Section 1

Section 1 of the exam paper is worth 10 marks and you can answer from the point of view of an acting or production role.

In the question paper you will firstly have to answer questions based on a performance you have taken part in during the course. This may be from any unit. The basis of your answers will be an evaluation of the preparation you undertook and the final performance. You should try to give as much detail as possible and, when asked, give reasons for your answers. May candidates lose marks by not giving a full enough evaluation, so think about the strengths and weaknesses of your drama from every angle so you can write about how well it worked or hoe it could have been improved.

You should make sure you use appropriate, correct terminology for all questions. If the terminology you use is vague, you will lose marks. You should make sure you can discuss, evaluate and explain all aspects of the drama you have chosen to write about. Think about the list below:

**Characterisation** – practical drama techniques you used to create characters, including rehearsal techniques.

**Performance or design concepts** – concepts you created to enhance you drama. This may be in relation to target audience, mood and atmosphere, setting, genre, theme etc. Appropriate terminology should be used for the production skill being discussed.

**Styles/genre of your drama** – identify the style or genre of your drama (comedy, tragedy, western, tragicomedy.)

**Setting** – where and when your drama is set.

**Staging/venue** – what venue, staging and set design you would use in order to make clear this setting.

**Themes/issues and message** – what are the themes/issues of your drama? You may also be asked to identify and justify dramatic message.

**Voice and movement terminology** – terminology must be used when discussing the performance of a character or the presentation of a key moment.

**Mood and Atmosphere** – you must be able to explain the mood and atmosphere of your drama.

**Target audience** – you must be able to identify, justify and discuss the target audience’s reaction to your drama.

Section 2

Section 2 of your exam is worth 30 marks. It is based in your response to three unseen stimuli. You will have to choose **one** of the stimuli to develop ideas for a drama and your answers will be based on a piece of drama that could be created and performed to an audience.

The stimulus is section 2 may be a picture, extract from a text, extract from a novel, poem, phrase, quote, newspaper headline etc. You will choose the one that you think you could create the best drama from.

In this part of the paper you will be given a blank page. This page is for you to make any notes, mid maps, lists, diagrams that help you with your ideas. This page will **not** be marked.

Although you may not be asked yo write the plot of your drama you will need to have worked out a storyline. This is crucial as you will have to be able to answer questions that relate to the drama you would want to create. Questions may refer to characters, rehearsal techniques, mood and atmosphere, style genre, staging, setting, venues, target audience, key moments, issues. You will also be given a page at the end of the paper for you to draw any diagrams to exemplify or support your answers.

Candidates often lose marks as they contradict themselves. Makes sure that later answers don’t conflict with previous ones, as this will lead to you losing marks.

Question are often linked so it is essential that you read all the questions first. This will ensure that you are answering the question set and can answer further questions that are related.

Audience

There is no show without an audience, so they are an extremely important consideration in your work. Developing a drama or theatre production is like writing, in that you need (if possible) to know your audience before you start so that the material, styles and language you choose for your piece are appropriate and relevant for that specific group. It is possible that some groups will identify with certain themes while others will not. Some might be offended by certain language while others will not, and certain stories might be more appropriate for some age groups and not others. Understanding your audience goes a long way to making a successful production.

**What is your aim?**

Above all, think about your aim for the audience experience. What do you want them to think/feel? Do you want to leave them wondering about something, or to be uplifted by a happy ending? Do you want them to start believing on thing and then change their minds? Do you want to surprise or shock them?

Do you want to inform or entertain – or both? What do you want to say to the audience? It might be that you want to say something about the importance of hope, or perhaps you want to take them on an emotional journey.

**Who are they and what does that mean?**

For each group, you must think about their expectations. What will their experience of theatre be and what will you need to explain?

**Very young children**

Small children can have short attention spans, so think about the length of your production. They will have very limited experience of being an audience, so they will have no expectations and will probably get involved if you invite them to. Think about how you will manage that, as they might not behave as you expect.

