

GCE Examiners' Report

Drama and Theatre
GCE
Summer 2025

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Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	<p>Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade.</p> <p>For unitted specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level.</p> <p>For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.</p>	For unitted specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner WJEC

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Executive Summary

Unit 1 – Theatre Workshop

Unit 1 assesses learners on creating, performing, and evaluating theatre work, focusing on reinterpretation of a set text, using techniques from a chosen practitioner or company. Students submit a performance, creative log, and evaluation. Moderators reported that popular influences this series included Brecht, Artaud and Frantic Assembly, with growing interest in Katie Mitchell. High band submissions showed clear understanding and application of techniques, though some overemphasised design or rehearsal details. Centres must remind their learners that the evaluation should focus on final performance and individual skills. Administrative requirements include scripts, marking sheets, and candidate identification and centres are asked to ensure they submit all of these correctly. Centres are also encouraged to annotate work and ensure clarity in submissions to support accurate moderation.

Unit 2 – Text in Theatre

Unit 2 assesses students on acting, directing, and design through analysis of set texts. Examiners reported that popular choices this year included *Lovesong*, *A Doll's House* and *Caucasian Chalk Circle*. High band responses demonstrated detailed understanding of vocal skills, character motivation and directorial vision. High-achieving candidates effectively linked practical influences to their own creative choices. However, some responses lacked depth, clarity or evaluative insight, especially in directing and design. Students are encouraged to use subject-specific terminology, maintain consistency in production style and prepare practically. Evaluations should analyse specific influences and not just describe similarities. Centres are reminded that structured, detailed and practical preparation is key to success in this unit.

Unit 3- Text in Action

Unit 3 involves performance and design work based on a theatre practitioner and a theatrical style and ideates, with candidates required to perform/design two contrasting pieces. Most performances were strong and innovative, with examiners commenting that both actors and designers were well-prepared, with improvements in the written report also evident. Reports that were structured in three sections were the most effective, especially when it came to evaluating individual contributions. Centres must submit all required documentation, including programme proformas, on time; adherence to deadlines and specification requirements is essential. Performances must clearly differ in style and influence, and candidates should present themselves before performing to ensure clarity in assessment.

Unit 4- Text in Performance

Unit 4 assesses students' understanding of drama and theatre (AO3) and their ability to analyse and evaluate others' work (AO4). Candidates performed well in directing and performance questions, particularly in *Sweeney Todd*, *The Radicalisation of Bradley Manning*, and *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg*. Strong responses demonstrated clear character movement, thoughtful design and creative interpretations for contemporary audiences. However, some responses lacked depth in costume analysis and synoptic evaluation. Section B responses often missed connections to the whole play. Looking forward, learners are encouraged to use ambitious and advanced subject-specific terminology, to manage their time effectively and to consider how to make plays relevant for modern audiences through thoughtful performance and design choices.

Resources:**We have resources available to support centres:**

Areas for Improvement	Resources	Description
Meeting the demands of the question	Exemplar Materials Portal by WJEC	Top, middle and lower band WJEC GCE Drama and Theatre exemplar materials for Acting and Design
Understanding the course	WJEC GCE Drama and Theatre Specification	For all aims, subject content, assessment and technical information
Applying the assessment criteria	WJEC GCE Drama and Theatre SAMs – under ‘Teaching Support Materials, entitled ‘Additional Exemplar Materials’	Sample Assessment Materials for WJEC GCE Drama and Theatre
Guidance for Teaching	WJEC GCE Drama and Theatre Guidance for Teaching – under ‘Teaching Support Materials’	The principal aim of the Guidance for Teaching is to support teachers in the delivery of the WJEC GCE Drama and Theatre specification and to guide teachers on the requirements of the qualification and the assessment process
Understanding the different elements of the course	WJEC A Level Drama Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blended Learning resources for each set text (full suite available by September 2025) • Knowledge Organisers • Exam Walk-Through materials
Administration and paperwork	WJEC GCE Drama and Theatre administration forms and guidance	Copies of all necessary paperwork to be completed

Our digital resources website has many blended learning lessons and knowledge organisers, among other resources, available to help centres. You can use the filters to find the resource that you need.

