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# **GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**GCSE  
DRAMA**

**SUMMER 2023**

Grade boundary information for this subject is available on the WJEC public website at:  
<https://www.wjecservices.co.uk/MarkToUMS/default.aspx?!=en>

### **Online Results Analysis**

WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC secure website. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.

### **Annual Statistical Report**

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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# DRAMA

## GCSE

Summer 2023

### UNIT 1: DEVISING THEATRE

#### General Comments

This unit is worth 40% of the qualification and requires candidates to submit three elements: a portfolio of supporting evidence, a practical/technical performance, and an evaluation of the final performance.

As in previous years, moderators noted that in the very best work candidates showed highly imaginative ideas in response to their chosen stimulus. They had an excellent understanding of their chosen practitioner, which was evidenced across all three elements. This understanding allowed them to create a piece of theatre that highlighted the key techniques/characteristics associated with the practitioner/style but also resulted in a well-structured piece displaying a clear, dramatic shape. Moderators noted that many more centres experimented with practitioners/companies such as Emma Rice, Splendid, Frantic, Paperbirds, and Katie Mitchell. The very best work demonstrated a sophisticated understanding evidenced through the way selected techniques were embodied in the final performance. The work displayed an excellent interpretation of the role using highly relevant aspects of the practitioner/genre to successfully realise artistic intentions.

However, moderators also noted that the work of some candidates did not display the depth of understanding to merit the marks awarded. As in previous years, the work involving some practitioners tended to focus on one specific aspect of the work. For example, whilst some work displayed an excellent understanding of the methods of Artaud, some candidates focused solely on the movement/screaming aspect whilst ignoring the role of dialogue within the performance. Similarly, with the choice of Musical Theatre there were some excellent examples where candidates had carefully chosen their song/movement choices. These were carefully crafted, along with appropriate dialogue into a performance, which displayed a highly effective structure, form and plot. However, some work consisted of a random selection of songs and dances displaying little relevance to the chosen stimuli and with the final performance lacking any shape or structure.

Centres are also reminded that the chosen style must allow candidates to access all of the assessment criteria e.g. Physical Theatre must and should include dialogue to indicate a complete understanding.

Whilst some centres opted for more contemporary practitioners, the methods of Brecht and Stanislavski still proved to be very popular. Moderators noted they viewed some highly imaginative work, which successfully realised the group's artistic intentions. The work displayed a high level of understanding of the relevant techniques/characteristics associated with the practitioner/genre.

As in previous years, a small number of centres used a mix of these two practitioners, which impacted on the quality and content of all three elements. We continue to remind all centres that whilst it is imperative to focus and experiment with a range of practitioners/styles throughout the course, it is crucial for a group to choose and focus on just **one** for the final exam.

Moderators noted that the number of centres/candidates choosing the design option for this unit continues to increase. They noted many design candidates produced work of an exceptional standard. As with the acting option, the very best design work showed a sophisticated understanding of the chosen style and it was apparent from all three elements that the designers had been an integral part of the group from the outset, contributing to the initial ideas/research and working closely with actors throughout the rehearsal process. Moderators did note that some design candidates worked with a style that did not allow them sufficient scope to develop their design option. However, it was also noted that some design candidates, in spite of working with relatively limited facilities, produced work that was innovative and highly creative.

Centres are reminded to familiarise themselves with the **minimum** requirements for the realisation of each design option, for example, a costume design candidate must do **hair and make-up** for two different characters/roles. There was a tendency to focus solely on costume and therefore candidates have not fulfilled the minimum requirements and cannot access marks within the top band.

Moderators noted that a significant number of centres did not adhere to the recommended timings for their performances or word count for their portfolios. In many instances this resulted in practical performances which lacked shape and structure, and portfolios which contained unnecessary and irrelevant detail. These recommendations can be found on page 10 of the specification and centres must adhere to them. Centres are also reminded that the appendices within the portfolios should only contain material which is relevant and discussed in one of the specified sections.

## Comments on individual questions/sections

### AO1

The portfolio work was generally of a good standard, reflecting the candidates' commitment to the work. Indeed, where centres had paid heed to the syllabus and assessment objectives, the AO1 submissions were of a higher standard than those encountered last year. Unfortunately, too many centres did not address the three required sections sufficiently to justify marks awarded:

- How ideas were researched, created and developed and response to the chosen stimulus was, generally, reasonable, although the link appeared tenuous without justification on occasion. Similarly, individual contributions tended to be weak and lacked development.
- How ideas from the chosen practitioner/genre were incorporated into the piece to communicate meaning was by far the weakest section. Some candidates simply listed techniques and/or rehearsal methods associated with the practitioner/genre and gave no indication of how these were employed to communicate meaning.
- How ideas were developed was generally sound, but amendments and refinements lacked detail. Many candidates gave very generic responses e.g. 'we had a dress rehearsal which went well' as opposed to pinpointing significant moments within the rehearsal process and analysing and evaluating how the amendment refined and improved the devised work.