Keep your story simple or familiar and bear in mind that children respond to bright colours, song and dance and funny characters. They might cry or interrupt, so think about disruptive behaviour and how you would cope with that. Think, too, about any parents present. If their children enjoy the performance, most adults will be happy, but you could throw in some jokes or **asides** for the adults to keep them entertained.

**Primary-age children**

Primary-age children will have higher expectations because they will already have seen some productions and they will know how to be an audience. They might be shy and need encouragement to get involved individually, but they will enjoy joining in as a group with things like pantomime-style responses and song actions.

Older primary children students will enjoy more complex stories with challenging themes.

**Young teenagers/tweens**

Be careful not to patronise young teenagers because they can consider themselves quite sophisticated, but be careful, too, about including adult themes. This age group will be familiar with a variety of **theatre forms** and will have certain expectations of the form you choose. They are often quite self-conscience about participating individually, but will probably respond as a group. They will enjoy references to popular culture in your story.

**Young adults/teenagers**

This age group can understand very sophisticated stories and will probably have some background knowledge of literature and politics. They will have a fair amount of experience and certain expectations of theatre forms. Teenagers often enjoy challenging social themes and references to subculture. Generally this age group is quite reluctant to get involved with audience participation.

**Adults**

Adults will have a varied experience of theatre forms and will come to the performance with expectations, but might enjoy have those expectations challenged. Adults can usually be persuaded to get involved in audience participation if you pitch it right.

Drama Forms

Drama **form** is a very difficult thing to define. You will find that the terms **form, genre** and **style** all seem interchangeable when discussing drama and that the definitions overlap depending on what you are reading or whom you are talking to. You will even find that some forms also feature in a list of **theatre conventions,** so don’t be too rigid with these definitions.

Generally speaking, drama or theatre form is the **shape** of the drama**.** Certain productions use particular **conventions** and **techniques** that give it a certain character and it falls into a category because of this. Categorising drama in this way helps an audience to read a performance as they understand the **conventions** used and have certain expectations of the form. It has nothing to do with content: it’s more about the **structure** and shape of the narrative rather than what happens or how it is performed.

**Play – scripted or improvised**

At the most basic level of form a play or a performance can be either scripted or improved. There may be elements of both or it may be a performance based on **rehearsed improvisation.**

**Physical Theatre**

Physical theatre emphasises physical movement as a form of expression. Some physical theatre productions also use speech or song, but the physical movement is the principle mode of expression.

These productsions are usually devised rather than scripted. They often combine music, dance, mime and visual art and encourage either audience participation or performers coming into the audience space. Sub-genres of physical theatre can be mime, circus, clowning and dance-drama. Some well-known physical theatre companies are DV8 and Frantic Assembly.

**Dance-Drama**

This is a sub-genre of physical theatre and in western theatre this is strongly influences by contemporary dance. It differs from physical theatre in that the action is mainly set to music and the story is told through dance. There are many different forms of dance-drama with well-known examples from Japan, India and Indonesia.

**Mime**

Mime is the performance of a story without the use of speech, it is closely related to mark and physical theatre, because the emphasis is on physical movement for expression. Famous practitioners include Charlie Chaplin, Rowan Atkinson and Marcel Marceau.

**Monologue**

This is a device found in various forms of drama. It can be a genre of drama in the form of **monologue** plays or one-person shows.

Drama Genre

In this section we are going to look at some common genres in drama. This list is not exhaustive, and you will come across many more genres that are not mentioned here.

**Comedy**

There are many different types of comedy, but ultimately it should be funny and make the audience laugh. Within this genre, there are sub-genres like **parofy, satire, slapstick, farce, comedy of manners** and **romantic comedy.**

Generally – unless it’s black comedy – a comedy has a happy ending with good characters rewarded and bad punished. Ridiculous things can happen and characters are often stereotypes such as a greedy lawyer or a stupid model. Comedies often use mistaken identities and verbal humour such as puns, malapropisms and exaggeration. Examples are *The Importance of Being Ernest* by Oscar Wildeand *Noises Off* by Michael Frayn.

