

DRAMA

Paper 0994/12
Written Paper

Key messages

As in previous sessions, some candidates continue to write too much for 2- and 3-mark questions. Candidates should use the number of marks that are available for each question as a guide as to how much to write. The space provided in the answer booklet should also help act as a guide. Many candidates use bullet points for 2- and 3-mark questions. This is acceptable. It is evident that some candidates are having to rush the 15-mark question at the end, or indeed not finish the paper, because too much time has been spent on the earlier questions.

Similarly, some candidates write lengthy introductory paragraphs for the longer essay style questions worth 10 or 15 marks that do not relate to the question. This is an inefficient use of time.

Candidates need to ensure that they have read and understood the question carefully. For example, **Question 6** asked candidates how they would direct scenes 7 and 9 to create suspense and horror. Many candidates provided responses that addressed atmosphere but didn't explore suspense and drama.

On a similar point, several candidates wrote about a screen rather than a live stage performance and some wrote about 'readers' rather than audience.

In **Section C**, some candidates continue to be overly narrative in their responses, writing about their devised piece but, often, without addressing the question.

Candidates' understanding of subject specific language continues to improve. However, this year, the term structure and dramatic impact/power appears to have challenged some candidates.

General comments

Many candidates demonstrated a good understanding and connection with the two texts. Generally, candidates were well prepared for the exam.

It was pleasing that most candidates followed the rubric in **Section B**. Nearly all candidates followed the instructions to answer **Question 8** or **Question 9**. Very few answered both. Those who did lost valuable time in completing the rest of the paper.

There were some examples of almost illegible handwriting and a tendency to write outside the lines provided in the answer booklets. Where necessary, candidates should use additional pages and clearly indicate the question they are answering.

A small number of candidates were unable to respond to **Section C** due to ongoing covid restrictions in their home country and had been given special dispensation by Cambridge. A component adjustment mark based on individual scores awarded in sections a and b, ensured that these candidates were not disadvantaged.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This was a very accessible first question to the paper, and many candidates were able to identify a specific acting technique. Examiners also accepted an example of a technique. Identifying how this might be used during the speech proved more problematic for a few, but examiners showed flexibility in how this had been interpreted giving benefit of the doubt to candidates, wherever possible.

A few candidates wrote far more than was asked for in the question and, in doing so, used up valuable time.

Question 2

Some candidates chose to respond to this question in a bullet point style. This was perfectly acceptable. The question does not ask candidates to give any detail, nor does it ask candidates to explain why the advice is being given, or where to use it. Some candidates chose to give the additional information, but this could not be given credit and took up candidates' time which might have been of better use in later questions.

Question 3

The lines given in the question gave candidates plenty of material to work with. Very few candidates recognised how uncomfortable the encounter was, although many did recognise that the two characters were once at school together. Many candidates were able to identify suggestions as to what **HARKER** might do on specific lines, words or at particular moments. Fewer candidates did so in a cohesive way that made clear that they had a good understanding of the character offering a detailed description of the character, using the lines/action from the text to support their answer.

Question 4

Generally, candidates demonstrated a stronger understanding of pace than in previous years, recognising that the term can apply to physical as well as vocal. The greater challenge was communicating how the use of pace created dramatic impact. Consequently, 3 marks was a ceiling for some candidates.

Some candidates wrote far more than a 5-mark answer, using additional pages, often losing sight of the question.

Question 5

Many candidates used the stage directions used at the start of the extract to inform their response.

Candidates who accessed band 1 were able to bring the scene to life, some concentrating on one specific element of design and others considering a range of design elements. Most candidates were able to access band 2 showing some understanding of design offering workable suggestions. A minority of candidates appeared not to have read the extract carefully enough to suggest an appropriate setting.

Question 6

The two scenes offer considerable scope for candidates and many candidates were able to demonstrate an understanding of how drama can be used to create atmosphere. However, fewer candidates directly responded to the demands of the question which focused on suspense and horror. Some candidates talked about them as if they were the same thing, but many ignored them completely. Typically, these candidates did show some understanding of the passage and therefore were able to access the mark scheme but were prevented from achieving the higher marks. Some responses concentrated almost entirely on the use of sound and lighting effects and did not adopt a director's point of view.