Some examples of blended learning lessons and knowledge organisers for this unit are listed below:

Blended Learning:

[Leave Taking](#)

[Once](#)

[The Caucasian Chalk Circle](#)

[Lovesong](#)

[A Doll's House](#)

[The Weir](#)

[Wyneb yn Wyneb \(Face to Face\)](#)

Knowledge Organisers:


Unit 1

 [Theatre workshop \(i\)](#)

 [Theatre workshop \(ii\)](#)

Unit 2

 [AS/S Level Unit 2 Text in Theatre: Sound and lighting knowledge organiser](#)

 [AS/S Level Unit 2 Text in Theatre: Set and props knowledge organiser](#)

 [AS/S Level Unit 2 Text in Theatre: Live theatre acting knowledge organiser](#)

 [AS/S Level Unit 2 Text in Theatre: Design knowledge organiser](#)

 [AS/S Level Unit 2 Text in Theatre: Costume and make-up knowledge organiser](#)

 [AS/A Level Unit 2 Text in Theatre: Acting knowledge organiser](#)

 [AS/A Level Unit 2 Text in Theatre: Live theatre design knowledge organiser](#)


 [Text in theatre - Answering question A](#)

 [Text in theatre - Answering question B\(i\)](#)

 [Text in theatre - Answering question B\(ii\)](#)

 [Text in theatre - Answering question C](#)

 [Text in theatre - Live theatre](#)

 [Text in theatre - The actor](#)

 [Text in theatre - The director](#)










 [Text in theatre - The designer](#)

Unit 3

 [Theatre workshop i](#)







 [Theatre workshop ii - Reflect and evaluate](#)

Unit 4

-  [Text in performance - Answering section A question a \(i\)](#)
-  [Text in performance - Answering section A question a \(ii\)](#)
-  [Text in performance - Answering section A question B](#)
-  [Text in performance - Answering section B question \(i\)](#)
-  [Text in performance - Answering section B question \(ii\)](#)
-  [Text in performance - Live theatre](#)
-  [Text in performance - The director](#)
-  [Text in performance - The designer](#)
-  [Text in performance - The actor](#)

Other Resources:

Text in performance

-  [Mametz](#)
-  [One Moonlit Night](#)
-  [A Day in the Death of Joe Egg](#)
-  [Sweeney Todd](#)
-  [The Absence of War](#)
-  [The Radicalisation of Bradley Manning](#)

DRAMA AND THEATRE

GCE

Summer 2025

UNIT 1- THEATRE WORKSHOP

Overview of the Unit

Non-exam assessment; internally assessed, externally moderated. 90 marks

In Unit 1, three Assessment Objectives are assessed:

- AO1- Create and develop ideas to communicate meaning as part of the theatre making process, making connections between dramatic theory and practice
- AO2- Apply theatrical skills to realise artistic intentions in live performance
- AO4 Analyse and evaluate their own work

In this unit, learners participate in the creation, development and performance of a piece of theatre based on a reinterpretation of an extract from a text chosen from a list supplied by WJEC. The piece must be developed using the techniques and working methods of either an influential theatre practitioner or a recognised theatre company.

Learners must produce:

- a realisation of the performance or design
- a creative log
- an evaluation.

This year, many candidates reached the higher bands of the assessment criteria, submitting work that was both engaging and varied. While Brecht, Artaud and Frantic Assembly remained popular choices, there was also evidence of influence from Boal, Katie Mitchell, and Berkoff. Notably, some centres drew on the work of local TIE companies with distinct styles, such as Bruiser in Ireland and Cwmni Theatr Frân Wen in Wales, which was particularly encouraging.