**Tragedy**

Tragedy is a classical genre of drama that originated with the ancient Greeks. It focuses on themes of human suffering and man’s place in the universe. There is usually a conflict between the main character and some kind of superior force like destiny or the gods. Typically, the main character has a tragic flaw and brings about his own downfall, which arouses the audience’s fear and pity. It is not essential for the main character to die in a tragedy, but Shakespeare’s normally do. There are many sub-genres of tragedy such as Greek tragedy, Roman tragedy, Elizabethan tragedy and Modern tragedy. Famous examples of tragedies include Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and *Romeo and Juliet.*

**Melodrama**

Melodramas are often over the top! They exaggerate plot and characters to appeal to the emotions. They are characterised by intense action, some kind of terrible disaster and intense emotion. They were popular in Victorian times when they included the use of signature music to signify a particular emotion or character. They have simple, exaggerated, good-and-evil stories with happy endings. The plot and action are more important than the (typical) one-dimensional characters. Traditionally, there was a hero, a heroine (who has to be rescues), a villain, a villain’s accomplice, a faithful servant and a flirty and loyal maidservant. Quite a few modern action and romantic comedy films use this formula with great success.

**Historical**

These plays are based on historical events and famous people from history. They don’t necessarily stick to the facts and will often be fictionalised. *Saint Joan* by George Bernard Shaw is an example of this genre.

**Kitchen-Sink/Social Realism**

Kitchen-sink drama deals with the real-life situations of the working class, and was developed in the 1950s and 60s. John Osbourne’s *Look Back in Anger* is a famous example.

**Tragicomedy**

Tragicomedy combines elements of both comedy and tragedy. It can often be a serious play with a happy ending or a funny play with a sad ending. These plays are sometimes called romances, like Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice.*

**Docu-Drama or Documentary Theatre**

These productions are dramatized re-enactments of real events and they attempt to stick closely to the facts as possible. They often include sound recordings from the event or film clips of actual events and places. The National Theatre of Scotland’s *Black Watch* is a powerful example of this genre.

**Theatre in Education**

Theatre in Education is a form designed specifically to encouraging learning and debate through theatre and drama. It is often performed in schools, and involves a high level of audience participation. This form uses mobile and minimal sets.

Drama Style

The style of the drama focuses more on the way the story is told – this includes the way it is acted and the contribution made to the drama by production techniques such as lighting, costume, make-up and sound.

**Naturalism**

This was a nineteenth and early twentieth-century movement in theatre, which aimed to create a perfect illusion of reality. These productions created realistic settings and stories in an effort to expose the harsh realities of life, often addressing issues such as sexuality, poverty and racism. The illusion was all-important, so devices such as narrators or tableaux were dismissed as unsuitable because they would shatter that illusion. The audience was supposed to be absorbed within the fiction as if they were watching real life happening in front of them. An example of this style can be seen in *A doll’s House* by Henrik Ibsen.

**Social Realism**

This was a movement in art, television, literature and film, and in Britain it was called “Kitchen-sink” drama because of its focus on domestic settings. This style of theatre explored themes around social inequality and political controversy to draw attention to the conditions of the working class and poor. The male heroes of these stories were often referred to as “angry young men”. *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney is an example of this style of play.

**Surrealism**

Originating around the 1920s and heavily influences by Freud’s psychoanalysis, surrealist theatre was an attempt to find the truth or core of the self – uninhibited by the conscious mind – to overcome the traditions and culture that oppress freedom. To portray this, surrealist playwrights experimented with writing whatever came to mind without the conscious mind trying to make sense of it. Plays would mix dreams and reality and present unexpected and apparently irrational connections.