Question 7

This question produced some wonderful responses from candidates. Those candidates who accessed bands 1 and 2 were able to show a perceptive understanding of the character and went far beyond the stage directions demonstrating a strong practical awareness. Some candidates offered specific actions that applied to specific lines, but these responses, generally, did not capture understanding of the role.

Section B

Question 8

This was, by far, the most popular question in section b with most candidates choosing to respond to it. However, many demonstrated a misunderstanding of the term ‘set design’ and focused their responses on other design elements. Considerations such as props or lighting were credited where they were being used to dress or enhance the set, but credit was not given if such technical aspects were explored in isolation. The more successful responses were able to pick up and develop the Japanese cultural references, and explained how their set design would work in practice, serving the demands of the text and the action.

Fewer candidates are using diagrams when responding to similar style questions. Those who did, generally, supported their diagram with additional text that explained their set design. This is good practice as a diagram alone limits access to the full range of the mark scheme.

Question 9

The least popular of the two questions that candidates could choose from and, generally, those who did were unable to demonstrate a detailed and practical understanding of how to stage the supernatural elements of the play. The question was specific about the directorial focus that was being asked for, but many candidates described the play.

Section C

Question 10

Some candidates appeared to misunderstand the term ‘structure’ and proceeded to give a narrative of their devised piece. At times, the narrative did give a sense of structure without being explicit. Credit was given for such responses, where possible. Some candidates showed knowledge and understanding of appropriate terminology for structural elements but did not illustrate this by direct reference to their devised work. Other candidates demonstrated an understanding of structure but didn’t link this to how structure was used to draw the audience into the action. Some responses were very lengthy and often lost focus as to what was being asked for in the question.

Question 11

There were different interpretations of ‘performance space’ with candidates exploring a range of ideas including blocking, staging, set design, proxemics, and use of props. Credit was given as long as it was clear as to how these suggestions added dramatic power to the piece. Candidates found this more difficult with many, it seemed, not understanding the term ‘dramatic power’.

DRAMA

Paper 0994/02
Coursework

Key messages

The overwhelming majority of candidates performed with enthusiasm and an obvious love for performing in front of an audience. It was very pleasing to see the number of performances that were delivered to a live audience.

Administration

Centres engaged much more effectively with Submit for Assessment (SfA) this session, and most uploaded all the necessary documents. Based on Moderators' reports in the current session, centres are reminded of the following for future submissions.

ICMS Forms

- It is necessary to upload **the entirety** of the ICMS forms to SfA, rather than just those to be considered in the sample.
- The ICMS forms should be uploaded as **one** composite document and not as separate PDFs.
- Some ICMS forms were incomplete or were too brief for the Moderator to understand how marks had been awarded by the teacher. Full comments should be made about each performance, which should point to the reason why a particular mark has been awarded, rather than just rephrasing the assessment criteria.
- AO1 & AO2 relate to aspects of the work that may not be immediately apparent from the performance. It is therefore important that the teachers' comments are specific as to how the mark has been awarded, drawing attention to contributions that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Recordings of Performance

- Several centres did not submit the performance summary sheet. This enables the Moderator to know which candidates are performing in which group pieces.
- Very few centres gave helpful candidate identification notes on the ICMSs. They were either missing or too vague. However, it is so helpful when candidates identify themselves to camera, although some were so quick it was difficult to catch the right name.
- In most cases the filming was good and performances were filmed using a static camera (i.e. without zooming). Some centres tried to zoom in, which was distracting and misrepresented the nature of the drama on stage. A handful of centres created a film montage, which was not in the spirit of the syllabus as the focus is on stage drama, not film.
- It is important to label the performance files carefully and ensure that the correct candidates are listed as performing.
- Centres are reminded that both candidate names and candidate numbers must be announced at the start of all group pieces. Many centres had candidates carrying placards with name and candidate number, which was very helpful.
- Group pieces were often filmed from so great a distance that facial expression could not always be assessed easily. This also meant that the sound quality was poor because the microphone was placed a long way from the performance space, which was exacerbated when the performance space had an echo.