## AO2

The performances were generally of a very good standard. The very best work showed highly effective application of performance skills, highly relevant aspects of the style and highly sensitive interaction. It was apparent the group had worked as a cohesive unit with each learner understanding their function and contribution. The final devised performance was polished, evidencing consistent and a meaningful rehearsal process.

It was apparent in a small percentage of groups that candidates had been mismatched. For example, one group member had learnt the work and had been placed within a group where the others had not. The structure and composition of a group can have a significant impact on a candidate's final mark, and this is something which should be taken into account at the beginning of the process.

The majority of centres ensured that candidates were provided with a suitable space and simple design elements e.g. costume, music, which had a significant impact on the overall performance. Whilst we acknowledge that not all centres have excellent facilities, we would encourage centres to use simple lighting, costume, music/sound and basic set to help create a sense of theatricality. However, we would ask centres not to use extended blackouts and numerous set changes, which have a significant impact on the structure and flow of the final performance. Whilst candidates are marked/moderated on the quality of their work, if the final performance has to be performed in a classroom we would remind centres that part of the assessment criteria is "the performance space is used imaginatively to communicate meaning". It would be helpful if desks could be rearranged and wall boards covered to help create a sense of theatricality.

## AO4

As in previous years, the evaluation of the final performance tended to be the weakest element with the same issues reoccurring. The best work fully addressed the required elements. However, there was a tendency to focus on the rehearsal process, which should be covered within the portfolio. The evaluation should **only** focus on the **final performance**. Many candidates evaluated the performance from the point of view of the whole group as opposed to their individual contribution. The most successful work analysed and evaluated each of the specified sections giving specific examples from the final performance in order to highlight key points. Work that tended to be weaker simply described what had happened within the final performance. Candidates should be encouraged to write the final evaluation in three separate sections, and the notes, which should be 2 sides of **A4 bullet points**, should be submitted with the final evaluations. These notes must be short and succinct.

### Summary of key points

- The majority of centres uploaded their work onto SURPASS which greatly aided the moderation process ensuring all work was accessible and could be viewed easily by the moderator. For 2024 all centres must use SURPASS to upload the work for Unit 1.
- Candidates must clearly identify themselves before the performance.
- Centres must ensure the audio/visual footage is of a good quality for the moderation process. Cameras should be placed as close as possible to the performance allowing coverage of the whole acting area. A number of moderators noted that in some centres the quality of sound was poor. Centres must check this prior to uploading the work as this can have a significant impact on the moderation process.

- Centres need to ensure that all relevant paperwork is uploaded with the candidates' work.
- Although not a requirement, it is recommended that centres annotate candidates' written work as this helps the moderator to ascertain where and why the centre has awarded marks.
- Centres are encouraged to access the WJEC secure website for exemplar work for Unit 1. This will help teachers to familiarise themselves with the standard for each band and prove a useful tool when awarding marks. Centres also need to look carefully at their moderator's report to check on how their marking adhered to standards across the range.

# DRAMA

## GCSE

Summer 2023

### UNIT 2: PERFORMING THEATRE

#### General Comments

This unit is worth 20% of the qualification. Learners are required to participate in a performance based on the study of two significant, ten-minute extracts from a text, which has been performed professionally **and/or** written for theatrical performance. An external examiner marks the performance.

**The text chosen for Unit 2 must contrast in either style or context and date written for the text chosen for Unit 3 (see page 25 of the specification). This is a requirement stipulated by Qualifications Wales and failure to adhere will result in candidates being penalised 5 marks.**

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

Overall, centres have recovered well from the challenges posed by the pandemic and examples of excellence were displayed in many of the centres visited. Examiners noted that they viewed some highly sophisticated work with candidates displaying excellent performance skills, highly effective interpretations of character and making significant individual contributions. There were also some outstanding examples of ensemble work from challenging plays e.g. *The Trial* and interesting interpretations of *Shakers*, *Teechers* and *Bouncers*.