Most students demonstrated a clear understanding of their chosen practitioner or company, and many articulated how they intended to incorporate specific techniques into their final performance. There was a noticeable increase in the study of Katie Mitchell's work; however, acting candidates often leaned too heavily on design elements and struggled to fully achieve the heightened realism that defines her style. Evaluation and analysis of final performances were generally strong, though a number of candidates misdirected their AO4 focus towards the rehearsal process rather than the finished piece. The number of technical/design candidates remained consistent with last year's entries, with a noticeable rise in interest in costume design, while sound and set design remained less popular choices.

ADMINISTRATION

Please note that the following should be completed and uploaded as part of the examination process:

- I. The centre approval form - standardisation cannot start without this signed form
- II. Programme proforma with the names of the candidates
- III. The final script which shows the original script and the re-interpreted parts. This must be obtained to see and understand how the candidates have reinterpreted the work
- IV. The candidates' individual marking sheets and declaration forms
- V. Candidate introductions, in which candidates introduce themselves clearly at the start of their practical work. It is impossible to identify candidates without this and endangers the process of moderation. Candidates who introduce themselves in costume before they perform are the easiest to recognise for moderation.

Centres are advised to upload each candidate's work as a single folder, rather than submitting individual files for the entire centre. Although not mandatory, annotations are encouraged to support moderators in understanding the rationale behind centre-awarded marks. Finally, please ensure that all candidates put their names on their work and their examination number. Without this, it is difficult to identify uploaded work.

Comments on individual questions/sections

AO1

Nearly all candidates presented their AO1 work in essay format, with most including relevant supporting material. It remains good practice to enhance written content with examples of research, development notes, refinement commentary, images and planning diagrams. However, few candidates adhered to the recommended word count of 1,000–1,200 words; notably, it is entirely possible to achieve the higher bands within these guidelines.

The strongest Creative Logs demonstrated a clear understanding of the assessment criteria and used them effectively to structure their responses. Most students articulated their creative ideas well, with their individual contributions clearly evident. That said, a few focused too heavily on their peers' input rather than their own, which is an area that could be improved. Stronger submissions focused on articulating innovative reinterpretation ideas rather than recounting the original plot in detail. Understanding of performance space was rarely addressed explicitly in the Creative Logs, with many candidates relying on their performance to demonstrate this aspect of the criteria. Nonetheless, a majority clearly outlined how they planned to reinterpret their chosen texts, and most candidates successfully realised these ideas in performance.

When discussing their chosen practitioner or theatre company, nearly all candidates incorporated appropriate research, though many failed to explain how this research would inform their performance choices. Lengthy biographies were often included unnecessarily; instead, candidates should concentrate on demonstrating how a few key techniques influenced the development of their work. A recurring issue - though improved this year - was the tendency of acting candidates to focus excessively on technical elements in their logs. Acting students should prioritise their acting techniques, while technical candidates must evidence a clear understanding of how their chosen practitioner or company uses design or technical components in performance. Candidates studying Katie Mitchell or Marianne Elliott often relied too heavily on design features such as video or puppetry, neglecting the practitioners' acting methodologies. Teachers must ensure the selected practitioners enable all candidates, whether in performance or design, to meet the assessment objectives, with each student having a firm grasp of applicable techniques for their role.

A small number of candidates referenced multiple practitioners in their Creative Logs. While it is acknowledged that practitioners are often influenced by others over time, it is strongly recommended that students focus on a single practitioner. This approach helps to maintain clarity of intention and avoids potential confusion regarding the aims and stylistic direction of the piece. Most candidates applied practitioner or theatre company techniques effectively in their work, with stronger pieces showcasing these methods in a creative and varied manner. For centres exploring Artaud, it is vital to include sufficient dialogue to allow candidates to meet the voice criteria. Additionally, candidates are expected to use between 30–70% of the original text in performance, an expectation not consistently met in some Artaudian pieces due to limited spoken content.