**Abstract Theatre**

A representation of the events, situations or feelings rather than acting them out in a realistic manner. Abstract techniques include physical theatre (movement), layering sound or voices over each other, movement machine, statues things like that

Drama Structure

In terms of time structure, all narratives can be split into two broad groups: linear and non-linear.

**Linear**

This is a naturalistic approach where events happen one after the other in the order they would occur in reality. Time is chronological and the narrative follows a beginning, middle and end structures.

**Non-Linear**

This is a structure in which events do not follow each other in time order. The play might be made up of fragments or it could include flashbacks and flashforwards that disrupt the normal order of things. The opening scene might be the end of the story and the events that lead up to that final event are slowly revealed.

Theatre Conventions

Theatre conventions are elements used in a performance to enhance the storytelling or to aid the understanding of the audience. They can also be used to create a certain style within production and contribute towards mood and atmosphere. Choosing the correct conventions for your drama is crucial to making your story flow and ensuring that the audience understand what is going on.

**Aside**

An aside is when a character makes a remark or a short speech to the audience, which is unheard by the other characters on stage. Shakespeare used this extensively in his plays.

**Choral Speech**

This is an important element of Greek drama. It involves a group of people speaking in unison, acting as the chorus.

**Dramatic Irony**

This is a very effective technique for heightening tension. It involves the audience being aware of something that the characters on stage don’t know – for example, when Romeo finds Juliet unconscious he thinks she is dead, but the audience knows she is not. This makes it all the more agonising and tragic for the audience when he then kills himself.

**Flashback**

A flashback is a scene that’s shows events leading up to the present time. It breaks the chronological sequence of events and moves the action back in time. There must be clues provided for the audience that the timeline has shifted so they understand what is happening. This can be done through dialogue, music or movement.

**Flashforward**

As with a flashback, a flashforward moves the action through time but this time the action jumps to a point in the future.

**Freeze Frame**

This is a moment in the action when all the actors on stage freeze. It allows the audience to take in more information about what’s going on. It can be a useful technique for portraying violent events like a car accident or a fight. You can freeze just a split second after the characters have realised what’s about to occur, and leave the audience to imagine the rest.

**Mime**

Mime could be a short sequence or a whole show performed through physical movement alone without dialogue. This can be useful for setting the context of a scene. It could have musical accompaniment to set the mood and tone, but silence is also powerful and creates contract if you are using dialogue.

**Monologue**

A monologue is a passage of text that a character speaks as if they are speaking their own thoughts aloud to other characters or to the audience. This is not to be confused with soliloquy.

**Motifs**

A motif is a recurring element that has symbolic significance in the story. It could be an object, words or sounds but it is repeated many times throughout the performance to tie events together or demonstrate significance.

**Narration**

Narration is when parts of the story are told by a narrator.

**Slow motion**

Slow motion involves actions being performed at a slowed-down speed. Again, this can be useful for very dramatic or active parts of a performance like fights scenes or chases.

**Soliloquy**

A soliloquy is when a character speaks their thoughts aloud. This differs from a monologue in that they are speaking to themselves and not to another character or to the audience.

**Symbols**

Symbolism in theatre involves using a prop or an elements of set or costume to represent am idea. For example, white could symbolise innocence or a flower could symbolise love.

**Tableau**

A tableau is a living picture. The actors create a still image to show an action, idea or moment in a story.

**Voice-Over**

A voice-over can be off stage, or recorded speech played during the production.

