labute	<i>The Shape of Things</i>
C S Lewis	<i>Voyage of the Dawn Treader</i>
Martin McDonagh	<i>The Pillow Man</i>
Sharman McDonald	<i>After Juliet</i>
Arthur Miller	<i>All My Sons</i> <i>Death of a Salesman</i> <i>The Crucible</i>
John Osbourne	<i>Look Back in Anger</i>

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Harold Pinter	<i>The Birthday Party</i> <i>The Caretaker</i> <i>The Homecoming</i>
Mark Ravenhill	<i>Pool No Water</i>
Yasmina Reza	<i>Art</i>
Philip Ridley	<i>Karamazoo</i>
Peter Shaffer	<i>Amadeus</i>
William Shakespeare	<i>Hamlet</i> <i>Henry V</i> <i>Merchant of Venice</i> <i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i> <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
Neil Simon	<i>Brighton Beach</i> <i>Rumours</i> <i>The Odd Couple</i>
Gordon Steele	<i>Like a Virgin</i>
John Steinbeck	<i>Of Mice and Men</i>
Simon Stephens	<i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time</i>
Shelagh Stephenson	<i>Five Kinds of Silence</i> <i>The Memory of Water</i>
Timberlake Wertenbaker	<i>Our Country's Good</i>
Debbie Tucker Green	<i>Random</i>
Enda Walsh	<i>Chatroom</i>
Oscar Wilde	<i>Importance of Being Earnest</i> <i>Salome</i> <i>The Ideal Husband</i>
Nigel Williams	<i>Lord of the Flies</i>
August Wilson	<i>Fences</i>
Lanford Wilson	<i>Brontosaurus</i>