When studying Brecht, centres should encourage more than just placards and direct address. The most successful Epic Theatre performances integrated creative audience alienation, employed Slap and Tickle sequences, utilised clear Gestus and conveyed a strong political message through ensemble-based physical and comedic work. Almost all candidates produced practical work of an appropriate length to access the higher bands. However, many discussed their final performance in the Creative Log, rather than focusing on the developmental process. The most effective logs were written during the creative journey, not retrospectively after the performance. Reflection on refinements helped students centre their work on process rather than solely on end product. A minority of candidates, when discussing key moments in the Creative Log, focussed on highlights of the final performance rather than those '*light bulb*' moments during the rehearsal period where something was changed for the better.

AO2

An excellent and imaginative sample of reinterpretation work was submitted for moderation this year, with nearly all centres applying fair and accurate marking for this assessment objective. Most candidates were given the opportunity to incorporate lighting, sound, set and costume into their performances, which significantly enhanced the overall standard of the practical work.

The strongest pieces demonstrated a clear and confident understanding of the selected practitioner, and only a small number of candidates did not succeed in fully integrating the core techniques into their performance. Techniques were varied, consistently applied and brought to life through imaginative and engaging use of the performance space. It was clear that nearly all candidates were well-prepared and supported by teachers who created vibrant and stimulating learning experiences. Rehearsals were clearly thorough, and candidates interacted effectively with one another, showing a strong grasp of the characters they had created. It was a pleasure to witness such high-quality practice across WJEC centres. Filming standards were good in almost all cases, with teachers making every effort to capture a faithful and accurate representation of the performances. Additionally, the duration of the pieces was almost always appropriate, aligned to both candidate ability and the requirements set out in the specification.

AO4

The majority of candidates successfully analysed and evaluated their final performances. Unlike the previous year, where analysis tended to outweigh evaluation, most candidates this year were able to identify both strengths and weaknesses in their work consistently. However, some struggled to provide clear *reasoning* behind their creative choices, which weakened the analytical depth of their responses. That said, many evaluations demonstrated a balanced reflection on both successful and less effective moments.

Two recurring issues were identified during moderation:

1. **Focus on the Final Performance:** A number of candidates diverted their evaluation towards rehearsal-based decisions. As per the specification, marks cannot be awarded for discussing the rehearsal process in the evaluation. Any refinement or decision-making during rehearsals must be documented in the Creative Log, not the final evaluation.
2. **Maintaining Skill-Specific Focus:** Performing candidates should concentrate on evaluating their own *acting* skills. Many included commentaries on lighting, set, and costume design - elements that fall outside the scope of acting. Similarly, reflections on the performance of group members should be avoided, as the assessment must centre on the individual's contribution.

We extend sincere thanks to the centres that provided detailed annotations on student work. While not mandatory, annotations proved extremely helpful in supporting moderators' understanding of the marks awarded. Nearly all annotated submissions aligned closely with the moderators' own judgments. Centres that referenced assessment criteria and terminology from band descriptors demonstrated the most accurate and effective approach to marking.

DRAMA AND THEATRE

GCE

Summer 2025

UNIT 2- TEXT IN THEATRE

Overview of the Unit

Written Examination. 60 marks

In Unit 2, two Assessment Objectives are assessed:

- AO3 - Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how drama and theatre is developed and performed
- AO4 - Analyse and evaluate their own work

In this unit, learners are required to study one complete text and are given the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills in interpreting a text for performance in a written examination. Learners must also evaluate live theatre. Learners are encouraged to approach this unit practically as an actor, designer and director.

As the first year of new texts in this qualification, there were some very effective responses. 'Lovesong', 'Once' and 'A Doll's House' proved to be the most popular texts, with many centres answering well on Brecht's 'Caucasian Chalk Circle' and Pinnock's 'Leave Taking'. 'Face to Face' had some sensitive approaches as did 'The Weir'. Most candidates had paced themselves well to complete the paper in the time suggested by WJEC: 15 minutes for question 1; 45 minutes for the two-part question 2; 30 minutes for question 3. The best candidates managed to track through the chosen extract with an efficient structure in the first two questions and chose their own apt extracts to design in the third and final question.