A wide variety of appropriate texts were chosen with many centres choosing scripts and characters which were well matched to candidates' ability and skills. This allowed candidates across the ability range to reach their full potential. A significant number of centres experimented with new and contemporary texts and playwrights e.g. *There Should Definitely Be More Dancing* by Ian Kershaw and Clare Darcy, *Bacon* by Sophie Swithinbank and *Tapped* by Katie Redford. These helped to produce some exciting and sophisticated performances. However, it was also noted that more traditional texts e.g. *Macbeth* and *Antigone* also produced some highly imaginative work.

The most successful work across the ability range indicated that candidates had been given sufficient preparation time to rehearse and refine their work which resulted in polished final performances.

The majority of centres ensured candidates had basic costume, set/props, lighting and sound, which helped to create a theatrical experience for the candidates.

The downside of performances this year, which may be a legacy of the pandemic, was that too many candidates were unsure of their lines and/or relied on scripts, which made it very difficult for them to fulfil the assessment criteria. For those who have chosen acting as their skill, knowing their lines is a basic requirement for this component. We would remind centres that scripts are **not allowed**. Candidates will receive more marks for learning a small proportion of the script, even if it falls under the specified time rather than just reading a script.

Centres are also reminded that the size of the acting group and length of the performance must be adhered to (see page 13 of the specification).

The number of candidates opting for design has significantly grown. As with Unit 1, the very best design work showed a close collaboration between actors and designers throughout the rehearsal process. Although facilities vary, some examiners noted that some outstanding work had been viewed in centres with limited facilities but highly imaginative design ideas. The weakest design work tended to be by candidates who had little or no understanding of the requirements of the design option. Centres are asked to familiarise themselves with the **minimum requirements** for Unit 2 to ensure all specified criteria is fulfilled, for example, costume, hair and make-up for 1 character.

Some examiners noted that a minority of centres had significant gaps between the two scenes. Centres are reminded that even with a design candidate the two scenes should flow seamlessly with the minimum of disruption.

The artistic intentions, although not assessed, form an integral part in assisting the examiner in assessing the realisation of artistic intentions. Examiners felt these were more developed than in previous years. Centres had followed guidance and encouraged candidates to focus on specific areas as opposed to the generic “use my movement and voice to create a character”.

Design Candidates can and should include additional material, for example, lighting plots and mood boards in order to support their design in performance.

Examiners noted that the majority of centres visited treated the examination with respect and ensured smooth transitions between each performance. Many centres displayed examination signs and did their utmost to ensure there was no extraneous noise pollution from outside.

### **Summary of key points**

- Centres should ensure that all paperwork is ready for the examiner on the day of the final exam (check WJEC website for guidelines).
- Performances should be uploaded onto SURPASS within 7 days of the final performance.
- Candidates should introduce themselves at the beginning of each performance, stating name, role and candidate number.
- Artistic Intention forms need to be sent to the visiting examiner prior to the performance (your examiner will liaise with you regarding this).

Centres are reminded that the chosen text for Unit 3 will have an impact on choice of texts for performance in Unit 2 (see page 15 of the specification). On completion of this year, we would like to thank all centres for their continued commitment to ensuring that all candidates were given the opportunity to achieve their potential and to provide candidates with a range of experiences, which enriched their understanding of drama and theatre. This year was also the first year since 2019 where candidates were able to complete the course in its entirety with no significant amendments.

# DRAMA

## GCSE

Summer 2023

### UNIT 3: INTERPRETING THEATRE

#### General Comments

Written examination: 1 hour 30 minutes  
40% of the qualification

This was the final year for the current set texts. 2024 will see the introduction of new texts on the examination paper (see page 3 & page 18 of specification). Centres should note the format and style of questions will remain the same.

As in previous years, the questions in this year's paper were balanced with a focus on both acting and technical elements. As in the case of previous years, examiners noted that the candidates' understanding of acting far outweighed their understanding of how design worked within their set text. As in previous years, a significant number fail to read the question and focus on areas which are not specified in the rubric. This led to information being provided which was not relevant or required, and subsequently not awarded marks. However, the majority of candidates timed the paper well, allowing them to complete both sections with detailed responses.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

##### Section A

- Q.1**
- (i)** This question was generally well answered with the majority of candidates choosing a relevant line, which showed the character's motivation. A significant number of candidates chose a line from outside the specified section and therefore were not awarded marks.
  - (ii)** The majority of candidates chose and described a suitable tone and tempo, which was appropriate to their chosen line. A small percentage stated 2 tones/tempo, which resulted in only 1 mark being awarded. Candidates who chose a line outside the specified section were unable to access the marks for this question.
- Q.2**
- (i)** The majority of candidates successfully described the relationship of the specified characters within the specified extract. Many stated three relevant points linked to the given circumstances within the extract. Some candidates described the relationship referencing the whole play, which diluted the response and had an impact on the final mark.
  - (ii)** The majority of candidates successfully explained two relevant movements which could communicate the relationship to an audience. Candidates referred to movement, facial expressions, gestures, proxemics and, where relevant, marks were awarded. A small percentage only referred to the movement of one character and therefore could only access 2 marks.