Characterisation Techniques

Useful characterisation techniques to develop character include:

* **Hot-seating** - being interviewed in role about background, likes and dislikes, thoughts and emotions.
* **Role-play** – improvising in role in different scenarios to explore how the character would act in different situations.
* Ask a friend to read your lines aloud while you concentrate on movement and body language. This will help you to focus on communicating your character’s thoughts through facial expression and action alone.
* Try using a prop or a piece of costume to get into character. Whenever you hold the prop or wear the costume, you are in role.
* **Thought tunnel** – This can be used in a variety of ways. The group forms two lines facing each other and one person (in role) walks slowly through the tunnel while the people on either side speak their thoughts aloud. The thoughts could be what they imagine the character is thinking or what other characters in the drama think of the character in the middle.
* **Writing in role –** write a diary entry or a letter as if you are the character. This will help you to explore the thoughts that the character has about other characters, or the action of the drama.
* **Thought tracking** - freeze the action during rehearsals and speak the thoughts of a character aloud.

Voice Terms

**Accent** – a particular way of pronouncing words that is related to a place or area.

**Articulation** – forming clear and distinct sounds – not running words together.

**Clarity** – words are clear and can be understood.

**Dialogue** – a conversation between three or more people.

**Emphasis** – stress given to a word or phrase to demonstrate importance.

**Fluency** – speech flowing effortlessly and smoothly.

**Intonation** – the rise and fall of the voice when speaking.

**Pace** – the speed of the speech.

**Pause** – a temporary break in speech or dialogue – a short period of silence.

**Pitch** – how high or low the voice is.

**Projection** – the ability to make you voice heard at a distance.

**Register** – appropriate speech and language for the situation and purpose.

**Timing** – speaking at the appropriate moment for the purpose.

**Tone** – the type of feeling or mood expressed.

**Volume** – the loud or quiet the voice is.

Movement Terms

**Body Language** – is the over-arching term used to describe the movement of someone’s body when acting.

**Facial Expression** – this is vital to communicate with the audience, because people will always focus on your face first if they can see it. When describing facial expression try to physically describe what the muscles in your face are doing. An example would be, a shocked facial expression: wide, open eyes, mouth open, eye-brows raised.

**Gesture** – this refers mainly to the hands, but sometimes to other body parts such as head and feet. Angles of the head such as nodding, shaking, a nod in certain direction or a raise of the chin to indicate a question are also frequently used in non-verbal communication.

**Eye contact** – eye contact gives the audience clues about relationships and emotions. If you are speaking directly to the audience, you will need to make eye contact to indicate this. Think about elements such as averting your gaze if upset, holding someone’s gaze to indicate attraction, intense unblinking eye contact if threatening or asserting status.

**Posture** – this can tell the audience quite a lot before the character even speaks. If they are a high-status character, they might have a very upright and proud posture with chest puffed out. If they are very low-status, they might be hunched as if they are trying to be invisible.

**Proxemics** – this is a technical term related to use of space – in particular the way we communicate with each other through our use of space. For example, it involves understanding personal space, how we use proximity to intimidate or threaten, how we physically distance ourselves with we disagree or how we stand over people to demonstrate power.

Production Areas

**Costume** – an audience receives a great deal of information from costume, as it is an instant visual clue to character, status and time period. Costume design can create a very powerful and striking effect. Naturalistic costumes are very easy for audiences to understand as we make assumptions about people based on what they are wearing all the time. For example, a group of “hoodies” with hoods pulled up could be quite a threatening presence, or a group of older men in suits would give the impression of power. More stylised costumes can have an unsettling effect as the normal clues are taken away.

**Lighting** – this can change the mood and atmosphere completely. The same setting can be made warm and comfortable or cold and unwelcoming just by changing the lighting. Colour plays an enormous part in this.

In their simplest forms, colours can represent certain moods and emotions. Mixed, they achieve more subtle effects.

* Red – anger, tension, fear, danger.
* Green – jealousy, death and decay.
* Blue – cold, sadness, loneliness.
* Pink – romance.
* Yellow – warmth, calm, sunshine.

You can also use effects such as strobes for unsettling effects or slow motion.

**Sound** – good use of music can set the mood and can also create tension in a dramatic performance. If you are using incidental music because the show starts, think about whether you want to set the tone straight away or create a jarring comparison.