Comments on individual questions/sections

11-71 (10 marks)

There were some excellent responses to this acting question with many hitting the top band as they deftly linked their vocal choices for the character with their given circumstances and motivation. The highest performing candidates could detail the changes in vocal skills as the motivation shifted, with a clear understanding of the circumstances given within the context of the scene and whole play. These candidates could also track through the extract efficiently and could embed quotes into their analysis with fluency. On the other hand, more superficial responses lacked the detail of the bullet points, commenting only vaguely on the vocal skills for the actor that could have been from any extract of the play. At AS Level, candidates should be able to link emphasis in tone or change in frequency or tempo of vocal skills to a shift in the character's development during the extract. Some weren't clear on the character's motivation nor the context of the character's given circumstances.

12-72 i) (15 marks)

The directing question had a mixed response this year. At AS Level, candidates are expected to direct extracts of the play with a clear understanding of their chosen stage and directing style, character positioning, movement and interaction within that stage choice. The high achieving responses clearly directed the characters throughout the extract with a clear vision of how the chosen direction of movement and interaction communicated the relationships of the characters at key moments within the extract. Lower band responses that lacked positioning at the beginning, often became vague and unclear as it wasn't possible to visualise the direction happening on that chosen stage from beginning to end. In these responses, directing terminology was vague and the tracking of the character positioning throughout the extract was inconsistent. There were some excellent directing responses however, and these candidates had obviously directed scenes of their set text throughout their course as they could confidently position and communicate how movement and interaction choices reflected the relationships between the characters.

12-72 ii) (15 marks)

The highest achieving responses in the second part of this directing question could clearly analyse how directorial choices seen as part of the course had influenced their own choices for the first part of the question. However, many candidates tended to describe similar characters in performances they had seen, rather than analyse or evaluate the directors' choices and how this had enhanced their own direction. Most responses were general with little evaluation this year, with a tendency to list performances rather than analyse and evaluate these influences in detail. Some crammed in four or five similar relationship influences rather than concentrate on analysing and evaluating how the positioning, movement or interaction influenced their own directorial choices.

13-73 (20 marks)

Similarly, the designer question on set and props produced a mixed response. The high band responses had clearly prepared a creative and innovative set design and chose props to link both chosen extracts to their own chosen production style. They chose materials and colours that suited the atmosphere of their chosen extracts and were detailed in their cohesive production design. The designers for Brecht's 'Caucasian Chalk Circle' were particularly innovative in their choices and clear in the effect of their design choices on the mood and atmosphere of their chosen extracts. Some responses failed to refer to the original production style and confused their own choice of production styles between extracts, from naturalistic to minimalistic. A few could only refer to the performance style and, therefore, their production style was lacking depth and innovation, with little link to the chosen extracts. This resulted in a more vague idea of the set and props used throughout the whole play.

Summary of key points:

1. The first acting question was the best answered as candidates could confidently refer to detailed vocal skills and could convey their character's given circumstances and motivations.
2. Essays were well structured. However, detail on all elements of the specification are required as the students only study one text across the whole year. As they track through the given extract and their own chosen extracts, they should have a plethora of subject-specific terminology to hand as an actor, director and designer.
3. The evaluative element should refer to the previous question in all instances; referring to the stem of the previous question as to how they were influenced. They should always analyse and evaluate their influences with detail to specific moments rather than a description of similarities.
4. Terminology should be at a higher level than GCSE and performance and production style should be considered before the examination. Students should prepare their interpretation in a practical manner to allow for the best possible outcome.