- Q.3** (i) This question was generally well answered with responses accessing a range of details, for example, garments, colour, fabric, period, style and accessories in order to obtain marks. The majority of candidates stated a complete costume. Most candidates referenced hair and make-up although a small number of candidates stated “no makeup” which impacted on their final mark. Candidates should be reminded if a question asks for a specific requirement, it should be fulfilled in their response.
- (ii) The majority of candidates were able to state two relevant reasons for their costume choice indicating a sound understanding of both the character and the given circumstances within the specified section.
- Q.4** This question displayed the weakest response with many candidates failing to follow the specified rubric and discussing sound, costume, positioning of characters on types of stages other than the specified **Traverse Stage**.
- Whilst the majority of candidates understood **Traverse Stage** in theory i.e. where the audience was positioned, this understanding was not evident in their understanding of how a set design would work on this type of stage.
  - A significant percentage of candidates stated “minimalism” as their chosen style and subsequently went on to describe detailed and elaborate sets which were totally inappropriate for a Traverse Stage.
  - A significant number of candidates failed to explore creatively the opportunities awarded by the specified scene within specific plays adhering rigidly to the requirements of the play. Whilst these responses were awarded marks, we would encourage centres to experiment and to develop their own ideas for staging scenes.
  - The majority of candidates were unaware of the original staging conditions of their chosen text. We would remind centres, whilst the majority of candidates understood Traverse Stage in theory i.e. where the audience was positioned, this understanding was not evident in their understanding of how a set design would work on this type of stage.
  - The majority of candidates were unaware of the original staging conditions of their chosen text. We would remind centres that an understanding of the historical, cultural and social background of a text is a Qualification Wales requirement. Detailed notes and blended learning activities covering all these areas are available on the WJEC/HWB websites.
  - A minority of candidates discussed the play in general as opposed to the specified section.
  - However, some candidates, particularly those answering questions on 1984, produced detailed and imaginative responses covering all specified areas.

- Q.5** The question was generally well answered. The majority of candidates chose a suitable extract and discussed the specified character in good detail referencing the question criteria. A minority of candidates discussed the scene specified for Q.1-4. Q.5 should demonstrate a candidate's wider knowledge of the play.
- The most successful responses demonstrated an excellent and perceptive understanding of character motivation using specific lines to highlight their ideas.
  - Voice: The most successful responses focused on key lines and gave vocal suggestions discussing tone, tempo, volume, accent, pause, subtext and how voice could communicate character.
  - Movement: The most successful responses focused on key lines and gave movement suggestions discussing quality of movement, gesture, facial expressions, stillness, proxemics, set and props and how movement could communicate character.
  - Detailed and discerning knowledge of interaction.
  - The most successful responses chose a relatively short section, the candidates covered the whole section giving highly detailed and appropriate references to support the vocal/movement/ interaction suggestions.
  - An excellent use and understanding of drama terminology.

## **Section B**

As in previous years candidates had been given the opportunity to view either live or recorded versions of live theatre, which judging from the responses, had inspired and excited them. Both the design and acting option were generally well answered, the majority of candidates following the required rubric.

- A small number of candidates only discussed one actor as opposed to the specified two.
- A small number of candidates didn't state the production they had viewed.
- A small number didn't discuss their response to the costume, hair and make-up or vocal skills.
- Some candidates gave detailed plot summaries which are not required and use valuable time.
- Some candidates have a tendency to describe as opposed to analysis and evaluate.

## **Summary of key points**

Despite the disruptions of the previous three years, the work produced by centres in 2023 indicates that the majority of centres are providing candidates with positive experiences in a supportive environment, allowing them to enjoy their GCSE Drama course whilst enriching their knowledge and understanding. Examiners and moderators would like to thank you for all your hard work, commitment and support.

We would also like to take this opportunity to remind centres of the range of resources, for example, exemplar material, blended learning activities and forthcoming Professional Learning dates which are available on the WJEC website.



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