Think about the different effect of music with lyrics and instrumental music. Will the lyrics in a piece of music fir the theme or story? Give the audience clues as to what’s happening or about to happen with music, or lead them in the wrong direction to surprise them.

Clever use of sound effects can heighten tension and encourage the audience to suspend their disbelief. Sound effects of things happening offstage give the impression of a complete world and the audience can imagine the events taking place that they can’t see. You can also use the element of surprise with sound, making the audience jump with a sudden loud noise, like a gunshot or thunder.

**Make-up** – Like costume make-up gives instant clues to character, time period and status. Naturalistic make-up and hair can help us read a character and can contribute to audience understanding of character. Other-worldly make-up and hair can create a magical effect. Hair design and wags can help encourage the audience to believe in characters.

**Props** – can be used to help create the desired mood and atmosphere of the show. They can either reinforce the naturalistic setting of a play by fitting perfectly with the style and period, or add to comedy or discomfort and confusion in a surreal or absurdist play by appearing out of place. You can use many of the same prop to create quite a stylised visual effect, like loads of umbrellas, or use props as symbol, like flower to represent love.

Personal props also provide the audience with clues about character, location and time period. For example, a mobile phone suggests a contemporary time period in the modern age, or a teddy bear can suggest the age of a character.

**Set Design** – the design of the set is a major contributor to the mood and atmosphere of a production. You can create an illusion of reality by having an elaborate and realistic looking set or have a more abstract and minimal set.

A minimal set can be just as convincing if cleverly designed, but the audience will require imagination to fill in the details of location.

Colours and shapes in your set can be comfortable or uncomfortable depending on their use. For example, the sharp and distorted shapes of German expressionist set design deliberately create an uncomfortable atmosphere.

Staging

Staging is the position of the acting area relative to the audience. Every stage is different in terms of size, shape, acoustics, backstage areas and atmosphere.

**End on** – this is the most common and traditional form of stage, and what you would expect in most theatres. The audience all sit in from of a raised stage. It gives the impression of there being a fourth wall between the actors and audience which creates a bit of distance between them.

Audience

This type of staging is quite easy to use as there is generally a large backstage area, and the fact that the audience sit on one side makes for straightforward blocking and sight lines. Things to remember about this type of stage are that sound can get lost if not projected and directed properly, and that the distance between the audience and the performers means that audience can feel removed from the action.

**In the Round** – the audience on all sides of the acting area. This can create a very intimate atmosphere, because the audience are usually very close to the action and feel quite involved.

Audience participation works well.

Audience

Audience

Audience

Audience

You have to be careful blocking to make sure that all members of the audience get a good view of what’s going on. You also have to use minimal set so you don’t block any sight lines.

**Traverse stage** – this is sometimes called an avenue stage. It involves the audience sitting on either side of the performance area, facing each other.

Audience

Audience

The audience are close to the action and feel involved in it, so this therefore created an intimate atmosphere.

This type of staging works well for a production involving lots of movement or travelling because the “avenue” arrangement implies and encourages movement along it.

Challenges include making sure that both sides of the audience can see and hear at all times and that the space is lit so as not to cast shadows on one side.

Like theatre in the round, a traverse stage usually has a minimal set so as not to block sight lines.

 **Thrust** – this is a common arrangement and can take different forms in itself.

Some thrust stages look almost like an end on stage, but have a protrusion at the front so that most of the audience are end on, with a few seated on the sides.

Audience

Audience

Audience

Others are almost in the round, but have the audience on three sides on like the well-known Globe Theatre in London.

**Promenade Theatre** - this is very different from the rest, in that the audience moves around and the acting area could be anything or anywhere. It might all happen over the audience’s heads, in different rooms of a building or in a variety of locations outside.

This type of staging is probably the most intimate for the audience, because they actually have to participate by moving around.

Dalziel High School

Department of Drama and Theatre Studies

**National 5 Drama**

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**Exam Revision Pack**

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