Scripted pieces

There were some stylish, accomplished and nuanced performances of roles from a range of repertoire, carefully chosen in most cases to suit candidates' individual abilities and interests, while continuing to stretch and challenge. There were some examples from older British plays that did not speak well to the candidates

performing them and where the language and cultural situation seemed to be a barrier. Some candidates used the same playwright with different plays for their solo and group scripted pieces. While this is permitted, it was limiting in terms of the opportunity to explore different styles, genres and acting techniques. Centres are reminded that the maximum length of time for a monologue is **three** minutes.

The strongest monologues were clear about the question, ‘to whom are you speaking?’, whether it be a person on stage or the audience. Where the answer to this was unclear, the performance generally needed more targeted focus. The answer, of course, must be ‘the audience’ and, as noted at the start of this report, the presence of an audience for most performances this year was very pleasing. This gave a greater purpose to the performances and avoided the danger of playing to the camera. Some candidates used other candidates as silent partners on stage for their monologues, which provided a focus for addressing comments or asking questions. Occasionally this meant the loss of direct, face-on views of the candidate, however, since they only shared side profiles.

The strongest candidates focused on their performance, rather than props and set. There were many monologues, however, which suffered from over-reliance on furniture, with the candidate being rooted to a desk and chair and mumbling to camera. With the weakest monologues, some candidates gave the impression of having the script on the table in front of them. Some candidates also appeared to give little thought to the clothes they were wearing, which were often very contemporary and distracting.

The comments relating to individual pieces also apply to group work. There was generally little difference in performance skills between candidates’ monologues and their group scripted pieces, although there was evidence that weaker candidates were helped by being in a group with stronger performers. The strongest performances were informed by thorough research and preparation, including stylistic approaches from key practitioners and consideration of the contexts of the performance text being performed.

Devised pieces

There were many high-quality pieces of devised work, which were often imaginative and well-crafted, with clear dramatic intentions and employing a range of approaches that included physical theatre, combined arts and developed interpretations of particular practitioners’ styles. Generally, however, candidates appeared less confident in their devised work, and many tried to devise in a purely naturalistic style, which was variable in its success.

Performance skills were inevitably related to the quality of the devised work. The strongest devised pieces responded maturely to their chosen starting points and there was much physical work that included underscoring, which usually added to the dramatic experience. The pieces explored an array of topics, often family dramas or issue-based work including a variety of physical theatre and it was unsurprising that many pieces explored the pandemic and its aftermath. In summary, the devised work was often innovative, creative and exciting with music, movement and physicality with judicious use of props/effects and pushing at boundaries.

Weaker pieces consisted of lengthy expositions that led to static, action-free performances that did not allow characters to develop. Having too many props was invariably counterproductive. Also prevalent were mini soap operas, with mundane dialogue, sketchy characters, and random standing or sitting with no relation to the drama and scenes which often needed editing to improve the dramatic flow. Sometimes in devised work the miming of door entrances/exits, handling of phones or cups of drinks could have been done better. The essential message to candidates in devising original work is to look at how playwrights construct dramatic texts and apply those skills as appropriate to the intended message to the audience.

Examples of repertoire seen in June 2023

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| Adamson, Samuel | <i>Frank and Ferdinand</i> |
| Adorian, Simon | <i>Trojans</i> |
| Albee, Edward | <i>Three Tall Women</i> |
| Anderson, Davey | <i>Blackout</i> |
| Anouilh, Jean | <i>Antigone</i> |
| Ayckbourn, Alan | <i>Confusions</i> |