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UNIT 3

Overview of the Unit

Non-exam assessment; externally assessed by a visiting examiner. 120 marks

In Unit 3, three Assessment Objectives are assessed:

- AO1- Create and develop ideas to communicate meaning as part of the theatre making process, making connections between dramatic theory and practice
- AO2- Apply theatrical skills to realise artistic intentions in live performance
- AO4 Analyse and evaluate their own work

This unit requires learners to engage with a stimulus supplied by WJEC to create two pieces of live theatre: one devised piece using the working methods and techniques of either an influential theatre practitioner or a recognised theatre company and one extract from a text in a different style to the devised piece.

Examiners enjoyed visiting a wide variety of centres and confirmed the warm welcome received. Most of the work was uploaded by the deadline requested but centres should take note of the specific timescale of one week regarding the upload of the written reports. This was not always adhered to, and it should be noted that any delays must be approved by the Subject Officer. Most centres provided clear programmes to facilitate the examination process. However, some centres need to ensure that the programme proforma is emailed to examiners in good time before the visit to check the suitability of text / practitioner / theatre company. Examiners felt that those centres that provided photographs, as well as the candidates' introductions on the day, proved helpful with regards to the marking process.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Performance Work

Candidates demonstrated a wide range of performance skills with some exceptional work that used highly innovative techniques, forms and conventions to reflect the practitioner, style and theatre company. However, it should be noted that centres must adhere to creating one piece on a theatre practitioner and the other on a theatre Style / company. This was not always adhered to. Centres must also note that no devising work / added dialogue should be included within the text performance. Most of the work viewed successfully challenged the candidates and had two contrasting pieces, giving the candidates opportunity to showcase their abilities and skills.

Designers had prepared well, with most giving a well-rehearsed viva, including documentation of their ideas and evidence to show they had worked closely with the group of performers from the start of the process. However, some candidates did not provide the relevant documentation requirements on the day, as stated in the specification. Centres should ensure that the minimum requirements are present for each design skill.

Written Report

Reports were well written and had improved again this year, with those that followed the structure in three sections proving far more focused. Most students responded to their selected stimuli in depth and referenced key techniques from their selected practitioner / style / theatre Company. Within the final section, candidates are reminded to evaluate their individual performance / skill and not that of the group. Centres are reminded that candidates must explain how their performances differ in this final section.

Summary of Key Points

- The performances must be contrasting. One piece must be based on a theatre practitioner and the other on a theatre style / company.
- The programme proforma should be sent in advance, enabling the examiner to prepare for the examination and to check the suitability of styles.
- Candidates should present themselves to the camera and the examiner before commencing their performances.
- All work must be uploaded within the deadline of one week after the visit.

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UNIT 4

Overview of the Unit

Written examination. 95 marks

In Unit 4, two Assessment Objectives are assessed:

- AO3 - Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how drama and theatre is developed and performed
- AO4 - Analyse and evaluate their own work

In this unit, learners are required to study two complete texts. Centres are reminded that the five texts studied for this qualification must represent a range of social, historical and cultural contexts and centres should consider carefully their choice of texts in all units to ensure they cover a range of contexts. In Unit 4, learners are given the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills in interpreting texts for performance in a written examination. Learners are encouraged to approach this unit practically as an actor, designer and director, and as an informed member of a theatre audience.

Although there was a slight drop in the number of candidates studying Drama and Theatre at A Level this year, the standard across the texts continued to impress. *Joe Egg*, *Sweeney Todd* and *Bradley Manning* were by far the most popular texts, with some excellent responses being produced on *Absence of War*, *Mametz* and *One Moonlit Night*. The highest-achieving responses in the directing question in Section A showed maturity, and the contemporary performance ideas for characters like Tobias and Mam in Section B of *Sweeney Todd* and *One Moonlit Night* respectively were creative and thorough. Responses to the synoptic element was not as strong in Section B this year, with many candidates describing similarities in character rather than analysing and evaluating, and some ran out of steam and time by the end of the paper. However, centres must be congratulated on the way they have taught directing, performing and design practically at an advanced level and are encouraged to continue using advanced and ambitious terminology with learners who are completing their Drama journey in the Secondary phase.

