

DRAMA AND THEATRE

Paper 9801/03
Devised Drama

Key Messages

- Centres are reminded of the need for candidates to explore their chosen stimulus in depth in order to develop well-crafted drama that is well structured, has credible characters, uses effective dialogue, and demonstrates impressive physicality.
- Candidates' acting skills should be honed and refined during the course so that the performance of the devised piece is of a high standard, and is engaging to the audience.

Administration and general comments

The examination ran smoothly in terms of the administrative arrangements. All candidates devised work of a suitable length, which gave adequate exposure to all of the performers.

For this paper, candidates are required to produce a piece of original-devised drama based on one of eight stimuli pre-released by CIE, the most popular of which in this session was: *1989 – Protests in Tiananmen Square*.

Programme Notes

Candidates are required to produce programme notes for the day of the examination. As well as providing photographs of the candidates in costume, these are intended to provide the Examiner(s) with a good overview of the intentions of the piece, the way it develops its dramatic material, and its structure. Some of the notes supplied, however, were very sparse and created a poor first impression through misspelling of important words.

Areas of note from the practical work seen in June 2014

- Candidates often displayed enthusiasm for working with the dramatic stimuli, and research was always in evidence, although much of it was variably translated into performance.
- The creation of meaningful and realistic dialogue was a particular challenge, and where this was the case it meant that characterisation veered towards the one-dimensional.
- Acting skills were variable, especially when it came to articulation and projection. There was often a sense that the drama had been inspired by television rather than the stage, depending as it did on short sentences, and meaningful looks. This style was unfortunately reinforced by the use of very short scenes, with transitions that might have worked on television but which appeared weak on stage.
- Some pieces gave little indication of character or setting, and it was also difficult to discern these from the set. There was a tendency for candidates to confuse 'Brechtian approaches' with not establishing the scenario or characters, which was certainly not Brecht's intention.
- Weak performances inevitably displayed low production values, and appeared more akin to educational drama rather than Theatre. In such cases, the set design was sometimes eccentric, and the placing of furniture poorly judged. Such pieces made little attempt to draw the audience in.

DRAMA AND THEATRE

Paper 9801/04
Performance Investigation

Key Messages

- Centres are reminded of the importance of the approval process that must be followed in order to receive feedback from Cambridge as to the suitability of the chosen topic.
- The Performance Investigation tests candidates' ability to pursue independently a topic in depth using appropriate academic conventions and these should be reflected in the style of writing and the method of referencing.

Administration

All submissions were received by the due deadline and the examination session ran without any administrative problems as a result. Centres are reminded of the need to obtain from Cambridge – in advance of submission – approval for each candidate's proposed area of investigation in order to ensure that it offers sufficient academic depth and rigour at Pre-U level.

Presentation of submissions

All submissions were of an appropriate length. There was some variability in the presentation of candidates' work. Candidates are encouraged to refer to the guidelines set out in the syllabus. These guidelines are intended to foster good academic practice by introducing candidates to the essential principles of how to organise and present their material, handle academic sources, reference them using appropriate academic conventions, and list them accurately and consistently in the bibliography.

Candidates are reminded that:

- The essay must be typewritten on A4-size paper.
- Coversheet provided should be attached to the essay securely.
- A complete bibliography of all resources used/referred to must be attached to the work.
- Candidate's name and Centre details should be displayed on every essay page.
- Direct quotations from the work of critics or others must be referenced.
- The essay should not be enclosed in any kind of file, folder or plastic wallet.

Assessment Objective 1

Communicate knowledge and understanding of the nature and interpretation of drama and theatre using appropriate vocabulary.

The choice of topic inhibited some candidates scoring highly in this assessment objective, and there was often considerable scope for thinking through the implications of the original ideas. Candidates should be encouraged to shape and refine their initial ideas before commencing writing. Candidates should show the depth of understanding of their chosen topic by focusing closely on the subject matter.

The use of vocabulary was generally appropriate. Most candidates focused on a single play and used it as a lens for viewing another aspect of drama, most commonly approaches to staging. Majority of candidates were not always clear as to the depth of understanding required, particularly regarding the chosen play. Candidates are reminded that in order to access high marks they should aim to engage with their chosen repertoire in a more systematic and coherent manner and avoid making only occasional references to lines from a play.

Assessment Objective 3

Analyse and critically evaluate aspects of drama and theatre, making independent decisions and judgements, within appropriate cultural, historical, stylistic and theoretical contexts.

Candidates wrote with enthusiasm about drama and theatre; it was evident that the study had sparked interest in studying dramatic repertoire. This was not always translated effectively into reflective analysis with evidence that candidates often relied on unsupported assertion or personal feelings rather than judgments based on careful consideration of what they had presented. Candidates are encouraged to use academic source material appropriately, quoting with comment and comparison.