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| Barker, Keith Becket, Samuel Berkoff, Steven Bovell, Andrew Brecht, Bertolt | <i>Invisible Friends</i> <i>One Man, Two Guvnors</i> <i>Waiting for Godot</i> <i>Metamorphosis</i> <i>The Trial</i> <i>Things I Know to be True</i> <i>Mother Courage and her Children</i> |
| Campton, David Cartwright, Jim Anton Chekov Churchill, Carol Coward, Noel | <i>Cage Birds</i> <i>Bed</i> <i>Two</i> <i>The Seagull</i> <i>Top Girls</i> <i>The Vortex</i> |
| Daniels, Sarah Davis, Gabriel Dowie, Claire Durang, Christopher Delaney, Sheila Dorfman, Ariel Dowie, Claire | <i>The Gut Girls</i> <i>Dreams in Captivity</i> <i>Why is John Lennon wearing a skirt?</i> <i>Marriage of Bette and Boo</i> <i>A Taste of Honey</i> <i>Death and The Maiden</i> <i>Adult Child, Dead Child</i> |
| Euripides | <i>Medea</i> |
| Fugard, Athol | <i>My Children, My Africa</i> <i>Sizwe Bansi is Dead</i> |
| Godber, John Gogal, Nicolai | <i>Shakers</i> <i>Teechers</i> <i>The Government Inspector</i> |
| Haddon, Mark Hare, David Hall, Katori Hartley, Matt Hennessy, Tatty Hickson, Ella | <i>Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time</i> <i>Amy's View</i> <i>The Mountaintop</i> <i>Horizon</i> <i>A Hundred Words for Snow</i> <i>Boys</i> |
| Ibsen, Henrik Isset, Debbie | <i>A Doll's House</i> <i>An Enemy of the People</i> <i>The Woman Who Cooked Her Husband</i> |
| Jonson, Ben | <i>Volpone</i> |
| Keatley, Charlotte Kelly, Denis Kane, Sarah | <i>My Mother Said I Never Should</i> <i>DNA</i> <i>Crave</i> |
| Macdonald, Sharman MacMillan, Duncan MacMillan, Duncan Mahoney, Dino McDonagh, Martin Mercer, David Miller, Arthur Minghella, Anthony | <i>After Juliet</i> <i>1984</i> <i>People, Places and Things</i> <i>Yo-yo</i> <i>The Pillowman</i> <i>The Arcata Promise</i> <i>The Crucible</i> <i>Death of a Salesman</i> <i>Chocolate and Cigarettes</i> |
| Oakes, Meredith O'Hare, Eugene Oswald, Debra | <i>Faith</i> <i>Hospital Food</i> <i>DAGS</i> |

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| Pinter, Harold Placey, Evan Powell, Kelly Punter, Michael | <i>The Dumb Waiter</i> <i>Jekyll and Hyde</i> <i>Girls Like That</i> <i>Like Dreaming Backwards</i> <i>Darker Shores</i> |
| Ravenhill, Mark Reade, Simon Reza, Yasmina Russell, Willy | <i>Pool no Water</i> <i>Yesterday an Incident Occurred</i> <i>Private Peaceful</i> <i>Art</i> <i>Blood Brothers</i> |
| Schaffer, Peter Schaffer, Peter Shakespeare, William Shaw, George Bernard Sheers, Owen Neil Simon Sophocles Soyinka, Wole Steel, Gordon Stephenson, Shelagh Stephens, Simon Stoppard, Tom | <i>Our Day Out</i> <i>Amadeus</i> <i>Equus</i> <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> <i>Two Gentleman of Verona</i> <i>Twelfth Night</i> <i>St Joan</i> <i>Pink Mist</i> <i>The Odd Couple</i> <i>Antigone</i> <i>The Lion and The Jewel</i> <i>Like a Virgin</i> <i>Five Kinds of Silence</i> <i>Punk Rock</i> <i>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead</i> |
| Tectonic Theatre Project Tempest, Kate Tinniswood, Emma Thorne, Jack Treadwell, Sophie Tucker, Paul Turner, Garrett | <i>The Laramie Project</i> <i>Wasted</i> <i>Sing Little Cuckoo</i> <i>Burying Your Brother in the Pavement</i> <i>Machinel</i> <i>Room to Let</i> <i>Boy's Life</i> |
| Waldron, Glenn Walsh, Enda Wheeller, Mark Wilde, Oscar Williams, Tennessee | <i>Forever House</i> <i>Chatroom</i> <i>Hard to Swallow</i> <i>An Ideal Husband</i> <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> <i>A Woman of No Importance</i> <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> |