Comments on individual questions / sections

Comments on individual questions:

SECTION A:

AO3:

11-61 (15 marks)

The best responses could track the extract concisely, clearly directing the movement of the characters on their chosen stage type from beginning to end. It was possible to see the characters positions and how their movements reflected their relationships at different points of the extract as the response tracked through. These candidates had obviously prepared directing extracts during their course as their directorial skills were coherent and purposeful, showing an excellent understanding of how their chosen movement style highlighted characters' relationships. At the lower end of the bands, the candidates had only noted physical skills without linking their choices to what this reflected about the character's relationship within the extract. Overall, this question was very well answered across the texts.

AO4

12-62 (10 marks)

There was some excellent analysis of movement within performances that inspired the directorial choices for the pair of characters in question 1. The candidates that were placed in high bands could analyse and then evaluate their opinion of how a director had grasped and communicated the relationship of their characters in plays seen during the course. There were many candidates this year, however, who had listed similar characters or relationships without analysing the director's choice of movements, nor evaluating their opinion of those choices. The emphasis must be on the 'analyse' and 'evaluate' element of the question as it is not a 'compare' question.

AO3**13-63** (30 marks)

It was felt this year, that out of all the design elements, that the candidates' analysis of costume hair and makeup was the design element that lacked the most detail. Just as a set, props, lighting and sound designer can create atmosphere within a certain moment, an effective costume, hair and makeup designer could use wigs, prosthetics, contouring, jewellery, glasses and layers of different fabrics of different shades to imply characters' feelings and desires at particular moments. For example, an adjustment of the collar, putting their hair into a bun or removing a cardigan, are all valid details. The best answers given by candidates linked the costume hair and make-up to the extract chosen effectively, for example, the tailored yet practical work clothes in *Absence of War* and the comfort of Mam's costume against the rigidity of society in *One Moonlit Night*. Excellent hair and make-up designs reflected location, status and surroundings effectively. The lowest achieving band candidates did not concentrate on the extract under examination but rather gave a limited description of parts of the costume that could have been at any point during the play. Many chose the original Bradley Manning multirole army costume which of course is fine, but failed to analyse how the costume fabric, colours, hair style and density of make-up reflected those characters in that particular extract. The lowest bands had little creativity and innovative ideas away from the original, or, if they stayed with the original design, it wasn't implying analysis of the characters within the extract.

SECTION B: 40 marks**AO3****14-64** (20 marks)

Responses to this question impressed examiners with some candidates mature and concise choices of vocal and physical skills within two extracts of their choice. They could link their chosen skill to the characters' development within the extracts and within the whole play. The top band answers had considered how to apply their performance skills for a contemporary audience. The weaker candidates had very basic terminology when analysing the vocal and physical skills. Terminology is expected to be at an advanced level by Unit 4, therefore, simply referring to a loud voice or a sad face doesn't allow the candidate to analyse the skills that could portray the character within the extracts. Some of the lower-band candidates had only focused on one of the skills required from the question and this, therefore, limited their responses.

Contemporary Audience

Many candidates noted 'which will be apt for a contemporary audience' as an add-on at the end of a sentence without any reference to how their performance would be apt for a contemporary audience. The best had *Sweeney Todd's* Tobias whizzing through the audience on an electric scooter, manically taking orders for the pie shop on his digital iPad before popping the pie with disdain in an air fryer. Some excellent examples included Tyler, in *The Radicalisation of Bradley Manning*, in a Trump-led era where LGBTQ rights were ridiculed, resulting in an air of anger in his furrowed brows and facial expression as he frantically waved his makeshift sign of 'Trans Rights are Human rights' with a proud posture following the most anti-LGBTQ election in decades. *Absence of War's* Frank Linus had the air of a hungry news reporter - as seen in the most recent election debates with Starmer, Sunak, Trump - licking his lips and rubbing his hands at the prospect of a politician putting a foot wrong. Section B allows the candidates to give their analysis a deeper context and understanding of the whole play when performed in the present day, but many were superficial, lacking the wider knowledge required for this section of the paper.

Whole Play

Understanding the motivation of the character within the context of the whole play is key to developing the vocal and physical skills. Again, many could not offer any insights into how the performer portrayed the character within their chosen extracts in relation to the character development during the whole play and were therefore, unable to access all requirements of the top band. Some abandoned vocal skills completely.

Guidance for teaching synopsis of contemporary audience

This refers to an audience that will watch the play today. Learners must consider the original productions of the plays to assess whether they are still relevant for a modern audience. If the play is still relevant, how can theatre practitioners ensure that this is sustained through their effective choice of acting, design or directing techniques? If the play, or elements of the play, no longer seems relevant to a contemporary audience, what conventions, techniques and approaches can be utilised in order to make it relevant?

AO4

15-65 (20 marks)

There were some deftly structured evaluations and analysis of live influences on vocal and physical performance choices. Some also evaluated contemporary audience influences and how the character development during the whole play was taken from similar influences. Similar to question 2 in Section A, the lower band responses tended to hook onto similar characteristics in characters in plays seen, rather than analysing and evaluating the performance skills of those actors and how that influenced their own contemporary performance. It felt as though timing was an issue with some candidates, who seemingly had run out of steam by this question. Some had spent longer on the 10-mark AO4 question in Section A than they had on the 20-mark AO4 question in Section B. This is where mock examinations of the whole 2.5-hour paper are beneficial as it helps candidates structure their responses to both sections.

Summary of key points

1. Those candidates who had directed extracts during the course clearly tracked the positioning of their characters on their stage choice and directed movement for effect. Weaker candidates need to strengthen tracking through the extract.
 2. The synoptic element should not be a list of similar characters or relationships. It should analyse and evaluate live theatre performances that have influenced candidates' directorial choices in Section A and performance choices in Section B.
 3. Candidates should be encouraged to time their answers as part of the course; the suggested timings are 1 hour 40 minutes for Section A and 50 minutes for Section B. However, it must be remembered that the synoptic element of Section B is worth double the marks of Section A.
 4. All candidates should know how both their chosen texts can be made relevant for a contemporary audience and the sectional context of both plays within the play as a whole. Their understanding of a change of character development or situation during the whole play needs referring to if asked for within the question.
- **AO3:** The first directing question was the best answered as candidates could confidently direct the characters' movements that reflected their relationship within the chosen extract on their chosen stage type. Responses were well structured, yet detail on all elements of the specification are required. Some struggled with analysing the costume hair and make-up of two characters in Section A. As candidates track through the specified extract, they should have a plethora of subject-specific terminology to hand as a designer, as they do as an actor and director. Please see the A Level subject specific terminology worksheets available. In Section B, the analysis of the actor's performance in two extracts of their own choice was pleasing. Some weaker candidates only focused on either physical or vocal skills in their extracts and not both, thus limiting their responses.
 - **AO4:** The evaluative element should refer to the previous question in all instances, referring to the stem of the previous question as to how they were influenced. Candidates should always analyse and evaluate their influences in detail, linking to specific moments rather than a description of similarities.
 - Terminology should be at a higher level than GCSE and performance and production style should be considered before the examination, thereby preparing candidates to make interpretations in a practical manner in order to allow the best possible outcomes.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029 2240 4299

Email: drama@wjec.co.uk

Qualification webpage: [AS/A Level Drama and Theatre](#)

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WJEC
245 Western Avenue
Cardiff CF5 2YX
Tel No 029 2026 5000
Fax 029 2057 5994
E-mail: exams@wjec.co.uk
website: www.wjec.co.uk